



National Document on BUDDHIST CIRCUITS OF NEPAL

As a Premier Pilgrimage, Spiritual and Cultural Tourism Product





National Document on BUDDHIST CIRCUITS OF NEPAL

As a Premier Pilgrimage, Spiritual and Cultural Tourism Product



NATIONAL DOCUMENT ON BUDDHIST CIRCUITS OF NEPAL

2077 BS (2020 AD)

Published by:

Government of Nepal

Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation

Lumbini Development Trust

Sacred Garden Lumbini, Rupandehi, Lumbini Province, Nepal

www.lumbinidevtrust.gov.np

Printing Supported by:



**Oriental Cultural Heritage
Sites Protection Alliance**

ISBN: 978-9937-1-7128-1

All rights reserved

Advisors LDT:

Ven. Metteya Sakyaputta, Vice Chairman

Surendra Muni Shakya, Treasurer

Gyanin Rai, Officiating Member Secretary

Er. Saroj Bhattarai, Project Manager

Coordinator: Gyanin Rai

Study Team: Rabi Jung Pandey - Team Leader; Dr. Milan Ratna Shakya - Buddhist Culture Expert, Dr. Shailendra Thakali - Landscape Conservation & Inclusive Development Expert, Kai Weise - Heritage Conservation Expert/Planner, Ram Chandra Sedai - Tourism Expert, Vinaya Shakya - Promotion and Marketing Expert, Rajendra Thokar - Sociologist/Anthropologist/Linguist, Chhabi Lal Chhidi - GIS Specialist, Basant Maharjan - Culture Associate, Yubaraj Lama - Culture Associate, Samde Sherpa - Tourism Associate

Compiled by: Ram Chandra Sedai

Consulting Service: Mountain Heritage Private Limited and CEST Nepal, Kathmandu

LDT Field Mission Team: Mr. Krishna Bahadur KC, Mr. Dhruv Narayan Pandey, Mr. Rajan Basnet, Mr. Bhim Basnet, Mr. Chudamani Bhattarai, Mr. Kamalesh Verma, Mr. Giri Raj Gautam, Mr. Bikash Lama, Mr. Janak Banjara

Photo Credit: Bharat Bandhu Thapa, Ram C. Sedai, Samde Sherpa

Graphic Design: Colors Print and Production Pvt. Ltd.



Technical Advisory Group Members



1. Ven. Metteya Sakyaputa, Vice Chairman, Lumbini Development Trust
2. Vikchhu Nigrodh, Immediate Past Vice Chairman, LDT
3. Dr. Naresh Man Bajracharya, Vice Chancellor, Lumbini Buddhist University
4. Dr. Jiba Raj Pokharel, Vice Chancellor, NAST and Senior Architect
5. Surendra Muni Shakya, Treasurer, Lumbini Development Trust
6. Bharat Mani Subedi, Joint Secretary, Culture Division, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
7. Dandu Raj Ghimire, Joint Secretary, Planning Division, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
8. Ajit Man Tamang, Immediate Past Member Secretary, LDT
9. Bhesh Narayan Dahal, Director General, Department of Archaeology
10. Deepak Raj Joshi, Chief Executive Officer, Nepal Tourism Board
11. Narendra K. Gurung, Executive Director, Buddhist Philosophy Promotion & Gomba Management Committee
12. Deependra Purush Dhakal, Senior Planner/Policy Expert and Ex. Tourism Secretary
13. Kosh Prasad Acharya, Senior Archaeologist and Ex. DG -DoA
14. Basanta Bidari, Senior Archaeologist
15. Dr. Dhan Bahadur Kuwar, Senior Culture Expert
16. Tamla Ukyab, Senior Culture Expert
17. Dr. Ghana Shyam Gurung, Country Representative, WWF Nepal
18. Lisa Chhoegyal, Senior International Tourism Specialist
19. Prof. Dr. Hari Sharma, Senior Tourism Expert
20. Bikram Pandey, Promoter of Buddhist Circuits
21. Sunil Shakya, Chairperson, PATTA Nepal Chapter

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Study Team would like to acknowledge following institutions and individuals for their meaningful support and cooperation during the preparation of this national document.

- ❖ Relevant officials of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
- ❖ Relevant officials of the Lumbini Development Trust
- ❖ Members of Technical Advisory Group
- ❖ Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment (State No. 4, 5 and 6)
- ❖ Department of Archaeology
- ❖ Department of Tourism
- ❖ Nepal Tourism Board
- ❖ Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Monastery Development Committee
- ❖ Lumbini Buddhist University
- ❖ Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
- ❖ National Trust for Nature Conservation
- ❖ Respective District Coordination Committees
- ❖ Office of Lalitpur Metropolitan City and Office of Butwal Sub-metropolitan City
- ❖ Municipalities (Lumbini Cultural, Taulihawa, Siddharthanagar, Devadaha, Tillotamma, Ramagrama, Tansen, Birendranagar, Narayan, Dullu, Shankharapur, Dakchhinkali, Namobuddha, Bhaktapur, Bhimeshwor, Haleshi-Tuwachung, Dailekh, Diktel, Rupakot, Majhuwagadhi etc.)

- ❖ Rural Municipalities (Lo Mangthang, Helambu and Cispang-Nuwakot)
- ❖ Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ❖ Relevant District Chamber of Commerce and Industries
- ❖ Nepal Association of Tours and Travel Agencies
- ❖ Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal
- ❖ Hotel Association of Nepal
- ❖ Nepal Mountaineering Association
- ❖ Village Tourism Promotion Forum Nepal
- ❖ Homestay Association of Nepal
- ❖ Siddhartha Association of Tours and Travel Agencies, Rupandehi
- ❖ Siddhartha Hotel Association, Nepal, Rupandehi.
- ❖ UNESCO office Kathmandu, Nepal
- ❖ World Wildlife Fund, Nepal
- ❖ Buddhist Organizations (Associations, Viharas, Monasteries etc.)
- ❖ Dr. Ramesh Kumar Dhungel, Lumbini College of Buddhism and Himalayan Studies, Bouddha, Kathmandu
- ❖ Mr. Chet Nath Kanel, Tourism Expert
- ❖ Monks/Vhikchhus and Nuns
- ❖ Buddhist Heritage based Tour/Travel Operators/Entrepreneurs
- ❖ Individual Experts (consulted during the study)
- ❖ Communities and leaders of the respective sites (visited and consulted)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The specific goal of designing Buddhist Circuits of Nepal (BCN) is to promote Nepal as a world-class Buddhist pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism hub and to promote Lumbini as a national and international gateway destination for Buddhist pilgrimage. The broader objective of the study is to design the Buddhist heritage based circuits and sub-circuits as world-class pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism products based on the outcomes of the assessment of the Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal.

Under the guidance, supervision and facilitation from Lumbini Development Trust (LDT), the multidisciplinary study team prepared the national document by adopting the rigorous review and consultation process. The team was also backstopped by the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) composed of various relevant institutions and individual experts. The study team reviewed relevant literatures, visited major Buddhist heritage sites and consulted with the relevant stakeholders and actors at local, provincial and central level.

The National Document on Buddhist Circuits of Nepal has been divided into two main parts and five chapters. Part A consists of Chapter 1, 2 and 3, and deals with the background, study methodology, site assessment criteria and synopsis of the evolution and expansion of Buddhism, including Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage and cultural tourism. Part B consists of chapter 4 and 5, and elaborate the detail profile of selected Buddhist Circuits of Nepal along with the recommended actions and activities for the promotion of selected circuits.

So far, nine major circuits and three extended sub-circuits have been selected by connecting the significant Buddhist heritage sites. The significance of the site was assessed by using the three major criteria viz., (i) Value for Pilgrimage (Buddhist), Spirituality and Peace, (ii) Archaeological and Historical Value, and (iii) Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value.

Moreover, additional circuits and sub-circuits may also be added in the course of time, based on the outcomes of the further research and changes in the given scenarios, such as changes in the pattern of pilgrimage, changes in physical infrastructures (connectivity/access etc.), creation of new heritage assets and so on. The selected circuits include the following:

- i. Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC)
- ii. Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit to Mt. Kailash
- iii. Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit
- iv. Lumbini-Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit
- v. Tsum -Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit
- vi. Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit-Kathmandu Valley
- vii. Maratika (Haleshi)-Sailung-Timal Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit
- viii. Everest-Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit
- ix. Beyul Khempalung- Upper Arun- Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit

Key indicative actions and activities have been suggested for the implementation of the document along with the proposed implementation arrangement.



ABBREVIATIONS



ACAP	Annapurna Conservation Area Project
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AOAN	Airlines Operators Association of Nepal
BC	Buddhist Circuits
BCN	Buddhist Circuits of Nepal
BKUAUTBC	Beyul Khempalung Upper Arun Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit
BPPMDC	Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Monastery Development Committee
BZ	Buffer Zone
CA	Conservation Area
CAAN	Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal
CBS	Center Bureau of Statistics
CEST Nepal	Center for Environment and Sustainable Tourism Development Nepal
CNI	Confederation of Nepalese Industry
CSIO	Cottage and Small Industry Office
CSIDB	Cottage and Small Industry Development Board
DBBHC	Dolpa Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit
DCC	District Coordination Committee
DCCI	District Chamber of Commerce and Industry
DDC	District Development Committee
DFO	Divisional Forest Office
DHR	Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve
DoA	Department of Archaeology
DoI	Department of Immigration
DoR	Department of Road

DoT	Department of Tourism
DNPWC	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
DPP	District Periodic Plan
ERSBC	Everest Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FNCCI	Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry
FY	Fiscal Year
GBIA	Gautam Buddha International Airport
GCA	Gaurishankar Conservation Area
GHT	Great Himalaya Trail
GHTDP	Great Himalaya Trail Development Program
GLA	Greater Lumbini Area
GLBC	Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit
GoN	Government of Nepal
HAN	Hotel Association of Nepal
HOSAN	Homestay Association of Nepal
IABTO	International Association of Buddhist Tour Operators
IFC	International Finance Corporation
JFiT	Japanese Funds-in- Trust
KCA	Kanchenjunga Conservation Area
KMTAA	Kailash Manasarovar Tour Agents Association
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
KTMP	Kenzo Tange Master Plan
LBU	Lumbini Buddhist University
LCM	Lumbini Cultural Municipality
LCS	Lumbini Crane Sanctuary
LDT	Lumbini Development Trust
LDMP	Lumbini Development Master Plan

