

Contribution of Nepal Buddhism to the World Culture

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Preface

In presenting themselves to the outside world, Newars have not so far clearly revealed the nature of Newa Buddhism. They are holding a Conference in which they would introduce their Buddhism and create an awareness of their own responsibility. In doing so, they should attain a right understanding in the international society, and will seek equality with other traditional societies. 'Responsibility' here means that they should show a definite will to step forward and open the door of their traditions and cultures to every outsider who is interested in it, understanding that nowadays the world is looking for traditional religions. In doing so, the Newars will open the way to other religious people and enable a deep exchange of religious experience, in order to find a profound coincidence of spirit and create peace in the world, Nepal-Buddhism and its culture. This is all for the purpose of preserving and promoting their own Nepal-Buddhism and its culture. By doing so, they believe, they will not only contribute to the international religious and traditional world but also make the way to preserve and promote their own religious culture making other religious peoples and societies interested in their own spiritual and religious world.

Through by the seminar, project and event, their message will be given to an academic and limited audience at first. But the real target is not just academic and authorized people but also young people and children who will spread their wings in the new century. To realize this vision, the Lotus Research Center has established a Home Page on the Internet. The youth of today are losing self-confidence; they lack peace and stability of mind through being unable to identifying themselves by their own culture and ethnicity. They are being thrown out into the modern monotone cultural world. The Nepal-Buddhism will invite youth into their own spiritual, traditional, cultural and religious world, show that its world offers a more profound means of attaining true identity, and give them the message that, through the wisdom of their own traditions, they can become people endowed with self-confidence in the international world.

Indeed this conference has another purpose: to create cultural self-understanding and to develop an accompanying awareness of culture: That is, in making them identify themselves by own tradition and culture, to enlighten the people, yet also making them become aware of their responsibility to preserve not only their own tradition and culture but also every tradition of the world. The purpose of preserving traditional culture is not to make a museum of traditions but to promote traditional culture in the minds and in their day-to-day lives. In the development of traditional culture, traditional culture is neither denied nor forgotten but evolves and develops new schema with which to preserve traditional culture by deep study. I hope you understand, therefore, that this theory of cultural development is not based on the theory of evolution of the modern age.

You have already understand that we are intending to realize a multi-cultural world and that we are therefore developing a basic philosophy of preserving traditional cultures. We intend further to awaken people to their responsibility in realizing a multi-cultural world.

Thus I am not only talking about preserving Nepal-Buddhism and its culture but also its contribution to a future world.

Keyword: Identify, responsibility, open to the world, contribution, and preservation

First Chapter of "Suffering"- Consciousness in Identity and responsibility of Nepal-Buddhism

It is doubtful that the Nepal-Buddhists have been brought up with much awareness of their own Identity, nor have they revealed this identity to the outside world. When the world was still relatively closed off and compartmentalized in spiritual terms, peoples preserved and promoted an abundance of religious and traditional culture, struggling and coexisting with neighboring cultures while being strongly conscious of their religious and cultural identities. But the closed world has opened abruptly; young people have been losing confidence in their identity and have begun to derive their sense of value from other less traditional value systems. They embrace

only the modern common values which have little or no relation to their own traditional cultural values. They not only abandon a sense of value, but they fail to consider their traditional culture and life style. This tendency is seen not only in Nepal but also any in traditional culture region, such as Korea, Japan, or Thailand. Nepal-Buddhism exists in a small area - the Kathmandu valley or Nepal-Mandala - where they have just encountered modern urban problems such as motorization, population influx and modern culture explosion. This traditional culture would drown in the sea of history and disappear from this world if they allow their identity and responsibility to their own traditional culture to disappear. I would say that this is the first suffering of Nepal-Buddhism.

