

BOUDHANATH STUPA



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The Boudhanath Stupa

Introduction

It is believed that the Boudha Stupa was built on Kashyap, the Primordial Buddha's relics. The Stupa also is depicted as the Buddha's chitta, the eternal conscience. Additionally, the Stupa is known as **Chintaamani**, the wish fulfilling jewel. Due to these reasons, every day the multitude swarm in to stroll around stupa to venerate and beseech for power from above and then set off for home. Apart from it's spiritual value, it is also believed that the Boudhanath Stupa is the biggest Stupa in the world.

The Stupa is located 7.5 km. away to the east of Kathmandu Durbar Square. The Stupa occupies 7631.06 sq. mt. of the land with the height 43.03 meters. A score angular (Vimshatiskona) plinth is spread out like the petals to hold on the oval womb. The 100 fts. diameter dome holds the square gilded copper harmika that has been artistically etched with the blue eyes beaming eternally to the world in four directions. The thirteen gilded conical steps stand vertically representing thirteen Bodhisattvas's ground. Then it holds a crest on it's pinion. As in the rest of the stupas, the yasti, wooden life pillar also has been pitted inside the Boudha Stupa.

Based on the Buddhist philosophy, the various parts of the Boudha Stupa symbolizes 5 elements. Thus, the plinth for earth, the dome for water, the thirteen steps for fire, the parasol for air and pinion for sky. In different period of Nepalese history Boudha Stupa was known as 'Khasau Cheta', 'Khase Chitasa', 'Khasa Chitha'. Now a days, Newars call it Khasti Chaitya and Tamangs know it as Khashyor Chorten. Whereas, since the ancient the Tibetans call it Jhyarung Khashyor.

UNESCO has enlisted Boudha Stupa in the World Heritage Site in 1979 A.D. Since then world has recognized it as a holy land. Now under the Nepal Government, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Shree Boudhanath Area Development Committee (BNADC) manages the preservation, maintenance and exposition of Boudhanath area. The committee also spends it's resources and time in preserving and developing the native culture and the heritage.

Though the Buddhists from around the world revere Boudhanath Stupa as the rarest jewel, it doesn't have an exact man's name who built it. Furthermore, it doesn't even have any archeological record concerning the exact time of laying the foundation.

Relying on the various chronologies, the oral tradition and the northern Himalayan Buddhists have traced the description about Boudha Stupa in the Guru Padmasambhava's Terma/Nidhigrantha, the Hidden Treasure Text. The present-day figure of stupa appeared only in the 16th century onwards after the renovation in that year.



History

Regarding the Boudha Stupa, Tibetan and Nepalese histories are the only sources. Guru Padmasambhava's Terma/Nidhigrantha, the Hidden Treasure Text had described it in an attempt to explain the history and its intrinsic value.

A widow, known as Jhyazima, a fowl herd wished to build a stupa from her saving. So, she asked the king for a piece of land. The king pleased with her wish, granted her the land she needed. Then she began her work of building a stupa along with her four husband's four sons and her servant. As the work progressed, the other people saw her work getting bigger and bigger day by day as a rare feat for her. They envied her. They even pleaded the king to command her to stop her work. But the king instead of listening to their plea, he praised the woman for carrying out her sacred deed. "I've said okay to work" (Jhya-ru-rung) "I've told through my mouth" (Khane-shyor) "a king spells out only once". The king saying them thus Jhyzima's work didn't stop.

Eventually, the Stupa got renowned with the name as Jhyarung Khasyor (okay to work spelt through the mouth). Unfortunately, Jhyazima couldn't finish the work in her lifetime. But her four sons and the servant including an elephant and a donkey continued the work till the end to fulfill her wish. The above story is told in the first chapter of the Terma.

Towards the last quarter of the eight-century, after the completion of Samye Monastery in Tibet, Padmasambhava consecrated the mandala and ordained his disciples. On the same ceremony he described the story of Jhyarung Khashyor during his sermon amidst the congregation where the king, the queen, the ministers and dakini (Yeshe Chogyal) and the laity. Guru Rinpoche proceeded further reminding that king Trisong Deuchen, Acharya Shantarakshit, Guru Padmasambhava himself and the inhabitant of Yarlung province, minister Bami Thiser were the four sons and the other minister Go Pema Ghungchen was the servant of Jhyazima in their past lives. This is mentioned in the 2nd chapter of the Terma.