LLKBC	Lumbini Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit
LIRI	Lumbini International Research Institute
LNP	Langtang National Park
MBNP	Makalu Barun National Park
MCA	Manaslu Conservation Area
MICE	Meeting, Incentive, Conference and Events
MoCTCA	Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFE	Ministry of Forest and Environment
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoITFE	Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment
MoPIT	Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transportation
MoUD	Ministry of Urban Development
M/RM	Municipality/Rural Municipality
MSTPSMCC	Maratika (Haleshi) Sailung Timal Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit
NATHM	Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management
NAC	Nepal Airlines Corporation
NATTA	Nepal Association of Tours and Travel Agents
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NMA	Nepal Mountaineering Association
NMBC	Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit
NP	National Park
NTB	Nepal Tourism Board
NTNC	National Trust for Nature Conservation
NTS	Nepal Tourism Statistics
NTSP	National Tourism Strategic Plan
NTVA	Nepal Tourists Vehicles Association
OBOR	One Belt One Road

OMPHCH	Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit to Mt. Kailash
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
PA	Protected Area
REBAN	Restaurants and Bar Association of Nepal
RM	Rural Municipality
SATIDP	South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project
SATTA	Siddhartha Association of Tours and Travel Agencies
SHAN	Siddhartha Hotel Association, Nepal
SNP	Sagarmatha National Park
SNNP	Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park
SoTTO	Society of Travel and Tour Operators Nepal
SPNP	Shey Phoksundo National Park
TAAN	Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal
TAG	Technical Advisor Group
TAR	Tibetan Autonomous Region
TGDB	Tara Gaon Development Board
TIA	Tourism Industry Association
TMJ	Tinjure Milke Jaljale
TNVSKE	Tsum Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit
TRPAP	Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme
TURGAN	Tourist Guides Association of Nepal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USP	Unique Selling Propositions/Unique Selling Points
VITOF	Village Tourism Promotion Forum Nepal
WHS	World Heritage Site
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
Executive Summary	vi
Abbreviations	viii
Table of Contents	ix

PART A: BACKGROUND STUDY PART 1

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background	2
1.2 Rationale of the Study	3
1.3 Objective of the Study	7
1.4 Study Areas	7
1.5 Beneficiaries and Users	8
1.6 Structure of the Report	10
1.7 Study Limitations	11

Chapter 2: Study Approach And Methodologies

2.1 The Study Approach	12
2.2 Criteria Used for Assessing the Significance of Buddhist Heritage Sites	13
2.3 Study Methodologies and Tools	22
2.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation	27

Chapter 3: Overview Of Buddhism And Buddhist Heritage Based Pilgrimage

3.1	Evolution of Buddhism and Buddhist Canons/Schools	29
3.2	Dissemination and Expansion of Buddhism	55
3.3	Buddhist Heritage based Pilgrimage and Cultural Tourism	92

PART B: SELECTED BUDDHIST CIRCUITS

Chapter 4: Selected Buddhist Circuits

4.1	Selection of Buddhist Circuits and Sub-Circuits	114
4.2	Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC)	120
4.3	Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit to Mt. Kailash	158
4.4	Dolpa Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit	186
4.5	Lumbini - Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit	211
4.6	Tsum - Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit	241
4.7	Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit- Kathmandu Valley	260
4.8	Maratika (Haleshi) Sailung Timal Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit	352
4.9	Everest - Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit	371
4.10	Beyul Khempalung -Upper Arun-Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit	396

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

5.1 Implementation Arrangement for the National Document on BCN	415
5.2 Overall Actions and Activities	418
5.3 Circuit based Actions and Activities	428

***REFERENCES* 449**

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 : Chronology of Development and Expansion of Buddhism	38
Table 2 : Comparative number of Buddhist population in selected countries	95
Table 3 : Countries with share of Global Buddhist Population	97
Table 4 : Visitor Arrival in Major Buddhist Sites of India (2011 to 2017)	104
Table 5 : Visitor Arrival in Lumbini (2011 to 2017)	106

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1 : Buddhist Circuits of Nepal (BCN)	118
Map 2 : Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC)	124
Map 3 : Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit to Mt. Kailash	161

Map 4 :	Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit	188
Map 5 :	Lumbini - Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit	214
Map 6 :	Tsum - Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit	242
Map 7 :	Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit - Kathmandu Valley	264
Map 8 :	Maratika (Haleshi) - Sailung - Timal Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit	350
Map 9 :	Everest - Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit	372
Map 10 :	Beyul Khempalung - Upper Arun - Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit	394

LIST OF FIGURE

Figure 1 :	Step by Step Study Framework	12
------------	------------------------------	----

LIST OF BOX

Box 1 :	Beyuls (The Hidden Valleys) Concealed by Padmasambhava	15
Box 2 :	Sacred Meditation Caves of Milarepa	17
Box 3 :	List of Buddhist Routes Proposed by Dr. Silva	98
Box 4 :	The Lumbini Development Master Plan, 1978 AD	152
Box 5 :	Mount Kailash and Manasarovar	178
Box 6 :	The Kabum Chorten of Lo Kingdom	229

PART A

**BACKGROUND
STUDY PART**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Background*

- ✿ Endowed with the beautiful natural landscape and the world's highest mountain-Mt. Everest, the Himalayan nation, Nepal is equally blessed with the cultural heritage sites of outstanding universal values. Nepal, being the birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha and blessed with authentic and never-discontinued Buddhist rituals and incredibly rich Buddhist architectures bears huge potentials to offer a world-class pilgrimage, spiritual, and cultural experience to about 550 million global Buddhist population plus other peace lovers and cultural explorers, while contributing tremendously to the local, regional and national economies.
- ✿ Since the very beginning of 1970s, the Government of Nepal, in association with United Nations (UN), has been undertaking various efforts to restore, preserve and promote Lumbini as a global pilgrimage and a cultural and spiritual tourism hub. Under the patronage and guidance of Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA), and in close coordination and collaboration with the Department of Archaeology (DoA), Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and other relevant public and private sector institutions, Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) has been tirelessly working for the preservation and promotion of Lumbini area, including implementation of the Lumbini Development Master Plan (also called Kenzo Tange Master Plan) since its establishment in 1985. In recent years, initiatives have also been

undertaken to develop and promote equally important other significant historical and spiritual sites in the Greater Lumbini Area (GLA), including Ancient Kapilavastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama.

- ✿ Realizing the fact that there is much more to do to tap the still untapped huge potentials of Nepal's significant Buddhist heritage sites to be promoted as a world-class premier pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism product, the Government of Nepal/MoCTCA- Lumbini Development Trust has prepared this document entitled "National Document on Buddhist Circuits of Nepal (BCN)". Besides promoting Lumbini as a global pilgrimage and spiritual hub, the report aims to mainstream and promote other equally potential Buddhist heritage sites of the country which are still lagging behind in-terms of pilgrimage and cultural/spiritual tourism development. As a national document, this document will govern, guide and facilitate the development and promotion of BCN as one of the flagship and premier pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism products of the country.

1.2. *Rationale of the Study*

- ✿ Nepal, being the country of the birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha, has a huge potential to be promoted as a world premier destination for pilgrimage, spirituality and peace. Despite having significant potentials for promoting pilgrimage and cultural tourism, and contributing to the regional and national economy, Nepal's rich tangible and intangible Buddhist heritage sites remained neglected for centuries due to several reasons, including poor realization of the significance of these heritages, inadequate efforts for excavation and preservation of heritage sites, poor infrastructures and inadequate promotion of these sites as product. Moreover, several heritage sites are still under the threat of further deterioration and degradation primarily due to the unplanned development activities and inadequate investment for preservation and safeguarding of these historic sites and monuments. In recent years, well-planned tourism has widely been recognised as a strong tool for economic development and conservation of natural and cultural heritages. Whereas, unplanned tourism may pose many challenges

to the sustainability of cultural heritage, well planned heritage-based pilgrimage and culture tourism can bring many positive opportunities to the area, including safeguarding the heritage sites and uplifting socio-economic conditions of the resident communities who have been enriching, preserving and safeguarding those heritages.

- ✿ Moreover, the popularity of cultural and spiritual tourism is globally increasing at a faster pace than most of the other segments. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has already acknowledged and highlighted the positive contributions of cultural tourism for the socio-economic development of a country and has adopted cultural tourism and its sustainable development as one of the focus agendas of UNWTO since the early seventies.
- ✿ Accordingly, the Second UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture (with title- Fostering Sustainable Development) held in Muscat of Oman from 11 to 12 December 2017, has explored ways to build and strengthen partnerships between the tourism and culture sectors, and enhance their role in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, reflecting upon the outcomes of the First World Conference, held in Siem Reap, Cambodia in February 2015.
- ✿ Asia Pacific is both the destination as well as the market for Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage and cultural tourism. There is a high potential for tourism to grow in Asia and Pacific region, including cultural tourism. UNWTO has predicted that Asia and the Pacific will be the fastest growing outbound region between 2010-2030. In 2017, the annual growth in international visitor arrivals to the Asia Pacific region reached 6% or 324 million international tourist arrivals. Likewise, the South Asia only experienced a healthy 10% growth in 2017 (UNWTO 2018).
- ✿ In recent decades, the efforts for promoting themes and routes-based pilgrimage, spirituality and cultural activities have gained a substantial attention in the tourism industry worldwide. The Ancient Silk Road Corridor which has been rapidly progressing with its well-crafted trans-national tourism partnerships, frameworks and products, can be

taken as one of the good examples of theme/route based product in the recent decades. Also acclaimed to be the ‘greatest route in the history of mankind’, the ancient Silk Road formed the first bridge between the East and the West, and was an important vehicle for trade between the ancient empires of China, Central and Western Asia, the Indian sub-continent and Rome. As routes of integration, exchange and dialogue, the Silk Road contributed greatly to the common prosperity and development of humankind for almost two millennia. With its richly diverse cultural heritage and its wealth of natural tourism attractions spanning across thousands of kilometres of ancient routes, the Silk Road today offers visitors the opportunity to experience a unique network of destinations linked by a shared history. By venturing along the ancient Silk Road, visitors can walk along the footsteps of famed explorers such as Alexander the Great and Marco Polo (www.silkroad-infosystem.org).