Nepal-Buddhism has not been given proper recognition in the world today, unlike the Buddhism of Tibet and China, which have sets of religious text in their own languages, as it exists only in this small valley called Nepal-Mandala. In the past 20~30 years, anthropological and ethnographic scholars have been studying and writing about many aspects of its culture. But they failed to recognize it as a critically important form of Buddhism. It is a most important form of Buddhism, because it has preserved the original Buddhist Texts in Sanskrit which were written and edited during the expansion of Mahayana Buddhism and were subsequently translated into Chinese and Tibetan. Many scholars of Mahayana Buddhism have been studying the Sanskrit manuscripts which are copied and preserved in Nepal-Mandala. But they have failed to recognize that they belong to the Nepal-Buddhism, and inevitably Nepal-Buddhism itself. The important point is not only that it has preserved and transmitted Sanskrit Texts but also that Nepal-Buddhism sustains and transmits the Sanskrit Texts in ritual and teaching. So we can recognize that it carries forward the old and original Buddhist tradition which disappeared in India. Nonetheless, its international position is low. It is the second suffering of Nepal-Buddhism.

Nepal-Buddhism has contributed to academic world by supplying the Sanskrit manuscripts. It is a big contribution. But, when we recognize that because of being a inheritor of original Mahayana Buddhism in many aspects of ritual and culture, the culture of Nepal-Buddhism has has a distinct and extraordinary quality that con-

tains a vast and complex cultural experience which would be useful in the immediate future, it can not be said that it has been contributing enough to the world culture. I like to say that it is the third suffering of Nepal-Buddhism.

As I wrote above, Nepal-Buddhism, which lost self confidence in the modern era as it encountered industrial development, change of life style, and the global economy, has not made a real effort to find a new way to identify consciously and take responsibility for sustaining and evolving their own traditional culture - not just for themselves but also for the outside world.

Tibet-Buddhism suffered greatly when China invaded their land and destroyed their monasteries and cultural assets on a huge scale in recent history. Many Tibetans fled to Nepal and India and to Europe and America. They publish many reprints of Tibetan Buddhist Texts and are engaging in mission in Tibetan Buddhism and its culture. They are contributing to world culture even though they have great suffering.

Now Nepal-Buddhism also must become aware that its suffering and crisis itself is an opportunity to step forward to preserve and sustain its tradition and culture, and to contribute to world peace and culture. For this precise reason, we have been holding this conference and seminar.

Keywords; open world, losing self confidence, struggle and co-existence, cultural crisis, international recognition and position, Buddhist Sanskrit Text, Contribution to the world, awareness of conscious identity and responsibility

Second Chapter of "Cause of suffering"- Nepal-Buddhism made cultural complex system in cultural exchange in its history.

Every universal religion has an axiomatic philosophy - all is equal. Some would disagree, but I would suggest that we can easily find the idea of equality in the ultimate base of any religion, even those which have a discriminatory social system and philosophy on the surface. But the non-discriminatory has no form and is a discrimi-

nation. When a religion is going to engage in the society, it must have a language and name. Without a language and name, it cannot be communicated and transmitted between two people or among many people. Human-Existence must have language to live coexistence. That is the reason the Principle of Buddhism is renunciation.

But at the same time Buddhism must take a form of religion which is automatically discriminatory, in the hope of realizing peace in this world. Buddhism must have a language and culture which envelop philosophy of equality in mind.

I might tell a famous story from the Buddha's life. Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment under a Bodhi tree. He thought he had no words to introduce his experience to others. Yet, the people were desperate to realize peace in their mind and society. Brahma knew both the desire of people and the experience of Buddha, and went before Buddha and asked him to introduce his experience to this world. Buddha rejected his request twice. But at last Buddha agreed to it. Buddha never makes a form or system of philosophy but saves people by suitable kinds of words from many kinds of suffering in every situation.

I think you understand what I would like to say. When we introduce truth to others, we must have language and it forms culture. We are asked to recognize that ideal and fundamental equality must take a form - called culture - in this world.

Nepal-Buddhism and its culture changed form and system in exchanging or struggling with other cultures or political situations in its history. Such exchanging and struggling was suffering rather than pleasure. Because of its history of adversity, its complex system was made strong and has the wisdom to introduce Buddha's experience of equality. Because they do not see the difficult history of Nepal-Buddhism, they do not want an identity in Nepal-Buddhism and have been losing self confidence in the open world.

