



Śākyabhikṣu of Nepal Maṇḍala: Its Antiquity and Correlation

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Abstract

In this paper, the Buddhist community of “Śākyabhikṣu” widely known for their ordination in Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna tradition in Nepal Maṇḍala is discussed. It is with certainty that, “Śākyabhikṣu” is not a term only constrained to the Newar tradition in Nepal but also its connection to ancient historical records from Indian inscriptions mostly worth of mention is Ajantā caves. The community of “Śākyabhikṣu” is well displayed and understood for their obligations from there. Whereas, in the Nepalese perspective, it is most likely a title borne by the Śākyas as an honorary depiction. It must not be limited to what was thought in surficial understanding but needs to interpret and explore what might come up with ancient Buddhist tradition we followed in Nepal from its inception. Some inscriptional tallies and correlations with Indian inscriptions and traditions are made with Nepalese tradition in this paper. The explanatory approach of the word “Śākyabhikṣu” and its etymology along with some comparative descriptions in India and Nepal is given emphasis. However, the bigger portion of the interpretation relies on the current practices of the sangha members of Buddhist Mahāvihāras who called themselves “Śākyabhikṣu” or terminologies well connected with “Śākyas”. So, the paper follows descriptive yet somewhat analytic methodologies on cultural observation with historical blending for the interpretation of “Śākyabhikṣu’s” legacy.

Keywords: Bare Chuyegu, Catu-pariṣada, Inscriptions in India and Nepal, Mahāvihāra, Śākyabhikṣu.

Introduction

Buddhism has its adaptability in connecting with the area where it has arrived. The uniqueness of the living heritage associated with Buddhist practices is thus beautifully visible in the Nepal Maṇḍala. Kathmandu Valley could be interchangeably understood as the Nepal Maṇḍala. The melting pot for various practices stretches from the Terai to the Himalayan region of Nepal regarding their sectarian activities. Among them, the predominant and indigenous are the Newaḥ people. Basically it's a civilization, yet the dominating practice among them is Buddhism. They have claimed their practices as early as the time of Śākyamuni Buddha and claim themselves to be descendants of historical Sakyamuni Buddhas, especially by *Śākyabhikṣus*.

The term *Śākyabhikṣu* itself is self-explanatory for its connection to Buddhism since *bhikṣu* is someone who renounces household life. In modern days, celibacy, as most sectarians may think, is not visible because they do not wear the yellow robes as many other celibates do. In this regard, they are also called the household monks. These *Śākyabhikṣu* have various typologies in description and practices within forming the Sangha of Buddhist monasteries commonly called Bahā and Bahi in the Nepal Maṇḍala. These variations and their antiquities should be the major concern for Buddhist practices prevailing among *Newaḥ* people in terms of interpreting them is a valuable research for all Buddhist anthropological studies, which is so far in this researcher's knowledge after reviewing the available literatures. The study is based on the personal observations and inscriptions as primary sources, and research, either published or unpublished, in the form of articles and books, are considered as secondary sources. Albeit the study is constrained to monastic practices of *Śākyabhikṣu* in Nepal, the etymological similarity and inscriptional information found on Ajantā were analyzed as well.

The Śākyamuni Buddha and Buddhist Sangha tradition

The Buddha, his Dhamma, and his Sangha are three jewels in Buddhism. The group of people following Buddha and his dhamma is called Sangha. They are also been understood as “*Catupariṣada*”. *Bhikṣhu*, *Bhikṣuni*, *Upāsaka*, and *Upāsika* are the four wheels of Buddhism to prevail it. In that sense, those who follow the Śākyamuni are called the Śākyabhikṣu in a casual sense. The commentary to *Cūlā-Nārada-Jātaka* mentioned the *Śākiya-bhikkhu* which connects to Sākiya ascetics could conceivably mean a *bhikku* who is of the *Sākiya* or *Śākya* clan (Cousins, 2003: 3). The *Mahāvastu* evolved a whole origin legend of the *Sakya* ethnic group, tracing their descent from five brothers, sons of the king of the *Ikṣvāku*. They settle down in Kapilavaṣṭu and are called *Śākya* because of the purity of blood or the teak (Skt. *Śaka*) trees they use for building it (Vajracharya, 2000: 23; Gellner, 1984:7 and Chaudhari, 1955:1). The name of the Buddha's clan occurs in the forms *Sakka*, *Sakya*, and