- ✿ The Ancient Silk Route was one of the best platforms for the expansion of Buddhism. Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage and spiritual journeys, which used to happen up to the Greece in the west almost overlapping the ancient Silk Road and to Korea and Japan to the east, during the first ten hundred years of the Christian Era, has again gained a attention remarkably during recent decades. Accordingly, countries in the South and Southeast Asia, including, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand etc. have already initiated efforts to explore, revive and promote the ancient and historic Buddhist heritage trails used by many Buddhist masters, explorers, pilgrims, Mahasiddhas and enlightened ones, including Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ✿ Whereas Lumbini, the birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha has already started gaining popularity among the major Buddhist countries and rest of the world; other equally important Buddhist heritage sites of the surrounding of Lumbini and the entire country are still awaiting for the planned efforts for their better preservation and promotion as a sacred pilgrimage site and a cultural tourism destinations.
- ✿ Under such circumstances, the rationale behind the preparation of the national document on Buddhist Circuits of Nepal is to promote Nepal

as a premier destination for Buddhist pilgrimage, spirituality and peace while at the same time contributing towards the preservation and safeguarding of those heritage sites adequately and appropriately.

- ✿ The specific goal of designing Buddhist Circuits of Nepal (BCN) is to **promote Nepal** as a world-class Buddhist pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism hub and to **promote Lumbini** as a national and international gateway destination for Buddhist pilgrimage.
- ✿ The national document will be serving as a guiding policy document for the Government of Nepal, relevant Provincial Governments, Local Governments, and other relevant stakeholders and actors to excel the efforts towards the promotion of significant Buddhist heritage sites by fostering trans-provinces (within the country) and trans-national cooperation and collaboration for designing and executing the appropriate products, frameworks and strategies. The national document will be able to provide a clearly defined spatial context for the development of strategies for the promotion of Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage and tourism in Nepal.
- ✿ In addition, to attract higher number of domestic and sub-regional pilgrims, the higher value international Buddhist and other special interest tourist segment can also be attracted in the Buddhist circuits by re-vitalizing the historical pilgrimage.
- ✿ Connecting all significant Buddhist sites with Lumbini as circuit (s) and sub-circuit (s) may result tremendous spiritual, cultural and economic benefits to the local, provincial and federal governments. The BCN national document will also serve to draw the attention of global markets, and the countries rich in Buddhist heritage sites in fostering cooperation and collaboration for the development and joint-promotion of trans-national Mega Buddhist Circuits and Sub-circuit (s). Re-vitalization of the historical pilgrimage routes and creation of 21st Century new pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural routes with the improved national and transnational road/rail/water connectivity across the regions can foster the flow of pilgrims and visitors in this region.

1.3. *Objective of the Study*

- ✿ The broader objective of the study is to design the Buddhist heritage based circuits and sub-circuits as world-class pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism products based on the outcomes of the assessment of the Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal.
- ✿ To achieve the broader objective, the study includes the following specific objectives:
 - ✿ To explore and document the major Buddhist heritage sites of outstandingly remarkable pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism value.
 - ✿ To assess the existing conditions as well as future development potentials of the selected Buddhist heritage as pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism product (s) and experiences.
 - ✿ To prescribe the highly competitive pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism products as circuit (s) and sub-circuit (s) with suggested activities, packages, and itineraries, as appropriate.
 - ✿ To recommend frameworks, strategies, and actions for the development, promotion and preservation of the selected Buddhist sites as circuit (s) and sub-circuit (s).

1.4. *Study Areas*

- ✿ Keeping Lumbini at the center, the team studied the potentials of all other significant Buddhist heritage sites of the country to be connected as circuit(s) and sub-circuit(s). Besides studying the significant Buddhist heritage sites in the Greater Lumbini Area, the other significant heritage sites explored and assessed by the study team include sites in the Nepal Mandala (Kathmandu Valley and adjoining areas), sites in the Western Himalayan Region, including Humla, Mugu, Dolpa, Jumla, Dailekh and Dolpa; sites in the Central Himalayan Region, including Mustang, Manang, Manaslu (Nubri and Tsum Valley), Ganesh Himal, Rasuwa/Langtang, Nuwakot, Helambu, Kavre-Timal area, and sites in the Eastern Himalayan Region, including Sailung, Charikot, Bigu, Lapchi, Jiri, Rolwaling, Khumbu (Everest) Valley, Junbesi, Maratika (Haleshi),

Mera Valley, Barun Valley, Upper Arun and Upper Tamor and Ghunsa in the Kanchenjunga region.

- ✿ The study also explored the opportunities for connecting the selected Buddhist circuits and sub-circuits with the significant Buddhist heritage sites located in the Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Uttarakhand State in the Northern part of India, and Kailash Manasarovar in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China.

1.5. Beneficiaries and Users

1.5.1. Beneficiaries of the National Document on BCN

- ✿ At destination level; the local residents, relevant religious and faith-based organizations, tourism entrepreneurs, service providers etc. will be the primary beneficiaries of the outcomes of this document, upon its full implementation.
- ✿ Likewise, at local, provincial, national and international level; members of travel-trade fraternity, relevant service providers, and religious organizations will be the beneficiaries of the outcomes of this document.
- ✿ Whereas the governments at various level can receive the increased revenue through tourism in the long term, the selected circuits and sub-circuits will offer private sectors a very promising business opportunities for investing in tourism and pilgrimage related infrastructures facilities and services such as connectivity/access & transport related infrastructures; accommodation and food related infrastructures; communication related infrastructures; spiritual & wellness related infrastructures, and so on. Private sector may also find this document useful for making investment in Buddhist heritage related products such as gastronomy, traditional handicrafts, music and art performance and so on.

1.5.2. Users of the National Document on BCN

- ✿ Government of Nepal/Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation will be the primary owner and implementing agency of this national



document. Under the patronage, guidance and supervision of MoCTCA, and in association with Department of Archaeology (DoA), Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), relevant provincial governments, relevant local governments, academic and research institutions, tourism industry associations (TIAs) and relevant religious organizations; Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) and Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Monastery Development Committee (BPPMDC), will be the technical focal institutions for the further development, promotion and preservation of Buddhist heritage sites connected by the proposed circuits and sub-circuits.

- ❁ As a national tourism promotion organization, Nepal Tourism Board, together with the relevant tourism industry associations, operators and Buddhist organizations, will use this document for the promotion of Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage, spirituality and cultural tourism products in the priority domestic and international markets.
- ❁ Tourism industry associations such as Nepal Association of Tours and Travel Agencies (NATTA), Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal (TAAN) etc., Buddhist heritage focused travel/tour operators, and hotel operators can use this document for developing and promoting Buddhist pilgrimage, spirituality and cultural experience based tour packages and itineraries delivering the high quality visitor experiences using the authentic and consistent information on Buddhist heritage sites.
- ❁ Respective provincial governments, provincial tourism ministries, and other relevant ministries/departments can use this document for further planning, development and promotion of Buddhist heritage based tourism, pilgrimage and spirituality related products and activities in their respective provinces.
- ❁ Concerned District Coordination Committees (DCCs), rural municipalities (RMs), and municipalities may also find this document useful for district and site level planning, development and promotion of Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage, spirituality and cultural tourism.

- ✿ This document may also be useful for the relevant protected area (PA) management authorities in promoting heritage based tourism and preserving these heritage sites.
- ✿ Relevant destination communities, Buddhist organizations, faith based organizations and heritage related conservation committees can use this document for the preservation of their heritage sites and monuments while promoting pilgrimage and tourism. Development partners, conservation partners and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also use this document for undertaking preservation and safeguarding of the Buddhist heritage sites while promoting heritage based tourism activities and supporting the livelihoods of the locals.
- ✿ This document can be taken as a useful reference document by the universities, research institutions, college, schools, individual researchers and learners for learning about the Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal and doing further research/study on the same.

1.6. *Structure of the Report*

- ✿ The National Document on Buddhist Circuits of Nepal has been divided into **two main parts** and **five chapters**. Part A consists of Chapter 1, 2 and 3, and deals with the background, study methodology, site assessment criteria and synopsis of the evolution and expansion of Buddhism, including Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage and cultural tourism. Part B consists of chapter 4 and 5, and elaborate the detail profile of selected Buddhist Circuits of Nepal along with the recommended actions and activities for the promotion of selected circuits.
- ✿ Chapter one presents the context and approach of the study including rationale, objective, study areas, beneficiaries/users, structure of the report and limitations of the study.
- ✿ Chapter two of the report presents the outcomes of the literature review on the brief history and expansion of Buddhism and Buddhist teachings from the time of the historical Shakyamuni Buddha to the present day including the modern Buddhism pilgrimage and tourism.



- ❁ Chapter three consists the key criteria used by the study team for the assessment of the significance of the Buddhist heritage sites. Contents included in this chapter also include the summary of selected circuits and sub-circuits.
- ❁ Chapter four of this report entails the detail profile of selected Buddhist Circuits and Sub-circuit (s).
- ❁ Chapter five presents the indicative actions and activities for the development, promotion and conservation of the proposed circuit (s) and sub-circuit (s).

1.7. Study Limitations

- i. The study was completed in a relatively very short period of time.
- ii. The information related to the Buddhist heritage sites included in this report were collected primarily through various secondary sources such as available books, reports, chronicles, established myths, oral traditions and versions of the local stakeholders under verification during the field observations and consultative workshops. Almost all selected sites in this document are the already known or exposed sites and no any form of archaeological survey was made by the study team to confirm the archaeological and historical significance of the sites included in this document.



CHAPTER 2

STUDY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGIES

2.1. *The Study Approach*

- i. Mobilization of Multidisciplinary Study Team: A multidisciplinary study team consisting of tourism planners, Buddhist culture experts, cultural heritage and landscape conservation experts, marketing expert, GIS expert etc. was mobilized by Lumbini Development Trust to carry out this study.