While further delving into the story of the Boudha Stupa, various personalities who had built the stupa appear in the scene. The earliest Nepalese source is known as 'Gopalarajvamshavali' the chronicle recorded in the 14th century. According to this chronology, Shiva Deva-I, the Licchavi king (590-604 A.D.) was the first founder of 'Khasau cheta' as mentioned in the page 21 of the chronology.



The recorded Chronologies of the 19th century, 'Bhasavamshavali', Daniel Wright's chronology (History of Nepal) Nepalikabhupavamshavali and Devamalavamshavali have mentioned Bhupakeshari/Mandeva as the first man who had built Boudhanath Stupa.

According to these chronologies, the ancient Narayanhiti spout suddenly dried up. Then the astrologer advised the king Vishwadeva/Vikramakeshari if a man having thirty-two virtues would be sacrificed on the spout, then water would flow again. The king Vikramakeshari decided to sacrifice his own life in his son Bhupakeshari/Mandeva's hand in disguise. In order to perform the sacrifice, he commanded his son to slay the man who would sit above the spout on the fourth night. Mandeva obeyed his father's order. After slaying the figure with his sword without seeing the face, instantly water gushed out from the spout. Then he returned back to his palace. In the following morning, he was devastated after realizing he had committed a patricide. Then his mind slid into contrition. With remorse, he then darted towards his patriarchal deity Maniyogini (Vajrayogini) in Sankhu for repentance.

After listening to Mandeva, Maniyogini told him that his sin would be washed-out if he would build a boudha temple. Then she released a kaliz, pheasant and she told him to build it where the bird would land. Following her order, Mandeva started his work on the spot where the bird had landed.

But due to the sin he had committed, drought occurred for twelve years. So, the workers spread out sheets of clothes each night to collect water from the dew and wrung them in the following morning. Thus, the water collected from the dew was used to build the boudha temple. Finally, in the 12th year itself the work was complete. The Nepalese society believe the story that those two figures were Mandeva-I (464-505 A.D.), the Licchavi king and his father Dharmadeva.

Likewise, while we rely on Newari oral tradition, the Newari words Khasu+Ti, conjugated together becomes Khasti. 'Khasu' denotes dew and 'Ti' denotes drops. During the time of raising the stupa drought occurred. So, the workers spread out sheets of clothes in order to collect dew every night. Then in the following morning, they wrung the clothes to collect water. That water was used to build the stupa. The Newars call it Khasti even these days. The Stupa also is called the Dewdrop Stupa. It is known as Kashyapa Stupa too. For the Primordial Buddha Kashyapa's relics had been enshrined here.

A Brief History of Renovation



Although the history is obscure about the founder of the stupa, the search began along with its first rediscovery and renovation.

Ngakchang Shakya Zangpo of Nyingmapa lineage obtained Padmasambhava's Terma, the Hidden Treasure Text in 1512 A.D. from Samye Monastery. Relying on that Terma Text, he found himself in that text as the future renovator of the Boudhanath Stupa. After realizing that he set forth to Bhalhyul, Nepal from Tibet. Upon his arrival, he found the Stupa as a huge mound. He then unearthed it and raised it to the present-day figure. While excavating the stupa, he had discovered the relics belonging to the Licchavi king Amshuverma below the yasti, the life pillar. Afterwards, he exposed the relics to the public. The detailed stories are narrated in his biography. After his lifetime, his own four reincarnated Rinpoches continued the renovation and preservation of the Boudhanath Stupa. These stories can be traced in various texts belonging to the Himalayan Buddhism.

Moreover, the Malla kings during their reign contributed their resources for the preservation of the stupa. King Shiva Singh Malla (1587-1617 A.D.) renovated the stupa, King Pratap Malla (1641-1674 A.D.) offered a Gajur, the spine. While Lalipa Lama offered Gajur, on the same day king Nripendra Malla also offered Chapukusaa, a crest in 1678 A.D.

In 1680 A.D. Yogi Rangrik Repa renovated the stupa. In 1748 A.D. Katok Rigzin Rinpoche Chewang Norbu of Nyingma school, the inhabitant of eastern province of Tibet, renovated it and performed a consecration ritual. In 1821 A.D. Shakbar Chokdrul Rangdol renovated the stupa's steeple and spire with gilded copper sheets. Around 1918/19 A.D. Guru Tokden Shakya Shree contributed for the renovation of the stupa. Since he expired in the first phase of the renovation, his son and disciples completed the work.