Here I would use the example of Bunga-Deo. Bunga-Deo is surely recognized as a Padmapani Lokeswar. At the same time some Nepali People call him Macchendranath. Some say His divinity is Surya, some says Vishnu. In ritual we see He has a divinity of fertility. When we consider him from view point of Buddhism, the Brahminical religions, or farmers etc., Bunga-Deo contains a complex array

of divinities. Newa People accept a practical belief in him as a Deo which is a form enveloping many divinities. His Divinity and Ritual are structured in strata, or we might say, in a complex system of schemata which were added one after another in responses to various historical crises.

Buddhism and the Brahminical religions have always competed and coexisted. In ancient times, they disputed every aspect of philosophy, adopted ideas from each other, and generated a complex system of religion. Nepal-Buddhism also met, exchanged and struggled with Himalayan culture, Kirati, Tibetan, Mountain, other kinds of Newa and Indian culture etc.. Nepal-Buddhism, like Bunga-Deo, in every cultural aspect to say Ritual, pantheon, social relation and arts etc., is a form of complex system of cultural schemata evolved historically. Thus Nepal- Buddhism has a strong and skillful way to continue transmitting and sustaining the Buddha-Dharma, with a fundamental concept of equality.

Third Chapter of Nirodha (Cessation of suffering) the four concept of culture and transference of the point of view.

Some say that we must embrace Multi-cultureism in the immediate future. This thinking also warns of the crisis of a modern mono-cultural world based on materialism. I think we should cultivate a more basic philosophy for a realized Multi-cultural world.

In order to realize peace in our world, we must know people are opposed to each other based on identity of region, culture and country. It means that if we can not understand exactly what is culture and its purpose, we will plunge into the sea of antagonism. To avoid this, I would like to discuss here 4 concepts of culture and the transfer of cultural perspective.

1. culture is Identity. Identity must be oriented towards confidence and responsibility
2. culture is Exchange. culture forms a complex system relating to, struggling with, accepting, and complicating other cultures.
3. culture is Human heritage. culture is the common property of

human beings

4. culture is preserved by international cooperation. International cooperation is the way to realizing and sustaining a multi-cultural-society.

1. culture is Identity.

It is easy to be understood and accept the statement "culture is Identity" Nowadays humans are facing the consequences of a world increasingly unified. The sense of value is being reduced to materialism and economism. Traditional and ethnic cultures have begun to be viewed, and to view each other, in a comparative light. Some Newa Buddhists have begun to transfer their identity as a Buddhist from Nepal-Buddhism to Terabad, which insists that it is the only successor of original Buddhism. Some of them reject identity as a Buddhist because Buddha-Dharma teaches non-discrimination. In any case, Nepal-Buddhism has been increasingly weakened such that it is difficult for Newa people to identify themselves and be confident within it.

Although I said above that Buddha-Dharma teaches equality in all, so that we actually should abandon our own identity, this world is not formed without language and identification. It is necessary to make a vessel of language and culture etc. which can introduce Buddha-Dharma to the world, which enables Buddhist people to identify as Buddhist. In history Buddhist actually did so.

2. culture is Exchange

The Concept "culture is Identity" is easily understood. But the concept "culture is Exchange" is not easily accepted for the people who identified with a culture and religion. They are apt to believe that their culture is the only right one and the most beautiful. But if we observe the reality of history of every culture, we become aware that every culture has changed form, that is to say, the complex system resulting from struggling and exchanging for the sake of co-existence with neighbors' cultures. No culture is pure and isolated but rather complex and dependently originated.

Buddhism and the Brahminical religions always compete and

dispute. In ancient times, they exchanged every aspect of philosophy and culture, accepted ideas from each other and made a complex system of religion. So none are pure and isolated from each other in their philosophy and culture. Nepal-Buddhism is also not pure and isolated from its neighbors.

3. culture is Human heritage.

When you accept the proposition "culture is exchange". culture is never pure and isolated from others, you are able to recognize that there is merit in cultural exchange and coexistence rather than antagonism and discrimination in cross-cultural communication. Considering that Nepal-Buddhism has been connecting with and depending on neighbor cultures to form today's complex system, which has abundant resources of wisdom for living and continuing to live, Nepal-Buddhism can show feelings of friendship and respect for other cultures. Nowadays many people recognize that traditional cultural assets belong to human beings; this is the concept of world cultural heritage in which there is the point of view that every traditional culture has equal value to continue for the human beings. After we recognize that traditional culture is world heritage, it is not far before we arrive at the idea of preserving traditional culture.