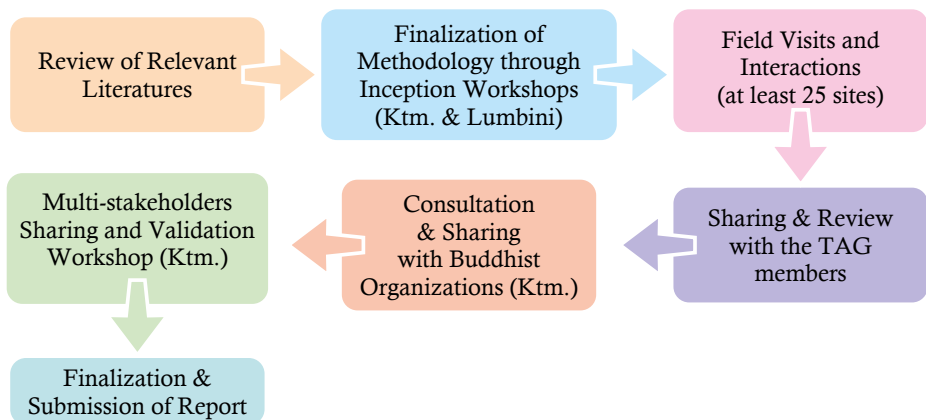


Figure-1: Step by Step Study Framework

- ii. Guidance, Supervision and Facilitation from LDT: The study work was carried out under the technical guidance and close supervision of Lumbini



Development Trust. LDT also designated its Senior Administrative Officer as Coordinator for maintaining smooth coordination with all relevant stakeholders and actors, including MoCTCA, DoA, NTB, Tourism Industry Associations (TIAs) etc. as well as facilitating the field works.

- iii. Backstopping through Technical Advisory Group: Moreover, a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was formed by Lumbini Development Trust. TAG consisted of various institutions and individual expert members and provided technical feedback to the study team and reviewed the outcomes of the study at various stages.
- iv. Multi-stakeholders Consultations and Sharing: The study team prepared the document through rigorous consultations and sharing with the various stakeholders and actors at central, provincial and local level during the various stages of the study.

2.2. Criteria Used for Assessing the Significance of Buddhist Heritage Sites

- ✿ The circuits and sub-circuits were designed by connecting the outstandingly significant Buddhist heritage sites of pilgrimage, spiritual, archaeological, historical, cultural and natural landscape value. And, the significance of the Buddhist heritage sites were assessed by using various criteria under the three broader categories, including (i) Pilgrimage (by Buddhist followers), Spirituality and Peace Value, (ii) Archaeological and Historical Richness, (iii) Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value. Moreover, the presence of sites with religious and cultural value of other religious groups (Non-Buddhist), as well as the presence of sites with outstanding natural landscape and rich biodiversity have also been considered as an added value for the area to be considered for the proposed Buddhist circuits and sub-circuits.

2.2.1. Pilgrimage (Buddhist), Spirituality and Peace

- ✿ The value of the site for pilgrimage, spirituality and peace was ranked highest while assessing the significance of the Buddhist heritage site. In

particular, the following key attributes were considered to be the most significant criteria under the category of pilgrimage, spirituality and peace:

- ❁ The sacred birthplace and footprint of Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ❁ Sites associated with the mythological arrival of Adi-Buddha and Bodhisattvas.
- ❁ The birthplace and footprint of other historic Buddhas (Manusi Buddhas) such as Krakuchhanda Buddha and Kanakamuni Buddha.
- ❁ Previous birthplace (s) of Siddhartha (or Gautam Buddha) as described by Jataka Avadanas (The narratives of previous birth of the Buddha), such as Namo Buddhha, Manichud etc.
- ❁ Sacred path followed by Prince Siddhartha during his Renunciation (Mahavinishkramana), including the path started from the Eastern Gate of ancient Kapilavastu Palace.
- ❁ Sacred path followed by Queen Mayadevi during her maternity travel to Lumbini Garden from the ancient Kapilavastu.
- ❁ Sites used for sacred **retreat/rainy season (s)** and sites where important Buddhist Manuscript were believed to have written/preached by the Buddha.
- ❁ Sacred sites containing the body relics of Shakyamuni Buddha, such as Ramagrama Stupa (in Parasi).
- ❁ Other ancient viharas, stupas and Buddhist monumental sites that have now become a center for sacred pilgrimage, spiritual and peace.
- ❁ Contemporary Buddhist heritage sites and trails containing spiritual and peace value. This may include spiritual and meditation centers.
- ❁ The perfected meditation sites such as Haleshi (Maratika), Asura Cave (Pharping), Chyungsi Cave (Upper Mustang) etc. of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche). Sacred footprints of Padmasambhava within Nepal, across Nepal-India and across Nepal-Tibet.



Sites associated with the sacred Behyul (Hidden Valleys/Lands) of Guru Rinpoche.

Box-1: Beyuls (The Hidden Valleys) Concealed by Padmasambhava

Beyuls (sbas yul) are the sacred hidden valleys with the texts and precious objects concealed as **treasures or termas** and sealed them off by Guru Rinpoche as places of refuge for the people of future generations (Ven. Jamyang Wangmo 2008). It is believed that the famed Kalachakra teachings were also hidden in Shambhala itself, until their re-emergence in Tibet in the 10th or 11th century (Hoivik S. 2007).

Beyuls are the sacred hidden valleys in the Himalayan region, especially along the Tibetan border, with treasure texts concealed by Guru Padmasambhava to remain safe until the advent of the right time and the right person (treasure finders). Padmasambhava said that beyuls would be the safest place for Buddhism at the time of conflict. These sacred places would be places of refuge where followers of Buddhism could meditate and worship peacefully in future time of conflict and war. Padmasambhava is believed to have visited the beyul valleys and performed a meditation. During his meditation, he is said to have subjugated all of the witches, ghosts and spirits of the area. They became his disciples and pleased to support his other disciples and pilgrims as a protecting deity.

Only persons of pure heart and true faith, called **terton** or Treasure revealer, can understand and appreciate a beyul. Some valleys were already opened by tertons whereas others await the future, and are remaining as sites of immense spiritual importance. Hidden valleys have four levels-outer, inner, secret and ultimate. Some of the outer and inner levels have already been opened. The secret levels, however, are extremely difficult to penetrate. As for the ultimate hidden valleys, they are the places of absolute reality and do not refer to a concrete physical place (Hoivik S. 2007).

The objective of these beyuls was to provide refuge to the followers of Buddhist faith at time of difficulty. These are places where pilgrims

could go and be freed from the troubles of the outside world or escape to when war threatened their doctrine (Rainhard, 1978). Pilgrims visit such beyul simply to gain merit or to have their wishes fulfilled whereas, monks and nuns go to meditate there. A formal but complete ritual must be performed before entering the beyul site.

Terton Rigdzin Go- Demchen (Rig' dzin Rgod [kyi] idem [phru] can; 1337-1409) is credited to have discovered (or revealed) the Northern Treasure that contains various treasure texts (Termas) and prophecies related to hidden valleys in 1366 AD. The number of these beyul is uncertain. According to Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, there are as many as 108 "hidden valleys" throughout the Himalayas (Hoivik S. 2007); however, other texts mention only seven. The Rinpoche of Thyangboche Monastery (Everest region, Nepal) felt that there might be as many as twenty beyul scattered through the Himalayas. Furthermore, the possibility exists that some beyul have not as yet been revealed as such while in some regions there may be several contenders to the appellation of beyul (Reinhard J Kailash)

The Out of seven Beyuls revealed by tertons as of now, five are in Nepal Himalayas, that include Kyimolung (Tsum.Nubri), Namgo Dagam (Langtang), Yolmo Gang-ra (Helambu), Khandro Rolwaling (Rolwaling), and Khenpalung. Remaining two Beyuls are Demojong (in Sikkim) and Pemako (in southern Tibet, border areas of TAR China and India).

Kathang Denga which is composed of five kathangs consists of Padmasambhava's bibliography. Text on Pema Kathang describes the sites associated with beyul, hidden valleys concealed by Padmasambhava in and around the Himalayas.



Perfecting meditation caves and footprints Milarepa, including 20 sacred caves; Four Larger Well Known Caves (such as Lapchi) and Four Larger Unknown Caves (such as Phurgon Phug in Tsum valley).

Box-2: Sacred Meditation Caves of Milarepa

The sacred meditative caves and fortress of Milarepa are of great pilgrimage and spiritual value particularly for the followers of Himalayan Buddhism. There are altogether **20 sacred caves** of Milarepa, including Six Outer Well-known Caves, including Dragkar Taso Uma Dzong or White Rock Horse Tooth Teeth (in Mangyul/Kerung); Six Inner Unknown Caves (in high cliffs), including Chonglung Khyungi Dzong; Six Secret (or hidden) Caves, including Tag Phug Senge Dzong (Hyolmo), plus Two more caves.

Amongst the 20 sacred caves, four larger well-known caves and four larger unknown caves have special pilgrimage and spiritual value. Four Larger Well-known caves include (i) Nyanam Tropa Phug (Stomach like cave of Nyanam), (ii) **Lapchi Duddul Phug** (Cave where Demons were defeated in Lapchi), (iii) Brin Briche Phug (Yak Cow Tongue Cave in Brin) and (iv) Tise Dzu Trul Phug (Miracle Cave in Mt. Kailash). Likewise Four Larger Unknown caves include (i) Tsayi Kangtsu Phug (Kangtsu Phug of Kyanga Tsa), (ii) Odsal Phug (Cave of the clear light of Ron) (iii) Zawog Phug (Cave of Silk) of Rola and (iv) **Phurgon Phug** (Pigeon Cave) of Kuthang or Chhekam.

Milarepa made hermitage to these sacred caves and fortresses, more frequently to Dragkar Taso (Mangyul), Lapchi, Yolmo Gangri, Gungthang Mangyul, Lapchi, and Tise (Kailash); entered into solitary meditation; attained great perfection and later blessed these sites eventually converting these sites as a holy pilgrimage sites for acquiring merit. At Mount Tise, Milarepa met Dampa Gya Phupa and triumphed over the magical Naro Bon Chung by the display of his magical powers.

Out of 20 sacred caves of Milarepa, three are included from Nepal Himalaya, including **Lapchi Duddul Phug** (one out of Four Larger Well Known Caves) and **Phurgon Phug** in Kuthang, Tsum Valley (one out of Four Larger Unknown Caves) and **Tag Phug Senge Dzong** of Hyolmo (one out of Six Secret Caves) are . Other equally significant important caves and fortress where Jetsun Milarepa used to visit frequently include Singla forest in **Yolmo Kangra** (Helambu),

Nyishang Gurta La (Manang) where he met Khyira Repa (Hunter Repa), and Lhasa Paku (Sudal, Bhaktapur).