In 1968 A.D. a thunder bolt struck the stupa. As a result, fire consumed the wooden pillar of the steeple and it was severely ruined. The natives of the Boudha area renovated it and replaced a new wooden pillar including a yasti the life pillar. That is documented as renovation of chhabisa saal (1969/70 A.D.).

Recently, the Boudha Stupa was severely damaged during the earthquake of April 25th, 2015 A.D. Boudhanath Area Development Committee initiated and led the renovation. Meanwhile, the department of Archeology of Nepal Government constantly supervised the work and guided the entire renovation work.

Stupa/Chaitya/Chorten

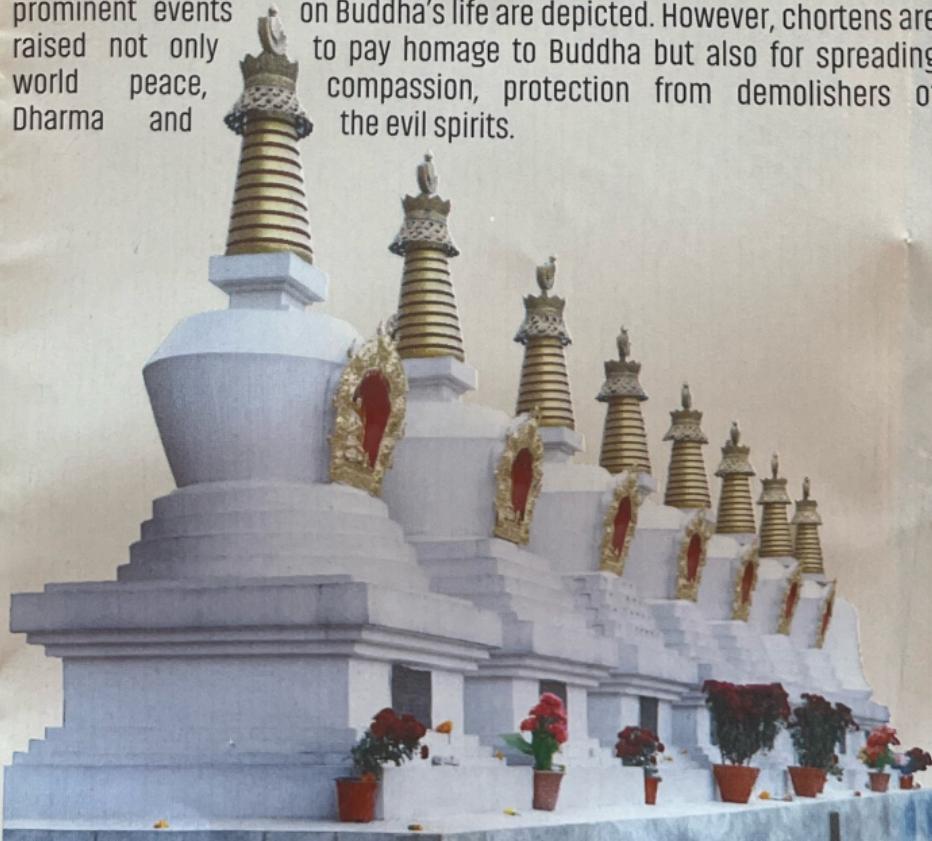
The stupa holds a prominent figure in Nepalese architecture. The term stupa is derived from Sanskrit and Thupa/Thube from Pali Language. Stupa denotes preserve/save/conserve, stow or to raise a memorial. The concept of stupa had already been rooted in the Vedic culture. During that period stupa was built in the memory of the prominent figures such as emperors. In the later period Buddhism also adopted it in order to pay homage to their enlightened beings (Arhat).

Buddha's disciples requested him about his memorial after his Mahaparinirvana. In response to their request, he suggested them to raise stupas on the crossroads in his memory just like the emperors. In the olden days, laying the relics in the center of a ground and a yasti, the wooden life pillar on it vertically, soil was heaved for a mound. Since then, such mounds represented the memorials of the enlightened Gurus and Buddhas. The relics of such enlightened souls would either be lost or decayed in due course of time if unkept. Therefore, stupas would preserve such relics also for safety. Besides that, the disciples and the laity would always feel closer to their enlightened ones.