Sākiya in the Pali texts and they could consider it the oldest however the Sanskritized forms either to *Śākya* or *Śākya* (Cousins, 2003:12) become more familiar in Nepalese culture and tradition at least in etymologies connections. It is most likely that various other contemporary traditions understand the uniqueness or pattern of Buddhist practices by the *Śākyabhikṣu* or *Śākya* monks. The well-known Sanskrit poems dated around the first or second century AD, the *Buddhacarita* and the *Lalitavistara* gave the biographical accounts of Buddha. They are literary not historical documents that were composed for the inevitable hero-worship of the followers of his religion. It needs to pursue actual texts of the three *Piṭakas* (Davids, 1896:89). The same thing will be applied to the Buddhist Sangha. Whatsoever, the *Śākyas* indicate *sarva-hita* which implies those whose mind is at peace and have the nature of compassion. The *Śākyas* are mentioned as Buddhist monks wearing red robes in the tenth century in India by commentator Bhaṭṭotpala (Cousins, 2003:6). *Mulasarvastivāda vinaya* sutra gives ‘*Śākya*’ in prefixes like *Śākyamuni* (*Śākyasage*), *Śākyasiṃha* (*Śākya lion*), *Śākyadhirāja* (*Śākya overlord*), *Śākyakula* (*Śākya family*), *Śākyarājakula* (*Śākya family*), *Śākyastri* (*Śākya women*), *Śākyakumārī* (*Śākya girl*) and *Śākyakumāra* (*Śākya boy*). Among them, *Śākyabhikṣu* is unique with its manifold understandings.

Śayanāsanavastu of *Mulasarvastivāda* sutra also mentioned that the *Śākya* renunciant (*Śākyāḥ pravrajitaḥ*) will receive offerings of seats, water, and alms before the others (Cohen, 2000:6)¹. So they stand out. It means there were certain monks from the *Śākya* family or lineage and those monks may have considered themselves deserving of special recognition for that reason.

The scene described in *Sanḥabhedavastu* is also worth mentioning here. The scene where Udāyin (Kaludai Amātya) after his conversion to a Buddhist monk, asks Buddha to visit Kapilvastu. Before Udāyin leaves, *Śākyamuni* tells him how to act on his return: “The blessed one said: ‘Go Udāyin, but do not enter the royal palace immediately. Standing at the door, you should announce: “A *Śākyabhikṣu* has come.” if they tell you to enter, you should enter. If they ask you whether there are any other *Śākyabhikṣu*, answer that there are.’ here, *Śākyabhikṣu* is used specifically to refer to a monk who is a member of the *Śākya* clan, not simply a follower of its favorite son but a blood member of the lineage. Udāyin is a *Śākya* who is also a *bhikṣu* (Gnoli, 1977:186)². Thus, the Rāhula, a blood member of Siddhartha’s clan, acts perfectly as Buddha’s seeker and thus fits with the term “*Śākyabhikṣu*”.

1 The hierarchy is started from *Śākya* renunciant, the *brāhmaṇa* renunciant, the *kṣatriya* renunciant, the *vaiśya* renunciant, *śūdra*, from a noble family, the wealthy family, monk who is handsome, comely, pleasing, who speaks well, who is famous, the meritorious monk, preservers of the sutras, *vinaya* or *mātrkāś* and finally the list ends with the *arhat*, a meditator on the eight deliverances.