- ❁ The perfected meditation sites and sacred pilgrimage routes followed by Nepalese Buddhist Mahasiddhas, masters/pundits, and yogis such as Buddhahadra, Bagishwarakriti (Phamthimpa), Sri Santibhadra, Lila Bhadra, Garab Dorje etc.
- ❁ The perfected meditation sites and sacred pilgrimage routes followed by Indian Buddhist Mahasiddhas, masters/pundits, and yogis such as Nagarjuna, Santaraksita, Atisha Dipankara, Tilopa, Naropa, Virupa etc.
- ❁ The perfected meditation sites and sacred pilgrimage routes followed by Tibetan Buddhist Mahasiddhas, masters/pundits, and yogis such as Marpha, Milarepa Dharmaswamin etc.

2.2.2. Archaeological and Historical Value

- ❁ Historical events and archaeological sites (mostly tangible) with (or without) inscriptions associated with the evolution and propagation of Buddhism, Buddha Dharma and Buddhist Philosophy were taken as the second most significant criteria for assessing the significance of the sites to be included in the proposed Buddhist Circuits and sub-circuits. Key attributes considered to be the most significant criteria under this category, include the following:
- ❁ Historical sites and archaeological monuments depicting the birthplace (s) of Shakyamuni Buddha and other previous Buddhas. These sites may also contain epigraphic evidences such as stone pillar inscriptions, copper inscriptions, cave edicts etc. Ashokan Pillars are the most visible and globally accepted epigraphic evidences that signify and validate the birthplace (s) of Buddha (s).
- ❁ Ancient chaityas, stupas, viharas, monasteries, chhortens, maniwalls etc. constructed by the emperors, kings, and Buddhist masters and mahasiddhas during the course of the evolution and propagation of Buddhism across many centuries through Gopala, Kirat, Lichchavi, Thakuri, Malla and Shah dynasties. Swoyambhu Chaitya, Guh Vihara



(Sankhu Vajrayogini) and four Ashokan Stupas in Patan city are some of the good examples of this criteria. For most of the Buddhist scriptures, the establishment and restoration dates/periods are often traced through pre-Buddhist era (before 623 BC), Buddha era (623 BC to 543 BC), Pre-Mauryan (before fourth century BC), Mauryan (during third century BC), Sunga (2nd to 1st century BC), Kushana (1st to 2nd century AD), Gupta (3rd to 9th century AD), medieval period (9th to 14th century AD) and modern era 14th to 20th century AD).

- ❁ Historical palaces, temples, shrines, ruins, and other surface and sub-surface archaeological sites associated with the perfected meditation and sacred pilgrimage journey of Buddhist masters and mahasiddhas also fall under this criteria. Asura cave in Pharping and Lashapa Ko cave in Sudal (Bhaktapur) are two significant caves in Kathmandu Valley related to Guru Rinpoche and Milarepa respectively.
- ❁ Archaeologically and historically important images/statues, sculptures, paintings, and murals housed in the chaityas, stupas temples, palaces, caves, rocks etc.
- ❁ Historical sites and archaeological monuments containing substantial Buddhist scriptural archive, including Buddhist manuscripts, gold written prajnaparamita etc.
- ❁ Historical trails of the spread of Buddhist thoughts and ideologies. Historical pilgrimage routes followed by emperors, mahasiddhas, ancient Buddhist explorers and monks such as routes used by Emperor Ashoka (3rd century BC), early Chinese travelers and monks, including Fa Xian (399-412 AD), and Huan Tsang (629-645 AD).
- ❁ Ancient Trade Routes/Silk Road Trade Routes overlapping with expanse of Buddhist socio-religious, economic and cultural transformation. Ancient silk trade routes and corridors that used to pass through the historic Buddhist sites, monasteries, caves etc. and also used by the monks, pilgrims and merchants of that time. So far following three routes have been emerged as prominent routes under the broader framework of the South Asian Silk Road networks from Nepal:

- ❁ Bodhgaya-Lumbini-Mustang Corridor: Bodhgaya (or Kushinagar) -Lumbini-Dobhan-Tansen-Ridi-Beni-Tatopani-marpha-Jomsom-Kagbeni-Tsarang-Lo mangthang-Kora La to TAR China.
- ❁ Patna-Kathmandu-Lhasa Corridor: Patna (Old Pataliputra)-Betia-Hetauda-Bhimphedi-Kathmandu-Sankhu-Chautara>Listikot-Kodari (Tatopani)-Xigatse-Lhasa-Xian.
- ❁ Bodhgaya-Karnali Purang Corridor: Bodhgaya-Lumbini-Surkhet-Dailekh/Dullu-Manma-Jumla/Sinja-GamGadhi-Simkot-Hilsa-Purang (TAR China) -Kailash-Guge-Leh (India).
- ❁ Ancient cities, caravansaries, mountain passes, forts, religious sites and archeological sites located along the ancient silk route fall under this category. The circulation of knowledge through these ancient trade routes. At least three Silk Road corridors have been identified in Nepal, so far.
- ❁ Other unique visible arts and architecture portraying Buddha, Buddha Dharma and Buddhist philosophy.

2.2.3. *Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value*

- ❁ Culture generally covers practices, lineage and tradition of certain religion. Ethnicity and intangible cultural heritages built over the centuries due to the interactions of the communities living in and around the major Buddhist heritage sites (and routes) with Buddhist teachings, philosophies, and Buddhist monuments, and transmitted from generation to generation, have also been taken as the third most significant criteria for assessing the significance of the Buddhist heritage site. Key attributes considered to be the most significant criteria under this category, include the followings:
 - ❁ Ethnic communities practicing Buddhist religions of various canon, such as Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana etc.
 - ❁ Communities and settlements that have been preserving and practicing the rich Buddhist traditions/rituals, including festivals,

rituals, traditions, stories, costumes, folklore, dance and music, costumes, food, oral history/tradition, charyas, artworks, local beliefs, events, celebrations, gatherings (including performing arts) etc. Mask Dance, Charta Nach, Mani Rimdu Festival, Tiji Festival etc. are some of the important traditions and rituals of significant cultural value.

- ❁ Buddhist tradition based healing practices such as Himalayan Amchi medicine practices, shaman/jhankri healings etc.
- ❁ Buddhist traditions and rituals such as daily and occasional monastic rituals (Nitya puja, Namasangiti and Prajnaparamita recitations etc.), family rites (Chudakarma), festivals (Matsyendranath Chariot festival, Kumari Chariot procession, Dipankara Yatra, Samyaka Mahadana Parva), dances (Charya dance, mask dance etc.) such and so on.
- ❁ Moreover, presence of sites full of outstanding pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural value belonging to other religious groups such as Hindu, Muslim, Jain etc. were also considered to be the added advantage of the sites selected for Buddhist circuits. Some religious sites revered by Buddhist followers are also equally revered by Hindu pilgrims, such as Maratika (Haleshi), Muktinath (Mustang) etc. Existence of non-Buddhist religious and spiritual sites in the vicinity of the popular Buddhist heritage sites would offer greater opportunities for the secular (general) visitors to observe and experience the culture and rituals of more than one religious community. Visiting Pashupatinath is the added advantage for pilgrims or visitors who visit Bouddha or Swoyambhu Mahachaitya.
- ❁ Similarly, sites of outstanding natural landscapes and rich biodiversity located in and around the Buddhist heritage sites have also been considered to be the added value for the site to be considered for the proposed circuits and sub-circuits. Key attributes under this criteria included, but not limited to the presence of protected areas (PAs) of any category such as National Park (NP), Conservation Area (CA), Wildlife

Reserve (WR), Hunting Reserve (HR), Buffer Zone (BZ); habitat of major flagship mammals/birds/butterfly/fishes/reptiles such as One Horned Rhinoceros, Wild Asian Elephant, Royal Bengal Tiger, Crocodile, Red Panda, Musk Deer, Snow Leopard etc.; popular and scenic mountain range/peak/pass, gorges, waterfalls, caves, viewpoints etc.; ecologically rich and important ecosystem/pastureland/forestland such as rhododendron forest; important river and wetlands; popular trekking trails and so on.

- ❁ Beautiful and sacred natural landscapes can also be considered as destination for natural healing, meditation and yoga.

2.3. Study Methodologies and Tools

2.3.1. Sources of Information

- ❁ The study tried to collect the archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic and textual evidences on the key Buddhist heritage sites during the study. Information related to both (i) the proven facts such as written in inscriptions and books as well as (ii) frictions including myths and legends, in relation to the evolution and expansion of Buddhism and Buddha Dharma, were collected and analyzed to assess the significance of the Buddhist heritage sites. Key sources of information included the following:

i. Archaeological Remains and other Mute Sources

- ❁ Proven archaeological facts and figures of archaeological monuments and objects such as images, ruins and objects related to Buddhist temples, viharas, monasteries, palaces, pillars, forts, sthamvas, stupas, maniwalls, chhortens, cave structures etc. studied and revealed by the archaeologists have been taken as the strongest source of information for this study. These information are primarily related to the birth and enlightenment of Buddha (s), perfected meditation sites of many mahasiddhas, and pilgrimage sites visited by emperors, Buddhist masters etc. Other mute sources include paintings, drawings, ceramics, sculptures, performance etc.

ii. Archival and Inscriptions (Stones, rocks, woodens, metals, papers, clothes etc.)