In the manner, the stupas were raised as memorials of the Gurus, Arhat and Buddhas, chaityas were also raised to offer prayers and perform rituals. Since chitta, mind calms down and becomes serine after offering prayers or performing rituals in such sites, they were called chaitya.

According to an opinion, a stupa itself was believed to be an alternate form of chaitya. Yet in another opinion, it was believed, chaityas were raised on the cremation ground (chitaa). So, they were called chaitya. Although, both the terms stupa and chaitya differ in meaning and purpose, these days, both seem to identify with the same objective.

In the simple term, Himalayan Buddhism calls the stupa and chaitya as chorten. While raising a chorten in any specific chosen space, eight prominent events on Buddha's life are depicted. However, chortens are raised not only to pay homage to Buddha but also for spreading compassion, protection from demolishers of the evil spirits.



Tangible and Intangible Heritages

Mamthan

Chhwaskamuni Aji Temple

Himalayan Buddhism calls it Mamo Puska Siddhi, Newars call it Chhwaskaamuni Aji, Tamangs call it Mam. Her temple is attached to the stupa in the north. Externally, the deity casts her ferocious face. She is dressed up with vibrant dress, ornaments and beads but her inner figure shows her mouth with the intestine of a child which is on her lap. Regarding the deity, the Newar and the Himalayan Buddhist Society interpret their own kind of story relating to her. The Tamangs of Boudha worship her as the matriarchal-deity. The folks believe that she was enshrined along with the stupa as a guardian and protector of the Boudha Stupa and dwellers around.

Peace Park (Ghoilisang)

Ghoilisang denotes a pond just behind the stupa. The pond is situated to the north-west of the Boudhanath Stupa covering an area of 15,289.80 sq. fts. People believe that while raising the Boudhanath Stupa, the soil of the site was used. As the soil was removed from that space, later on, it turned into a pond. So, the pond bears a historical significance along with the stupa.



Teenchule

The name Teenchule is derived from the three boulders used as hearth-stones for holding up pans and pots for cooking meal for the workers in Boudhanath Stupa in the by gone days.

In order to preserve those hearth-stones, BNADC has installed a Buddha's statue beside them in a tiny temple. Besides that, a huge banyan tree stands on the crossroad signifying the history of the site located one km. away to the north of the stupa.

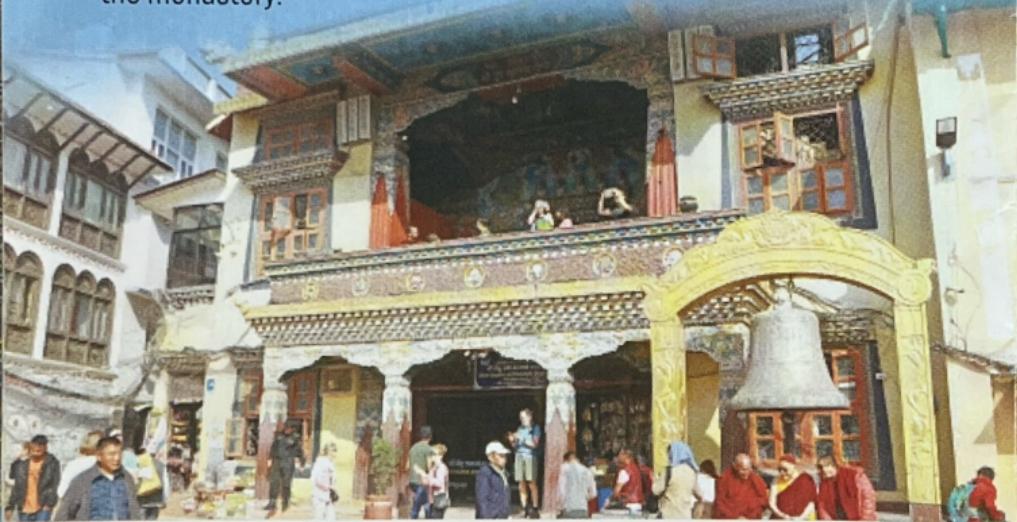


Monasteries of four schools around the Boudhanath Stupa

Nearly forty monasteries are established in the outskirts of Boudhanath area. However, only four traditional monasteries hold the space encircling the stupa.