2sa rājakuladvāra sthītvā kathayati, bhavanta rājño nivedayata Śākyabhikṣurāgata iti; te kathayanti : kim anye’pi santi Śākyabhikṣavaḥ ; bhavantaḥ santi; tai rājño niveditaṃ, Śākyabhikṣur āgata iti ;

Śākyabhikṣu and its manifold meanings

Śākyabhikṣu is a widely used nomenclature for Newar Śākyas in Nepal. *Śākyabhikṣu* is defined as the “epithet of a Buddhist monk, same as Śākya” (Sircar, 1966:287). Samuel Beal was of the opinion that this very word “Śākya” was sufficient evidence to show that the clan was of Skythian, and therefore of Mongolian origin. Rhys David denies it for Aryan descent with aristocratic governance where the title like “*Rājā*” may not be equivalent to “the king” but rather “archon” or “consul” in significance (Davids, 1896:91-2). Masao Shizutani analyzed the Indian inscriptions dated before the Gupta period and believes that the title “Sakyabhikṣu” was not common during the Kuṣāna period. However, the title ‘*bhikṣu*’ is found in several inscriptions, and the orthodox congregations of the monks, belonging to the Sarvastivadin sect and the *Mahīśāsaka* sect, are mentioned as *bhikṣusangha*, which tempts us to conjecture that the new title Śākyabhikṣu was of Mahayana origin. This conjecture, however, may be erroneous, and the title may have been devised in order to distinguish the Buddhist monks from the Jaina monks (Shizutani, 1962:356). Gregory Schopen believes that from the fourth century and throughout the Gupta period, the followers of the Mahāyāna used those terms vigorously. He had taken support from his collection of 57 passages of epigraphic materials (Schopen, 1979:15). L.S Cousins argues with the previously stated opinions by saying the use of names could not partly justify the “Śākyabhikṣu” to be a distinct group of people who followed the Mahayana tradition. There are various terms or titles which come closer to the Śākyabhikṣu like *Sākiya-bhikkhu*, *Sakya-bhikkhu*, *Śākya*, *Sakka*, or *Sakkaputtiya* (Cousins, 2003:2). This evidence, as they put forth as testimony, is not sufficient. He could be correct in his assumptions, but the exciting fact is that none of the writers were witnesses to the “Śākyabhikṣu” tradition or culture that still prevailed in Nepal Maṇḍala. Śākyas of Kathmandu valley prefer to call themselves *Śākyabhikṣu*, claiming that they were the descendants of Buddha’s clan, who fled during the massacre of Virudhaka in Kapilvastu, and they were once *Bhikṣus* who later became householder.

The ceremony of making different types of Bhikṣus in Buddhist monasteries is still practiced, and they function as intended. “*Bare Chuyegu*” is the term used, which translates as “making *Bare*” or “making *Sakya* or *Sakyabhikṣu*”. The oldest evidence of *Śākyabhikṣu* was discovered in Nepal from an inscription dated 542 AD, recently from Guitole Vihāra of Pātan. It was actually a donatory inscription that records one Yaśomitra *Śākyabhikṣu* donated a bronze image of Buddha during the reign of king Rāmadeva (Alsop et al., 2020)³. The use

3 *ū deya dharmmoyam śākyabhikṣo Yaśomitrasya mātāpitarau pūrvvāṅgamaṇ kṛtvā ācāryopādhyāyānām sarvvasatvānām anuttarajñānavāptaye 2. stu, bhaṭṭāraka mahārāja śrī rāmadevasya sāgra varṣaśataṁ samājñāpayataḥ mahāsāmante mahārāja śrī kramalīla kuśalini 3. bhagavato buddhasya kāṇsyapratimā pratiṣṭhāpitā * mārggaśīrṣe śukla trayodaśyām saṃvat a-pka cu pka*. The inscription is dated Śaka Era 464 (542 CE). It describes Yaśomitra Śākyabhikṣu donating the bronze image of the God Buddha during the reign of the Great King Rāmadeva and the Great Feudatory Kramalīla.