- ✿ Inscriptions written on the various objects such as stone pillars, rocks, caves, viharas, stupas, temples, sthamvas etc. have been taken as a very strong source of information for assessing the significance of the Buddhist heritage sites. As far as applicable, these inscriptions have been observed by the study team members and verified with the published research works such as books, reports or journals of various archaeologists and authors. Such inscriptions may describe the significance of the site (s) in-terms of historical, archaeological, religious, spiritual, socio-cultural, political and architectural values of that period. Inscriptions written on the Ashokan Pillars in Lumbini; stone inscription of Handigaon; various pillar inscriptions of Dullu/Dailekh, and copper inscriptions and Gold written Prajnaparmitas available in various Buddhist monasteries and viharas are some of the good examples of such sources. Sanat/Sabal granted by the kings/rulers and dKar-chag written in the ancient monasteries/gombas have also been taken as a good source of information.

iii. Genealogy and Legends

- ✿ Published chronicles, treaties, literary evidences, manuscripts and narratives such as Nepal Mahatmya (incorporated in Skandapurana), Bhasa Vamsabali (Swoyambhu Mahapurana), Gopalaraja Vamsavali, Vasha Vamsavali, Sripali Vamsavali (Dailekh), Tibetan Chronicles, Chronicles of Laddakh, Sutras (Pali and Sanskrit), and legendary accounts etc. accepted by the larger segments of population, especially the Buddhist population for a reasonably longer period of time have been used as one of the important sources of information for the study.
- ✿ Moreover, relevant evidences contained in the various literatures such as Mahabharata, Rajatarangini etc. have also been taken as a good source of information for assessing the significance of Buddhist heritage sites for pilgrimage, spirituality and peace.

iv. **Scriptures and other Published Books on Buddhism**

- ❁ Buddhist scriptures and published historical travel accounts, bibliographies, reports and manuscripts on Buddha, Buddhism, Buddhist arts and iconographies were also used as the major source of information.
- ❁ It includes translated versions of Tripitaka: Sutrapitaka, Vinaya Pitaka, Abhidhamma Pitaka; Tripitaka Attakathas (commentary books); Agamas (Buddhist literatures in Sanskrit language; translated version of Tibetan Kangyur and Tengyur; Avadana and Jataka stories (stories on 547 earlier births of future Buddha-Shakyamuni); philosophical texts; travel accounts of earlier monks and masters; and other relevant Buddhist scriptures available in the viharas, monasteries and other temples.
- ❁ Moreover, books written by many historians, cultural experts, geographers, orientalis, Indologists and Tibetologists on Buddha, Buddhism, Himalayan Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism etc. have also been taken as a good reference for this study.

2.3.2. Information Collection and Discussions

i. **Review of Relevant Literatures on Buddha, Buddhism and Buddhist Pilgrimage**

- ❖ The study team reviewed various documents related to Buddhism, Buddhist Dharma, teachings, pilgrimage, spirituality, peace and so on. Pertinent information gathered in relation to the study include the following:
 - ❖ Information signifying the identity and significance of the Buddhist heritage sites.
 - ❖ Policy, regulatory and planning frameworks relevant to the development and promotion of Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage, spirituality and cultural tourism in Nepal.
 - ❖ Current situation of Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage, spirituality and cultural tourism in Nepal, India and other Buddhist countries.



- ✧ Interventions made by various agencies for the development and promotion of Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage, spirituality and cultural tourism in Nepal.
- ✧ Best practices and lessons learnt from other Buddhist countries and destinations, including India, on promotion of Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage, spirituality and cultural tourism.
- ✧ Key issues, weaknesses, opportunities and threats on promotion of Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage, spirituality and cultural tourism.

ii. **Conduction of Inception Workshops**

- ✧ The study team organized two separate inception workshops, one each in Kathmandu and Lumbini, to inform all relevant stakeholders and actors about the objective of the study, and to get input and feedback on the proposed approach, methodologies and tools of the study, including the site assessment criteria. The first workshop was organized in Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) Kathmandu amidst the presence of relevant central level stakeholders and actors including MoCTCA, LDT, NTB, DoA, Lumbini Buddhist University (LBU), Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Monastery Development Committee (BPPMDC), Buddhist organizations, tourism industry associations, academic and research institutions, individual experts etc. Likewise, the second inception workshop organized in Lumbini was attended by stakeholders from the Greater Lumbini Area, including LDT, LBU, relevant municipalities, rural municipalities, Buddhist organizations, monks, nuns, regional tourism industry associations, private sector organizations, tourism entrepreneurs etc.

iii. **Consultations with Key Stakeholders and Individuals**

- ✧ In order to acquire context specific and detailed information and valued suggestions, one to one consultations were made with the key relevant stakeholders and individual experts, including policy making bodies, infrastructure development related agencies, conservation related agencies, local religious organizations, private

sector experts, media personalities, social leaders, conservation champions and so on.

iv. **Field Visits, Observations and Interactions**

- ✿ The study team visited at least 25 major and numerous associated Buddhist heritage sites throughout the country; rapidly observed and assessed the sites and its potentials for pilgrimage/tourism, and documented the information using various tools including note making, photography, videography and GIS based mapping etc. Major sites visited during the study include key sites in Greater Lumbini Area (Lumbini, Kapilvastu, Devadaha, Ramagrama, Sainamaina and Tansen), key sites in Kathmandu Valley and surrounding (Kathmandu, Sankhu/Manichud Vajrayogini, Bhaktapur, Sudal Manjushree Cave, Nala Karuna Temple, Panauti, Namobuddha, Lubhu, Patan city, Bungamati, Chovar, Pharping etc.); Chitlang and Rudreshwor; Nuwakot Sispang Area; Rasuwa (Langtang); Helambu; Timal-Sailung; Charikot-Jiri; Bigu-Lapchi, Junbesi-Khumbu Valley; Haleshi; Arun Valley; Tamor Valley; Manaslu region (Nubri and Tsum Valley); Pokhara- Beni-Mustang- Lo-Mangthang; Upper and Lower Dolpa; Surkhet-Kakre Vihara; Jajarkot-Dailekh-Dullu; Jumla- Sinja Valley; Mugu; Simikot -Limi Valley (Humla) and so on.
- ✿ Similarly, at least 15 site-level formal interaction workshops were organized in which more than 482 participants attended. Most of the consultation workshops were organized in collaboration with the respective municipalities and rural municipalities. Moreover, two province level consultative workshops were organized in Pokhara (Gandaki Province) and Butwal (Province #5) together with the Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment (MoITFE) of the respective province. During the workshops, the area's potentials for being connected and promoted as Buddhist Circuits was discussed.

v. Study of Best Practices and Exposure Visits to the Similar Sites

- ✿ A group of three members visited key Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, including Taklakot, Kailash Manasarovar, Guge and Sakya Monastery and learned about various aspects of Buddhist heritage based tourism and pilgrimage development in the area including development of infrastructures (connectivity and accommodation), restoration and preservation of heritage sites, restoration of natural landscape and so on. The team also explored opportunities to connect key Buddhist heritage sites of Tibet with the selected Buddhist circuits sites of Nepal.
- ✿ Likewise, a group of 6 members visited the key Buddhist heritage sites of Northern India, including Kushinagar, Vaishali, Nalanda, Rajgir, Bodhgaya and Sarnath currently being promoted by the Government of India as Buddhist Circuits India (BCI). The team learned the various efforts carried out by the Government of India, State Governments and private sectors for the promotion of Buddhist Circuits India. The team also made several meetings with the tour operators and some Government authorities, and discussed the possible ways for the joint packaging and promotion of Buddhist Circuits of both countries.

2.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

- ✿ The information gathered through the literature review, field observations, consultations and interaction workshops were grouped and analyzed using the set criteria for assessing the significance of the Buddhist heritage sites for pilgrimage spirituality and cultural tourism. Subsequently, various circuits and sub-circuits were designed by connecting significant Buddhist heritage sites.

2.4.1. Sharing and Validation of the Study Outcomes

i. Sharing of Preliminary Outcomes with the TAG Members

- ✿ The preliminary outcomes of the study were shared with the members of Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and critical

feedback was received from them on the proposed circuits and sub-circuits. A very preliminary report was drafted by incorporating the feedback and suggestions provided by the TAG members.

ii. Sharing of draft report with the Relevant Buddhist Organizations and Scholars

- ✿ Summary of the preliminary version of report on Buddhist Circuits of Nepal was shared with the representatives of various Buddhist organizations during the workshop held at Hotel Tibet, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, and attended by venerable monks, nuns, executive heads of various monasteries and viharas, including Bouddha Mahachaitya, Buddhist researchers, academicians, practitioners and culture experts. The workshop received invaluable feedback and input on the selected Buddhist circuits and sub-circuits. Senior culture expert and centenarian Mr. Satyamohan Joshi also attended the programme as chief guest ,and delivered his valuable remarks and feedback on the proposed circuits.

iii. Sharing of draft report in the Multi-stakeholders Sharing and Validation Workshop

- ✿ The summary of the final revised version of report on Buddhist Circuits of Nepal was shared with the multi-stakeholders and actors amidst the final sharing and validation workshop held at NTB Hall, and attended by Honourable Rabindra Adhikari- Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal, Vice President of Lumbini Development Trust, Vice Chancellor of Lumbini Buddhist University, TAG members, representatives of tourism industry associations, Buddhist researchers and so on. Incorporating the feedback and suggestions provided by Hon. Tourism Minister and other participants, the draft report on Buddhist Circuits of Nepal was finalized.



CHAPTER 3

OVERVIEW OF BUDDHISM AND BUDDHIST HERITAGE BASED PILGRIMAGE

3.1. Evolution of Buddhism and Buddhist Cannons/ Schools

- ✿ The background information related to the evolution of Buddhism and spatial and temporal expansion of Buddhism over the period gives us an idea about the potential Buddhist markets, strategic routes and the factors contributing towards the dissemination and decline of Buddhism and Buddhist teachings during the period of last 2600 years. It also helps the government and other relevant stakeholders to develop strategic positioning for Nepal so as to tap the huge potential for making Nepal a global hub as well as an international gateway for Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage, spirituality and peace.