Guru Lhakhang Monastery

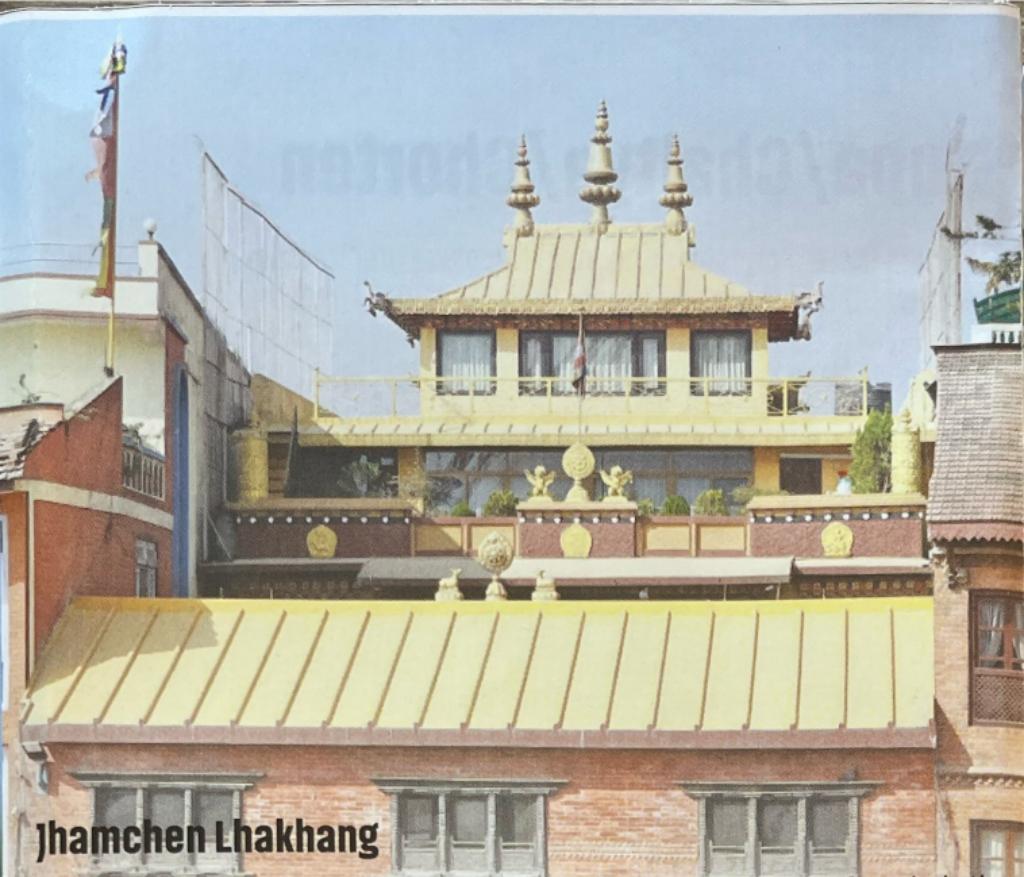
Lhakhang denotes a temple within the monastery. As one circles around the Boudha Stupa, one passes by the oldest monastery belonging to Nyingma tradition situated to the north of the stupa. The monastery has enshrined statues of Amitabha Buddha, Arya Avalokiteshvara, Guru Padmasambhava and other statues of Himalyan Buddhism. The Monastery follows the tradition of Nyingma and Jhyang Ter. The inhabitants of Boudha call it as the Tamang Gumba too. One gets the best view of the Boudha Stupa from the rooftop of the monastery.



Samteling Monastery

Venerable Rinpoche Kachen Yesi Gyaltsen founded the monastery. This is the first monastery which belongs to the Tibetan community. It follows Geluk tradition and performs rituals to venerate the three tantric deities. One sees the monastery to the east of Boudhanath Stupa.