4. culture is preserved by the international cooperation. International cooperation is the way of transmitting and sustaining multi-cultural-society.

After we reach at the point of view that we should preserve every traditional culture equally, the necessity of cooperation becomes clear. We choose to preserve traditional cultures not only for the people who comprise and sustain them but also for every human being, because every traditional culture is a history itself and a treasury or mine of human wisdom. Nowadays many countries make cooperation projects to preserve and restore cultural assets. But concerning spiritual culture - that is to say, religion and life style etc. - we are afraid to touch identity and pride which are constituted in culture. I would propose that we not try to force cooperation on

the government level but work towards cooperation on the level of NGOs which have friendship and respect for each other. In cooperative work for preserving traditional culture, we will discover the richness of wisdom and beauty in every life and generate further friendship and respect for each other.

In the 20-century people of the world have been exchanging materials and money, which are the worst thing for the human mind, world peace and global environment. We cannot step backward but must step forward. We must make more correspondence and exchange with each other on subjects of common interest and benefit. This is cultural exchange and co-operation. I like to say that it is important to understand the 4 concepts of culture and the transfer of perspective of the 4 concepts of culture. For Example, Japanese Zen groups and Catholic groups have been exchanging the concept and the way of meditation and experience of monastery life. They believe it cultivates more deep religious experience and it also builds world peace.

Fourth chapter of the "way"; International cooperative work for preserving and transmitting traditional culture, contributing to the human mind and world peace.

1. Going forward to Multi-cultural era
2. Releasing from materialism and spiritual suppress
3. Building real world peace and solving the environment problem
4. Nepal-Buddhism can contribute to realize era of solidarity and human right in the scale of earth

1. Going forward to Multi-cultural era

Humanity ought to have a universal sense of value for realizing world peace and human equality. We should abandon the sense of value based on material richness and taking advantage others. Thus we should transfer the sense of value and base it instead in a culture, which is not a mono-culture unified by modern new civilization but traditional, regional and ethnic culture. In the sense we should make an exchanging, cooperative work of preserving and promoting. It is called the Multi-cultural-era or era of Coexistence.

Nepal-Buddhism is Vajrayana in nature. Vajrayana is Multi-culturalism. WE can explore this through the traditional model of the history of Buddhism which the Newars themselves use. When at first a few monks followed Sakyamuni's own way of living, they practiced Buddha-Dharma in Sangha only. After Sangha came to depend on donations, both monks and patrons identified themselves as Buddhists. With the advent of the Mahayana, they taught the philosophy of Bodhisattva who still lived in the sea of discriminative cognition, yet who could save others to Buddha-world. The sea of discriminative cognition means where people have language and name, that is to say society and culture. They had not only religious but cultural identities in Buddhism. Coming at last to the Vajrayana, there was rich experience of other religions and cultures resulting in a complex system of schemata in which many culture and religion are co-existing. That is to say, Vajrayana is Multi-culturalism. The philosophical development of Buddhism was mostly ended by the time of the Vajrayana. As for Nepal-Buddhism, it continues to develop in many aspects of cultural and social fields for the sake of survival, facing at every moment historical challenges. Nepal-Buddhism lost the Bhikshus and acquired the Vajracaryas, accepted the caste system, and developed a closed system etc. for the sake of continuity. Even though they developed much in culture and custom, they never threw out their traditions, which started at era of Shakyamuni. That is to say, the original system of the Sangha is still visible in the Sangha of Baha-Bahi. The sangha of Nepal-Buddhism is a successor of the 16 sects of Buddhism. They preserve the Mahayana texts called nine jewel sutras in which we see the rich philosophy of the Bodhisattva. They preserve a synthetic and total philosophy in the symbolism of Karma-Kanda or festivals. They never forget to sustain and transmit Buddha-Dharma itself in center of their culture. Indeed we should say Nepal-Buddhism itself is Multi-culturalism. Nepal-Buddhism has been promoting Buddha-Dharma in symbols, rituals, and lifestyle by establishing Chaityas which are a symbol of Shaky Muni Buddha and peace, by teaching the 6 Paramita in song and ritual, by allowing people Dana-Paramita practice in festivals such as Samyak or Pachadan, and by leading people to

live under Asta-Uposada-sila in Astami-Vrata. People of Nepal-Buddhism realize religious practice, offering, meditating, preaching etc. while enjoying song, music and dancing. Indeed it is cultural.