3.1.1. *Legends about the Existence of Other Buddha (s) before the Historical Shakyamuni Buddha*

- ❁ Nepal is not only the sacred birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha, but also the birthplace of other previous Buddhas, including Manusi Buddhas.
- ❁ The dawn of real Buddhist history begins with the birth of historical Shakyamuni Buddha in Lumbini (Nepal) in 623 BC as Prince Siddhartha who attained enlightenment at the age of 35 in Bodhgaya (India) and set in motion of the wheel of Law (Dharma) by delivering a formal preaching to his first five disciples at a Deer Park in Sarnath (India).
- ❁ Various Buddhist scriptures and chronicles also suggest the existence of other six historic Buddhas or Manusi Buddha who lived in blessed past (Bhadrakalpa). Whereas, certain Theravada texts contain up to 24 Manusi Buddhas, the Sanskrit texts often reduce their number to six. Alternatively, the idea of a Transcendent Buddha developed into that of the five (or eight) celestial Buddhas, and eventually into innumerable Buddhas including Vipasyi, Sikhi, Visvabhu, Krakuchhanda, Kanakamuni, Kasyapa, Shakyamuni (the present Buddha), and Maitreya (the future Buddha).
- ❁ The pillar inscriptions carved by the late Emperor Ashoka testify Gotihawa (Kapilvastu), Niglihawa (Kapilvastu) and Lumbini to be the birthplaces of Kakruchhanda Buddha, Kanakamuni Buddha and Shakyamuni Buddha respectively. Likewise, Kasyapa Buddha is believed to have taken birth somewhere in Vanaras area, India. The Future Buddha, Maitreya Buddha, will be the successor of the historic Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ❁ The Buddhist scriptures, such as Jataka stories also suggest the several previous births of Shakyamuni Buddha before he took birth as Siddhartha (as a Bodhisattva). Jataka stories suggest that Shakyamuni Buddha, during the 45 years of his teaching life, had told about 554 episodes of past life stories (Jataka Kathas).
- ❁ Moreover, the concept of the Buddhas of Three Times (viz., past, present and future) is common in Buddhist world, and they are represented iconographically with the images of Buddhas Kasyapa, Shakyamuni and Maitreya.

- ❁ Since the 10th century, the Kalachakrayana has started glorifying the Adi-Buddhas or primordial Buddhas, a supreme entity born of itself. Samantabhadra, Vairocana and Vajradhara are the best known names for Adi-Buddha. All famous Bodhisattvas are considered to be the reflections of Adi-Buddha. The concept of Adi-Buddha has also been mentioned in the Swayambhu Purana (a 14th or 15th century AD chronicle) and other sources including a Buddhist text ‘the Gunakarandavyuha (written in circa 3rd century AD and Namasangiti-9th century AD) (Regmi 2007). The Swayambhu Purana relates the establishment of Swayambhunath in Nepal Mandala with the visits of various primordial Buddha (AdiBuddha).
- ❁ The Pali sources suggest the existence of 24 mythological Buddhas, Dipankara being the first one. It is said that Shakyamuni Buddha (the then Sumedha), up on seeing Dipankara, made a vow to become a Bodhisattva and opted for the enlightenment which he ultimately attained.
- ❁ Dhyani-Buddha, in Mahayana and particularly the Vajrayana doctrines, suggests the existence of a group of five “self-born” celestial Buddhas from the beginning of time. The five ‘self-born’ celestial Buddhas (or Pancha Buddhas) with their respective positions in the chaitya along with their spiritual sons and Bodhisattvas include the following:

Buddha	Symbol	Hand-gesture	Spiritual Son	Bodhisattva	Direction in Stupa
Vairocana	Wheel	Preaching	Manjushree	Samanta-bhadra	Center
Amoghasiddhi	Double Thunder-bolt	Reassurance	Vajrapani	Visvapani	North
Akshobhya	Vajra	Earth-withness	Vajrapani	Vajrapani	East
Ratnasambhava	Tri-Ratna	Generosity	Ratnapani,	Ratnapani	South
Amitabha	Lotus	Meditation	Avalokiteshvara	Padmapani	West

- ❁ These five celestial Buddha are represented in different postures in all the stupas and Chaityas on four sides, Vairochana is seen invisible occupying the center.

- ❁ Where as the Red Amitabha Buddha is considered the Buddha of the Western Pure Land, the Medicine Buddha is often considered the Buddha of the Eastern Pure Land.
- ❁ Manjushree, also known as God of Divine Wisdom, is viewed both as a historical bodhisattva as well as an emanation of Vairochana Buddha. He is one of the popular bodhisattvas following Avalokiteshvara. In Tibetan Buddhism, Manjushree is a tantric meditational deity or Hidam, and considered to be a fully enlightened Buddha (or Bodhisattva). Manjushree is sometimes depicted in a trinity with Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani. He is considered to be the founder of Nepal Mandala civilization and the creator of the Kathmandu Valley.

3.1.2. *Birth, Renunciation, Enlightenment, Teachings and Mahaparinirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha*

- ❁ There are many sacred places in Nepal and India with significant miraculous events of Shakyamuni Buddha, including birth, renunciation, enlightenment and so on. Baishakh Purnima (the full moon of Vaishaka) is celebrated as the *Three-Fold Blessed Day* in the life of Buddha as all major events of Buddha's life took place on Baishakh Purnima (Full Moon day in Baishakh, May/June). Queen Mayadevi gave birth to the Bodhisattva Siddhartha on Baishakh Purnima in 623 BC; the prince up on renunciation attained enlightenment on the day of Baishakh Purnima in 588 BC, and entered into Mahaparinirmana on the day of Baishakh Purnima in 543 BC.

i. **Miraculous Birth of Shakyamuni Buddha as Prince Siddhartha (Gautama)**

- ❁ Also known as the Supreme Buddha (Samma-sambuddha) of our age, Shakyamuni Gautama Buddha is the founder of Buddhism. Prince Siddhartha, the bodhisattva, was born under a Sala Tree in Lumbini Garden, present day Rupandehi district of Nepal (the ancient Shakya Kingdom) in 623 BC. Buddhist scriptures suggest that celestial Gods Indra and Brahma came to take the young Bodhisattva into their hands and they cleaned him. The newly born bodhisattva then walked 7 steps in 4 directions and

proclaimed, “Like a lion free of fear and terror, I would vanquish sickness and death”. On the 7th day of the birth of the prince, Queen Mayadevi (Mahamaya) passed away. The prince was then brought to Kapilavastu (present day Tilaurakot), the capital town of ancient Kapilavastu Kingdom and nourished by Mayadevi’s sister Mahaprajapati Gautami. Siddhartha had 32 bodily signs of the Buddha, and under the guidance of his guru Viswamitra, the prince learnt all sorts of 64 arts, crafts, and martial exploits within a very short period of time. At the age of 16, Siddhartha was married to Yasodhara, a Kolian princess. At the age of 29, Siddhartha and Yasodhara were blessed by a son, Rahula. Suddhodhana, the king of ancient Kapilavastu had arranged everything for prince Siddhartha’s worldly pleasures and enjoyments in order to prevent him from becoming a great sage what the astrologers had predicted about him.

ii. The Great Renunciation (Mahaviniskraman) from the Worldly Life

- ✿ While visiting to the pleasure garden, prince Siddhartha one day saw four sights: an old man with grey hair, a sick man, a corpse and a monk; that brought a great change in his mind. Realizing the impermanence of all worldly things, Prince Siddhartha immediately determined to leave the princely life in search for enlightenment. Accordingly, the prince, at the age of 29 and on the full moon day of Asadha renounced the palace to become a mendicant. This great event is also known as *Mahaviniskraman* and the eastern gate, through which the prince escaped the palace, is thus called as *Mahaviniskraman Dwara*. Accompanied by his charioteer-Channa and Horse-Kanthaka, the prince crossed the kingdoms of the Shakyas, the Koliyas and the Mallas, and finally reached the Anuvaineya town on the river Anoma. Wearing the yellow robes, the prince began his ascetic life.

iii. Attaining the Enlightenment as Buddha

- ✿ Siddhartha spent six years doing meditation in the quest for the enlightenment. He first practised meditation under the guidance

of two great philosophers (hermits/teachers): Alara Kalama (Sage Arada) near Anupiya in Vaisali and Uddaka Ramaputta (Sage Uddaka) in Rajagaha (modern Rajgir). Out of eight Samadhis (first four being *Rupa Dhyana* and next four being *Arupa Dhyana*), Siddhartha attained the 7th stage (*the state of the realm of no materiality*) while meditating under Alara Kalama and the 8th stage (*the state of neither perception nor non-perception*) while meditating under Uddaka Ramaputta. However, Siddhartha realized that both of his samadhis could not resolve the fundamental problem of *liberation from birth and death and liberation from all suffering and anxiety*, and he went to Uruvela (present day Bodhgaya) for further meditation with no teacher.

❁ At Bodh Gaya, Siddhartha and a group of five companions led by Kondanna then set out to take their austerities (asceticism) even further. After asceticism and concentrating on meditation and Anapanasati, Siddhartha realized the vanity of the asceticism and discovered what is called Middle Way- a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence or mortification (*attakilomathanuyoga*) and sensual pleasure (*kamesukamasukhalikkanuyoga*), accepted rice pudding prepared by Sujata, and entered into deep meditation under Bodhi Tree with a strong determination for his attainment of enlightenment. Other companions had abandoned him by that time. Mara tried to obstruct Buddha's enlightenment by sending demons to frighten him and sending his 3 daughters to seduce and allure him.

❁ Under the Bodhi Tree in Bodh Gaya, Siddhartha started analytical meditation of Vipassana (Kaya, Vedana, Chitta, Dharma); acquired knowledge of 12 linked chain of dependent origination or causation (*pratityasamutpada*); attained the knowledge of the four noble truths (*Aryasatyas or ariyasaccas*), and detached his ties from the cycle of rebirths. By attaining his highest knowledge, the *Samyak Sambodhi*, he finally attained Enlightenment and became Awakened One at the age of 35. Buddha's enlightenment is called Samma Sambodhi, the ultimate perfection of wisdom and compassion. The Buddha's enlightenment is characterized by a

threefold knowledge including (i) knowledge of his former lives (*purbenivasanusmriti*), (ii) knowledge of birth and details of living beings (*parachittvagya*), and (iii) knowledge of his release from the whole process (*chyuti utpati*).

- ✿ In the 7th week after his enlightenment, two merchants-Tapussa and Bhallika offered Shakyamuni Buddha the rice cakes and honey and became his first lay followers.

iv. Setting Into Motion the Wheel of Law (Dharmachakraparvartana)

- ✿ Upon request of Brahma Sahampati; Shakyamuni Buddha then journeyed to Deer Park at Sarnath near Varanasi to preach his Dhamma (Dharma) for the welfare of the world. He delivered his first discourse known as the *Dhammacakkappavattana* (*Dharmachakravartana*) sutta, also called as Turning of the Wheel of the Law, to his former five companions at Deer Park. The first five disciples of the Buddha were Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji.

- ✿ Shakyamuni Buddha then illustrated the **Four Noble Truths**, i.e.