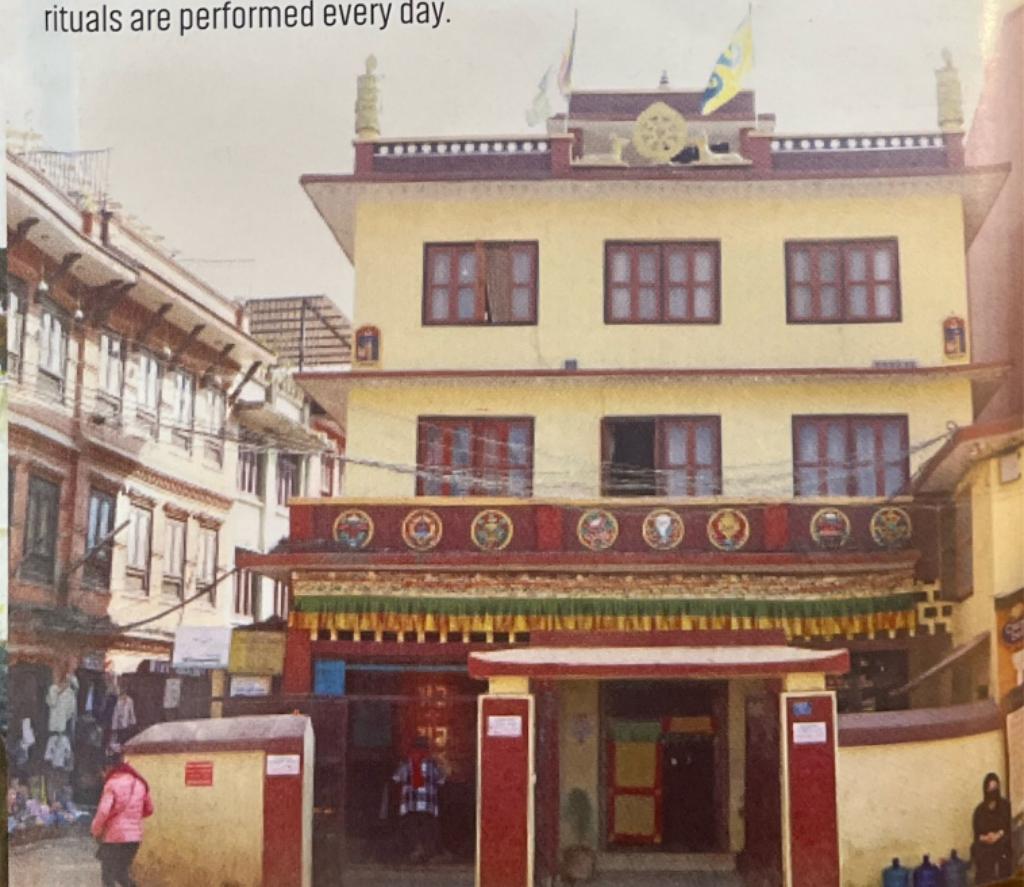
Jhamchen Lhakhang

Venerable Chyopge Thichen Rinpoche of Sakya tradition founded the monastery in 1986 A.D. The monastery has enshrined statue of Trikaal Maitreya Buddha (Gyalwa Jampa), the future Buddha. The monastery follows Sakya tradition of Himalayan Buddhism. As one meanders around the Boudha Stupa from the main gate, one finds the first monastery.

Dilyak Yevam / 1000 Buddha's Monastery

(Palri Tashi Migyur Dorje Gyaltsen Ling)

Venerable Rinpoche Dazang Ngeden Chhoeki Ngima Palsangpo founded the monastery in the Kagyu tradition in 1966 A.D. The monastery has enshrined thousand Budhhas. The Monastery is also known as Dhapsang monastery. It is situated to the north-east of the stupa on the way to Phulbari. Regular Dharma rituals are performed every day.



Festivals of Boudha Stupa

Mamla Jatra

This festival is celebrated on the full moon in the Nepali month of Magh (Jan./Feb.) in honor of Mamo Puska Siddhi/Chhwaskaamuni Aji/Mam. During this festival, the Mamo Puska Siddhi's statue is enthroned to a palanquin. The folks then carry the palanquin in their shoulder for the procession around the Boudha area. Some of the participants carry traditional torches in their hands to lead the procession.

After resting the deity back in her temple, they conclude the festival with the offerings and with a hearty feast. Natives believe that she protects the inhabitants of Boudha area from the evil.



Ropai Jatra

Paddy Plantation Festival

The folks celebrate the festival after finishing the paddy plantation, after the second day of Janai Purnima, the full moon of August. They celebrate it in the memory of their demised parents and relatives in the previous year.