of words like *Paramopāsaka* in Gaṇabaha *Avalokiteśvara* and *Śākyabhikṣu* seems somehow connected. This inscription somehow gives the donatory behavior of *Śākyabhikṣu*, which is common with the inscriptions we can find in India. There are also many inscriptions in Nepal that mentioned the different activities of *Śākyabhikṣu*. Thus, the *Mahāyanī Śākyabhikṣu* can be both members of the Buddhist monastic order and *Paramopāsaka* at the same time in Nepal, based on the practices we have in Nepalese Monasteries, often called *Bahā* and *Bahī*. Nepalese *Śākyabhikṣu* does not wear red clothes all the time but follows every occasion or activity of the Mahāyāna tradition. This feature seems unlikely for L.S Cousins and argues it because he did not seem to investigate the Newāḥ tradition. This could be the unique character of *Newāḥ* Buddhism. It seems quite understandable that this particular term “*Śākyabhikṣu*” is not something very strict or limited to any particular group of people. Even if it denotes something sectarian, then that sect could incorporate big sentiments connected with Buddhist norms. That probably is the expression held by *Sakyaputta*, which does not only mean ‘son of the *Śākyan*’ but also male members of a clan or extended family. This is why interpreting it with the cultural practice of Nepal makes sense. Even though the term itself is not self-explanatory, whether the *Śākya* relates to junior Buddhist monks or committed lay supporters. This assumption occurs because of the *Barechuyegu* ceremony as this ritual is generally conducted for a little kid with a father's pure lineage. Although girls do not go through this ceremony these days in Nepal. Richard S. Cohen believes girls belonging to the *Śākya* family are called *Śākyakumāri* and hence proposes that *Śākyabhikṣu* functioned as a kinship term. Further from Ajantā inscriptions, *Śākyabhikṣus* are also synonyms for bodhisattva and members in a superior blood lineage, betokening membership in a superior spiritual one.

***Barechuyegu* ceremony (Making of *Śākyabhikṣu*) and its implication in Nepal**

Pravajyā (Making monks) is carried out in the Newār Buddhist tradition according to the ritual manual *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* is locally known as *bare chuyegu*. The Buddhist monastics constitute ‘*Catupariṣada*’. Unless one takes *pravajyā* or ordination, one is not considered a member of the Sangha. Edward Conze divides the timeline for Buddhism into four periods, starting from the time of Buddha with an approximation of 500 years for the first three periods and 1000 years for the fourth period (Conze, 1999: Content). In the first 500 periods, *Theravāda* tradition seems dominant, and hence, homeless life and celibacy are important. Around the classical period (1st to 5th cent. AD), a movement led to a new style of Buddhism known as the *Mahāyāna* brought remarkable change in monasticism (Bajracharya, 2014:137). Formulating the concept of *Bodhisattva*, the concept of *Trikāya*, the ten realms, the concept of *Nirvāṇa*, and the concept of faith are some factors that stand apart from the traditional practice in Buddhism with *Mahāyāna* tradition (Upadhyaya, 2011:87).

During the classical period (5-10th cent. AD), after the emergence of *Vajrayāna*, Buddhist monasticism saw varieties with the involvement of priestly functions of sacramental rites and magical activities of mystic realizers. This is also the time when *Vajrayāna* spread northward from India to Nepal, Tibet, and most of the central Asian countries (Bajracharya, 2014:139).