2. Releasing from materialism and spiritual suppression

History is born in the balance between war and the desire for peace. Every universal religion is aware of it and of their own responsibility to realize peace. For they know they release people from suffering of lack and excess of material and the spiritual suppression which arises in discriminative consciousness. What is universal religion? I say that the religion that releases people from the suffering of material and spiritual problems is the universal religion.

We can say that Nepal-Buddhism emphasizes the family. Festival and ritual are exquisitely constructed in relation of role of man, woman and children. In the result of its philosophy, Newa society takes woman and children in considerations that are weak at competitive society. Those who have contact with Newa society and its culture are ease to understand it. How Goddesses like Ajima, Dakini, Ashtamatrika and Yogini etc. are so strongly believed among Newa people. Statue of 4 Karunamaya is like a children. Living Goddess Kumari is a small girl has a big Tantric power. In Festival Sakimana-Punhi people make Ashta Mangala, Purna Kalasha of roasted bean. They sing song of Dasa Paramita etc., giving thanks for Buddha and God for enough food and peace of mind. After they give thanks enough, they destroy Ashta Mangala, Purna Kalasha and give all children and others. We see Children are so enjoyed in it. Yomari-Punhi and others Festival we see the consideration of woman and children in the same way. I had a chance to listen a lecture of Rev. Divya Vajra Vajracarya when he lost his wife. In speaking of his gratitude and compassion for his wife he emphasized that Nepal-Buddhism could never stand without women in every aspect of its practice.

Nowadays people, who lived in developed countries, lose their identity, relation to their families and become socially isolated. Nepal-Buddhism can surely contribute to save them from such suffering. Nepal-Buddhism should be aware of a responsibility to help and

step forward.

3. Nepal-Buddhism contribute to building real world peace and solving the environment problem

Today we human beings are facing the crises of Antagonism and the Environment. Both problems are deeply based on materialism and economism. So if human would not be release from materialism and economism, human will not be able construct peace. For that human must be released from a sense of satisfaction in material wealth and social advantage. Fortunately not only Buddhism but also Hindu, Muslim, Christianity and other kinds of Universal religion teach it fundamentally. When those religions could join together and work to solve those human problems, the end of such suffering would be near.

Nepal-Buddhism teaches people philosophy of Buddha by symbolism in ritual and festival. Nepal-Buddhism know how to let people get wisdom and same time enjoy Buddha Dharma

With a small amount of material. In Ashtami Vrata, people realize "Meditation" in keeping Amoghapasa Lokeswar in their mind, and "Dharma" in symbolism of Mandala, "Temperance" in Vrata, Beautifulness in flower and light give. People, women and old men joined in the Vrata not seriously and strictly but comfortably and relaxed. Like this Nepal-Buddhism face always to the people and give easiness to realize religious, simple, beautiful, pleasure and peace life. So that Nepal-Buddhism can contribute to lead people in new simple life style.

4. Nepal-Buddhism can contribute to realize era of solidarity and human right in the scale of earth

Last year the movement of mine-abolition succeeded in making a treaty in the UN, and many countries are ratifying it. This movement was started by an ordinary woman (who don't have big position, authority and money) She and her friends who were linked through the internet gathered one after another voice and it spread to cover the earth. So many people and voices joined in Internet at last called out people at government level. We can say the time of

grassroots is arriving and time of solidarity. In preserving and promoting Multi-culturalism, we should cooperate by solidarity of grassroots level.

Shakya Muni starts to establish Sangha. Sangha is one key way of Buddhism. In Nepal-Buddhism Guthi are working much for their society, which are based on philosophy of Sangha. We see not only religious solidarity but also solidarity and cooperation in their daily life. Guthi preserve and succeed their culture. Guthi realize equality of members. Guthi is a social welfare and so help weak section of members. Guthi is an entertainment for members and children. Solidarity of Guthi make peace multi-Guthi society.

Wisdom which are developed in history Guthis can surely contribute to new solidarity era.