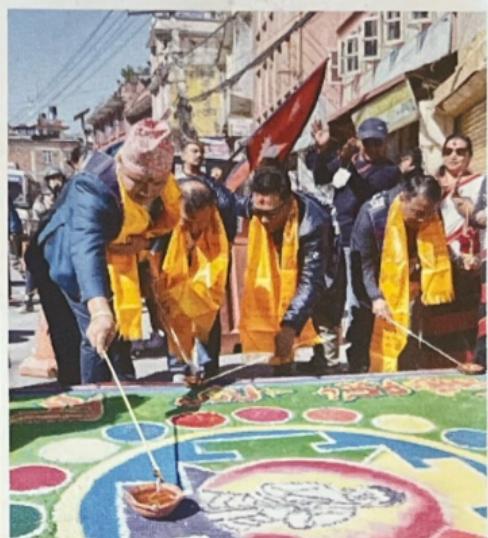
During the festival, the participants showcase their satirical performances mimicking as farmers, ploughers, dharma figures, cultural figures, politicians, actors/actresses and the people from all walks of life including the animals. BNADC honors the best performers with the trophies, medals and rewards. They also extend their heartfelt gratitude to the participants and the audience.



Chechu Puja

(The Tenth Day Ceremony Of Guru Padmasambhava)

According to the Himalayan Buddhist tradition every tenth day of every month is dedicated to Guru Padmasambhava in general. The people of Boudha also follow the same tradition. Besides that, the tenth day of the tenth month of each year, they dedicate the occasion to Guru Rinpoche for the grand celebration. On this day, the devotees perform rituals and offer prayers to honor Guru Padamsambhava. The ceremony falls every year in the month of Mangsir/Poush (Dec/Jan).

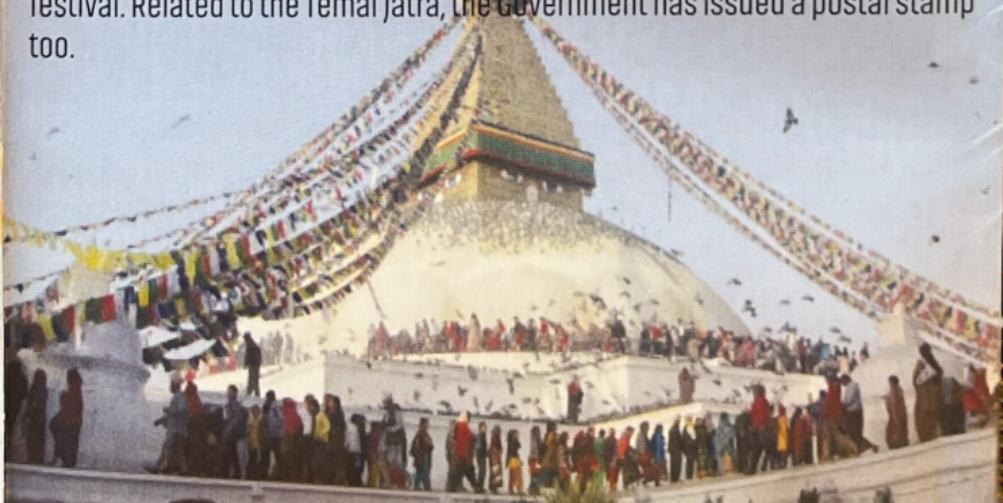


Losar

Lo denotes 'Year', Sar denotes 'New'. According to the Himalayan calendar, years are divided into twelve names of animals and a bird: mouse, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, bird, dragon, and pig. The year replaces the next name of the animal in Losar. The Himalayan Buddhist community such as Tamangs, Sherpas and Tibetans celebrate Losar welcoming the new year. Losar falls every year on the second half of January/February.

Temal Jatra

The Tamangs from Temal, Kabhare celebrate the festival on the day before Chaitra Purnima, the full moon of the March/April. On this day, they perform rituals for their deceased parents. Buddhists also celebrate the festival in the memory of Vipashvi Buddha for planting a Lotus in Nagadaha, the Lake in the Valley. Nepal Government has recently recognized the day as a national festival. Related to the Temal Jatra, the Government has issued a postal stamp too.





Buddha Jayanti

The festival falls every year during the full moon in the month of Baisakha, (April/May). The auspicious occasion is known as Gautam Buddha's birth, enlightenment and mahaparinirvana. So, the day also is called Tri-Samyog Diwas. On this day, BNADC organizes the occasion with sacred spirit of the festival. They carry the Buddha's statue and the procession follows it around the Boudha area.

Government of Nepal

Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation

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