There is no doubt, at least in tenth-century India, that the *Śākyas* wear red. They are all compassionate and live in most parts of India (Cousins, 2003:6). However, in *Newāḥ* (Nepalese) Buddhist tradition, we have different stories to tell. They do not wear distinctly distinguishable robes, nor do they always keep shaved heads. On occasion, some only wear robes and keep patched heads and other paraphernalia of religious identity. Thus, a special Buddhist community called *Śākyas* and *Vajrācāryas* simply formed the Buddhist monks after certain ordinations and rituals. This is the ceremony where a male born becomes *Śākyabhikṣu* or *Vajrācāryabhikṣu*. It can be corroborated with the pāli term ‘*samaṇo Sakyaputtiyo*’ meaning ‘follower of the *Sakyaputta*’. In this sense, Samana or bhikṣu has a responsibility as the heirs of the Buddha and hence in some sense members of the Sakya clan. This is exactly a case in practice by monasteries in Nepal *Maṇḍala*. Irrespective of the religious lineage and affinity, we can see that the people became *Śākyabhikṣu* from historical records; however, the system has changed, and the patriarchal legacy is totally overruled these days. *Barechuyegu* is the ceremony where the eligible born get the authority to be called *Bare* or *Śākya* and eligibility to enter the membership into the Saṅgha because from now on he is *bare* or *bandhye*, which literally means “Venerable”. As we are having the Buddha seed or *Buddhabija*, we are all hidden Bodhisattvas. Our need for us is to chrysalis and become Buddha. So, Bodhisattva is a Buddhist *dvija* (twice-born) and simply understands a transformation from being laity to a Buddhist realizer. This could be more understandable by the act of *Mahākāśyapa*. He stands on the shore of Lake Anavatapta, and declares: “I am the *Dharma* Kings’ legitimate [aurasa] son.” (Cohen, 2000:19) This could also be verified from the Aggaṇṇa sutta of the Pāli Dīgha Nikāya.

“He whose faith in the Tathāgata is settled, rooted, established, solid, unshakable... can truly say: “I am a true son (*orasa*) of the Blessed lord, born of his mouth, born of *Dhamma*, created by *Dhamma*, an heir of *Dhamma*.” why is that? Because, Vāseṭṭha, this designated the *Tathāgata*: ‘The Body of *Dharma*.’”

By contrast, the above statement disregards ritual and blood in its definition of an *aurasa* relation to the Buddha. From the epigraphical sources in India, it seems India’s *Śākyabhikṣu* took the royal name for themselves as princes in a lineage of Dharma kings. This is quite a common scenario in Nepal however, variations in terminology can be expected, like *Śākyabaṃsa*. Five types of titles have been used in *Nevāḥ* practices:

Śākyavaṃsa (Bare): of the Śākya lineage

Śākyabhikṣu (Bare): Buddhist Monk

Brahmacārya Bhikṣu (bhikhu Bare): Celibate monk

Bauddhācārya/ Buddhācārya (Bare): Buddhist preceptor

Cailaka Bhikṣu (Chibā Bare): Caitya monk

Since the title “Śākyabhikṣu” is only assigned to ordained sangha members of *Mū Bahā* (Major Monasteries) in *Nepalmaṇḍala* (Bajracharya, 2000:3), it does signify categorical distinction. However, the above-mentioned are simply called *śākya*, the neater expression for ‘follower of the Śākya’. These terms do seem to have some reserved meaning thus Licchavi king Vṛsadeva is to be called *Sugataśāsana Pakṣapātī* instead *Śākyabhikṣu* however, of great devotion and conversion.

At the time of *Pravajyā*, Monastic initiation, a novice monk is required to worship a caitya in the form of *Silāku* (the staff). The candidate is presented with two silver bracelets, a pair of earrings, a silver necklace, along with robes, a begging bowl, a staff, and a ritual umbrella. This practice does not exist in the *Theravāda* tradition. The practice of giving ornaments to a novice or a *Bhikṣu* is similar to that mentioned in the *Bodhisattvapitaka*. As mentioned in the text, ornaments are offered to the *Mahāsattva* who belongs to *Mahāsāṅghikā* (Bajracharya, 2014:224-25). There is a tradition that a newer novice has to make a request in front of the elders for the sangha to initiate him as a *parivrājaka* and utter *Buddhatvapada prāptaye*. The aim of *Pravajyā* initiation is to go forth on the path of enlightenment, thereafter acquiring Buddhahood.

Bahābahi and Buddhist Sangha

There are two types of monasteries regularly called Bahā and Bahī in *Nepalmaṇḍala*. Almost every monastery has a Saṅgha with a thāyepā, the eldest senior. All the community of monastics- *Vajrācārya Bhikṣus*, *Śākyabhikṣu*, *Brahmacārya Bhikṣus*, and *Cailaka Bhikṣus* have separate Saṅghas of their own (Vajracharya, 2000:2). They can be called *Navakārmikā*. They are the monks engaged in the profession of craftsmanship, including construction work. Mahasāṅghika also attests to this profession of the monks (Silk, 2008:79-85). *Śākya* and *Vajrācārya* are involved in different occupations like goldsmithing or other forms of craftsmanship like woodcraft, metal craft, or sculpture making, and so forth. Therefore, some sort of linkage can be envisaged between these *Navakārmika* monks mentioned by *Sarvāstivādins* and Śākyas/Vajrācāryās of *Nepal-maṇḍala*, the aboriginal residents.

Śākyas and *Vajrācāryas* have found ways of combining everyday life and religion. Thus, these professions also allow them also stick to their religious practice while they work. *Sarvāstivādins* were believed to be the first to introduce image cult in Buddhism, and they

were also ascribed to have made the first anthropomorphic Buddha and Bodhisattva images either in Gāndhāra or Mathurā around the first century AD. The *Sarvāstivādin* monk and *Tripitakācārya* Bala image is one noteworthy image with inscriptional support discovered from Mathura. It would appear that the image and its attendant cult were major preoccupations of nuns and monks; they everywhere introduced the cult and supported it (Bajracharya, 2014:241). Guitole, Cābahi, Gaṇabahā are some peculiar inscriptions discovered so far to witness this act of bhikṣus or upāsakas.

Texts to support the *Barechuyegu* event

The ritual manual for *barechuyegu* is *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*. This text was composed or compiled by Ācārya Kuladutta in the 11th century. The starting point of the rite is more precisely the pravrajyā rite as attested in several *Sarvāstivādin* texts like the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayavastu* (Bajracharya, 2014:233).

Having undergone *barechuyegu*, the boys, for the next four days, wearing their tiny and perfect replica of monastic garb, including *cīvara*, sandals, begging bowl, and staff, act the role of monks. After getting ordination, the practitioner follows ‘the middle way’ in pursuit of the spiritual goals as prescribed by the Buddha, avoiding two extremes- indulgence in sensual pleasure and self-mortification. The purpose of *Pravrajyā* (going forth) is to keep a lifelong commitment to live a life with minimal requirements, detached from thoughts of sensuality and objects of the senses. It is, therefore, self-sacrifice in deed and the urge to do so. It should be genuine if it is to bear pleasant fruition. The evidence or information is scanty in terms of using the ordination manuals in other countries besides *Nepalmaṇḍala*, but some remnants of records from Afghanistan are also coming out with prominent names like Buddhahadra and places like Nagarahāra, Bamiyan and etc.

***Śākyabhikṣu* from the corpus of evidence and its antiquity**

The evidence of using the term *Śākyakuladhvaja* for Siddhartha occurred in the *Buddhacarita* epic of Aśvaghōṣa (Chaudhari, 1955:12). His exact date of occurrence is not clear, but most scholars believe he must have belonged to the time period of 50 BC to 100 AD. An earlier mention of the word *Śākya* occurs in the *Yavanajātaka* of *Sphuḍidhvaja*, composed in A.D. 269/270. Here we learn that a strong Mars produces a *Śākya-śramaṇa* ‘with bad character’ (Cousins, 2003:7). This also signifies the concept of producing other religious practitioners when other planets are getting strong. So the concept does not abruptly arise and be recorded in *Sphuḍidhvaja*, but is prevalent sometimes earlier without any doubt. The earliest inscription mentioning “*Śākyabhikṣu*” is discovered from a relic casket buried in the stupa at Devnimori around the late fourth century (Mehta & Chowdhary, 1966:121)⁴.

⁴ *Bhadrapadapañcamadine nṛpatāśrīrdraseneca kṛittamavanīketubhūtasamahāvihārāśraye mahāstupam*

Some remarkable and unparalleled sources of Indian Buddhist social history can be witnessed in Ajanta caves because we can contextualize it with remarkable precision (Schopen, 1979:5). Ajanta's artifacts were created in two phases, the first of which dated to the *Sātavāhana* period, approximately 100 BCE to 100 CE after a several-century hiatus, work resumed in the late fifth century. Interestingly, epigraphic evidence clearly indicated that Ajanta's resident community was a community of *Śākyabhikṣus*. Ajanta boasts a total of 97 inscriptions, painted and incised. Of these, 60 record information on late fifth-century Buddhist donors; unfortunately, 27 of the donative inscriptions are damaged beyond use. Among the remaining 39 donative inscriptions, 28 name their donor as a "*Śākyabhikṣu*", "*Śākya-upāsaka*" or "*Śākya-upāsikā*". It means nearly three of every four inscriptions mentioned the donor as *Śākya* (Cohen, 2003:6), although Ajantā was not uniquely *Mahāyānist*. This caused disagreement among scholars and traditions in Nepal to be *Mahāyānist Śākyabhikṣu*.

Some cultural aspect is mentioned in *Arthaśāstra* where a rule prohibition the feeding, at rites for ancestors of renunciants such as *Śākyas* and *Ājīvakas*⁵. Interestingly, the same persistence can be observed in Buddhist monasteries during ordination rituals in Nepal maṇḍala. A copper-plate grant inscription of Guhasena (553-569 AD) of Valabhi (Varji, 1952:38) grants the revenues of a number of villages to provide the four requisites to the monastic order of the *Śākyasmonks* in the Mahāvihāra of Duḍḍā near Valabhi belong to the eighteen *nikāyas* and have come from many places (Cousins, 2003:8)⁶. Xuan Zang recorded a ubiquitous number of monasteries belonging to the *Hinayāna Sammitiya* as well as the *Mahāyāna sṭhavira* schools during his visit to western India in about A.D 640. However, in the sixth and seventh centuries, *Mahayanism* was growing because of the influence of Nalanda (Varji, 1952:175-76).

The donatory inscriptions from Guitole and one from Caitya of Cābahi (Vajracharya, 2030:121) directly connect with the *Mahāyānic* practice during the Licchavi period. Some records say, from the middle of the 12th century AD, the learned Buddhist monks were also called '*Bhikṣurācārya*' or '*Śākya-bhikṣurācārya*' in Nepal. Since the last quarter of the 11th century AD the descendants of *Śākyabhikṣu Sunayasri Mitra* (1070 AD) were called *Brahmacaryabhikṣu* or the *Nirbāṇik Vānaprastha Bhikṣu* (Locke, 1985:204).

satvanekānugraha niratābhyam śākyabhikṣubhyam'. Inscribed in Casket II

5 "*Śākyājīvakādīn vṛśala-pravrajitān deva-pitr-kāryeṣu bhojayataḥ śatyodaṇḍah*"

6Duḍḍāpāda-kārita-Duḍḍā-mahāvihāre nānā-dig-abhyāgatāṣṭādaśa-nikāyābhyantare-Śākyāryya-bhikṣu-saṃghāya grāsācchādana-śāyyāsana...

From the sample study of *Hiraṇyavarṇa Mahāvihāra*, we come to know that Pt. Hemraj Śākya recorded ninety-eight dated piṇḍa pātra or begging bowls inscriptions ranging from 1525 to 1893 AD. Among those ninety-eight, fifty-two recognized their donor as *Bhāro*, two were “*Bhikṣu*”, two as “*Śākyavaṃsa*”, and five as “*Śākyabhikṣu*”. Similarly, sixty-six colophons from the period 1380-1768 AD recorded *Śākyabhikṣu*, *Śākyavaṃsa*, and *Bhiksus* along with their related vihāras. Numerous birch-bark land documents witness those facts (Gellner, 2010:13-14). The residents of *Vihāras* are usually referred to as *Śākyabhikṣu* or simply *bhikṣu* in 140 palm-leaf land deeds found at Rudravarṇa *Mahāvihāra* in Pātan concerning buying and selling land in their own name, dated as early as 982 AD (Locke, 2005:287). This would seem to indicate a high degree of secularization.

Conclusion

Śākyabhikṣu was a layered, complex synonym term for bodhisattva. The term ‘*bodhisattva*’ is a big identity in Buddhism, describing an earlier state of Buddha by the Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions. Masao Shizutani and Gregory Schopen hold that Śākyabhikṣu was a title Mahayanist monks adopted for themselves, whereas K. Sarkar suggests that the Śākyabhikṣu were an organization of peripatetic monks concerned with the dissemination of Buddha images and the exaltation of Śākyamuni Buddha. Both interpretations seem valid when we are talking about the tradition still prevailing in NepalMaṇḍala. Researcher believes this is the only country where it remains intact from the cultural and historical records.

Śākyabhikṣu seems differentiated from other monks or bhikṣus. The tradition surviving in Nepalese bahā and bahī gives a comprehensive idea of its communal adoption. As an *aurasa* son lost his right to name and wealth from the biological family and was completely obliged to a new family, the one with a Buddhist convert has all his reputation accordingly. The *Mulasarvastivada vinaya* sutra says, “a son has a claim to his father’s property” (Cohen, 2003:18). In this reference, we might expect that every monk could claim to be a *Śākyabhikṣu*: a Buddhist monk who acts as a proper son to Śākyamuni. Mahākāśyapa shares no blood with Sakyamuni, by calling himself an *aurasa* son, Mahākāśyapa displaces his common marker of social status outside the bounds of its conventional social meaning with legitimacy as an heir.

The form and context of the *Śākyabhikṣu* epithet itself suggest that *Śākyabhikṣu* did not seek to eliminate all social differentiation; neither in India nor in Nepal did they make a hierarchy in Buddhist practice. The Rāhula of the lotus is our model; he is the paradigmatic *Śākyabhikṣu*, kin by blood and by a religious goal. I would propose that Ajanta’s *Śākyabhikṣu* took advantage of the structural logic of Indian kinship, whereby family membership is

determined through behavior, to set themselves up as *pratibimbās* of Rāhula. Legitimacy is founded in behavior. Thus, a *śākyabhikṣu* acts as a member of Śākyamuni's blood and spiritual lineages.

The embodiment of the *tathāgatavaṃśa* during the long interval between Śākyamuni and Maitreya Buddhas is the paradigmatic *Śākyabhikṣu*. The *Mahāyānist* rhetoric challenged India's *bodhisattvas* to act as true sons of the Śākya, to realize their aims, and to preserve their lineage through rituals of compassion. Therefore, it is most likely that the evolution and significance of the *Mahāyāna* tradition seem effective after the emergence of *Śākyabhikṣu*; however, their traces can be visible in earlier times as well. The tradition of making *Śākyabhikṣu* persists only in Nepal to date, referred to as *Barechuyegu*. They then remain as householder *Bodhisattva*, also called *ādikarmic grihapati Bodhisattva*. Hence, *Śākyabhikṣu* has a metaphoric as well as a literal meaning that is perfectly preserved in Nepalese practice. The reminiscence of historical impressions and cultural blend can be well observed in surviving Nepalese Buddhist practices of the *Mahāvihāra*.

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