- i. *Dukkha*: The nature of suffering inherent in the human condition and arising from the transitory nature of the universe.
- ii. *Smudaya*: The origin of dukkha (suffering), arising from the craving (desire) for sensual pleasures, for existence and for extermination.
- iii. *Dukkha-nirodha*: The cessation of suffering.
- iv. *The Way- Marga* (*Arayastangamarga*): Noble truth of path leading to the cessation of suffering by following the Eight Fold Path.

- ✿ The Buddha recited the four noble truths three times and, thereby turned the wheel of Dharma in twelve aspects. Shakyamuni Buddha then explained to his first disciples the middle path (*majjhima patipada*) or the **Noble**

Eightfold Path (*Arya Astangik Marga*) which consisted of

- i. 2 Margas of Pragya/Wisdom: Right view/Right vision and Right speech.
- ii. 3 Margas of Sheel/Ethical Conduct: Right action, Right livelihood and Right Effort/Exertion.
- iii. 2 Margas of Samadhi/Enlightenment: Right Determination, Right mindfulness and Right meditation.

❁ Kaundinya became the first arhant, and immediately, four other ascetics also became arhat. The Dharmachakra is compared to Solar Wheel and the wheel represents the law of the Tathagata. Finally, after delivering *the doctrine of anatta* to his five disciples, the Buddha converted them to his new faith.

❁ As per Mahayana School, the Buddha taught the 2nd and 3rd Wheels of Dharma, which include the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras and the Sutra Discriminating the Intention, respectively. These teachings are the source of the Mahayana, or Great Vehicle, of Buddhism.

v. **Delivering Dharma Teachings and Formation of Shangas**

❁ For the remaining 45 years of life, the Buddha travelled several places in the Northern India (the Gangetic Plains), the present day Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in India and Southern part of Nepal, propagating and teaching his doctrine and discipline to an extremely diverse range of people.

❁ The first five disciples were the beginning of the Order (Sangha). Yasa, a son of a rich merchant of Vanaras became the first layperson to be converted and entering into the Order. The formal Sangha was formed when the number of disciples became one thousand.

❁ The Buddha then reached Rajgir, met Bimbisara, the king of Magadha, his ministers and his citizens, and preached the non-existence of the soul and the essencelessness of the five khandhas to them. The king gave his Bamboo Grove, Venuvan to the Buddhist Shanga and became a lay devotee of Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha accepted the grove and established the *first Buddhist vihara*. In

Rajgir, Sariputta and Moggallana, the two disciples of a noted spiritual teacher (Sanjaya) also became the monks of the Order.

- ✿ About one year later, Shakyamuni Buddha visited his home-town Kapilvastu and delivered teachings to his father King Suddhodhana, Step-mother Prajapati Gautami, wife Yasodhara, his son Rahula and many Shakyas. Kala Khemaka and Ghataya, two Shakyas who showed veneration towards the Buddha also built monasteries in the *Nigrodharama*, present day Kudan. The Buddha delivered a series of discourses to the Shakyas.
- ✿ Buddha's two cousins Ananda and Anuruddha became two of his 5 close disciples. Out of his disciples, Sariputra, Mahamoggallana, Mohakasyapa, Anand and Anuruddha comprised the 5 chief disciples. Other 5 foremost disciples were Upali, Subhoti, Rahula, Mahakaccana and Punna.
- ✿ At Vaisali, the Buddha converted many Shakyas and Koliyas to the Order. The order of Nuns created; Mahaprajapati later became an arhat whereas Yashodhara adopted Buddhism as her religion. The Buddha spent his significant years (about 24 years) teaching to his disciples in Sravasti.

vi. **Entering into the Mahaparinirvana (Great Decease) and Distribution of Sacred Relics**

- ✿ At the age of 80, on the full moon day of Vaishaka in 543 BC, the Buddha entered into *mahaparinirvana* under the Sala-grove in Kusinagara. The Buddha, while staying at Rajgir, expressed his desire for the attainment of Mahaparinirvana at Kusinara (Kusinagara). He came to Vaisali from Rajgir; stayed at the mango-grove of Ambapali and preached to his disciples. At Bhoganagara, on his journey to Kusinagar, the Buddha delivered to his disciples his instructions relating to the observance of moral precepts (sheela), meditation (Samadhi), acquisition of knowledge (panna, prajna) and the attainment to emancipation (vimukti). At Pava, he received meal from Cunda, a son of blacksmith and felt ill.

- ✿ Finally he reached Kushinagara and ordained Subhadda (Subhadra) an unorthodox monk and the last disciple of the Buddha. Before entering into mahaparinirvana, the Buddha delivered his last speech to his disciples and also informed Ananda, one of his closest disciples, that the teachings and Dharma rules would be their teacher and guide after he gets entered into mahaparinirvana.
- ✿ Finally, he lay down in a Sala Grove (*Shorea robusta*) (between two sal trees lying his head to the north and face to the west) and after several hours, he attained the *Mahaparinirvana*, Near Hiranyawati River.
- ✿ After his mahaparinirvana, altogether ten stupas were erected to enshrine the relics of the Buddha which consisted one for Devas, one for Nagas, and eight for contemporary Kingdoms, including Shakyas and Koliya kings.

Table-1: Chronology of Development and Expansion of Buddhism

Year	Events
623 BC	Prince Siddhartha Gautama was born in Lumbini
594 BC	Mahaviniskramana of Siddhartha (Renunciation of the worldly life)
594 to 588 BC	Meditation practice in Vaisali, Rajgir, Uruvela (Bodh Gaya) for six years
588 BC	Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree in Bodh Gaya; Shakyamuni Buddha set the motion of the wheel of Law (Dharma)
588 to 543 BC	Delivering Buddhist Teachings in many areas for 45 years
	Sandalwood statue of Buddha during Buddha's lifetime under the instruction of King of Kosambi
543 BC	Shakyamuni Buddha entered into Mahaparinirvana
Year	Events
544 BC	1 st Buddhist Council in Rajgir, Sutta Pitaka and Vinaya Pitaka produced



444 BC	Second Buddhist Council held at Vaisali; Beginning of Buddhist Sectarianism
247 BC	Third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra, Abhidamma Pitaka produced; finalization of Theravada Canon
	Reign of Emperor Ashoka, Buddhist missionaries to 8 various places
246 BC	Mahinda brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka
220 BC	Buddhism was introduced to Burma
2 nd Century BC	Beginning of Mahayana Buddhism
1 st Century BC	First Mahayana Sutra: Saddharmapundarika produced
	Pali Canon written down in Sri Lanka
1 st Century AD	4 th Buddhist Council at Kashmir; Reign of King Kaniska; Composition of Prajnaparamita Sutra Buddhism entered Central Asia and China
2 nd Century AD	Nagarjuna's Madhyamika School, philosophy of emptiness
3 rd Century AD	Buddhism entered into Cambodia, Indonesia
	Initiation of Vajrayana Buddhism in India, composition of Guhya Samaja Tantra
4 th Century AD	Buddhism entered into Korea (372 AD), Java, Sumatra
5 th Century AD	Nalanda University founded in India
	Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsian visited India and Nepal (399-414 AD)
6 th century AD	Buddhism entered Japan from Korea (552 AD); became state religion
629-645 AD	Chinese pilgrim Huan Tsang visited India
7 th to 8 th Century AD	First dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet with great contribution from three dharma kings and with the arrival of great masters Padmasambhava and Santaraksita
8 th Century AD	1 st Tibetan Monastery (Samye) established; Nyingma School founded by Padmasambhava in Tibet
	Foundation of Vikramashila University by Dharmapala
Year	Events
9 th Century	Massacre of King Ralpachen and Langdarma in Tibet; Tibetan Buddhism entered into the dark period

983 AD	1 st Complete printing of Chinese Buddhist Canon
11 th Century AD	Second Dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet with the arrival of Buddhist scholar Atisha Dipankara Srijnana in Western Tibet
	Kagyü and Sakya School emerged in Tibet
	Buddhism started declining from the Northern India
1197 AD	Nalanda University destroyed by Muslims
11 th -12 th century AD	Theravada Buddhism established in Burma
13 th Century AD	Soto Zen, Pure Land, and Nichiren Buddhism established in Japan
14 th century	Theravada Buddhism entered in Thailand, Lao and Cambodia
	Je Tsongkhapa founded Gelug School in Tibet
1578 AD	Mongol ruler Althan Khan offered the title 'Dalai Lama' to Sonam Gyatso (1543-1588 AD)
1642 AD	The 5 th Dalai Lama obtained the semi-divine leadership after obtaining the temporal and spiritual leadership of Tibet from the Mongol ruler Gushri Khan.
1844 AD	Burnouf published his landmark work on Lotus Sutra in France in his book "Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism" in French Language
	'The Preaching of the Buddha' became the first ever-published dharma (Buddha) article in English language.
1879 AD	Sir Edwin Arnold published a book, 'The Light of Asia' - the English version of the life of Shakyamuni.
1880 AD	Two white Americans - Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott became the first westerners to have converted into Buddha dharma
1893 AD	Buddhism was first recognized as religion in US during World Parliament of Religions (Columbian Exposition) held in Columbia, USA
Year	Events
1896 AD	Lumbini was re-discovered by Dr. AA Fuhrer and Khadga S. JBR

1950s and onwards	14 th Dalai Lama left Tibet and fled to Dharmashala, India; Tibetan Buddhism expanded into various parts of the world
1956 AD	Lumbini Dharmodaya Sabha Vihara (Theravada Buddhist Vihara) founded at Lumbini Sacred Garden
	Celebration of the 2500 th anniversary of the mahaparinirvana of Buddha; restoration of Buddhist monuments in India
1966 AD	The first Buddhist Vihara, the Buddhist Vihara Society of Washington founded in US
1970s AD and onwards	Flourishing of Mahayan and Vajrayan monasteries in Kathmandu Valley and Himalayan Region of Nepal
1978 AD	Lumbini Development Master Plan (LDMP) approved
1985 AD	Lumbini Development Trust established and implementation of LDMP started

3.1.3. *Buddhist Councils and Compilation of Various Sutras/Baskets of Dharma*

- ✿ After the mahaparinirvana of the Buddha, the teachings of Buddha and expansion of Sanghas continued by his disciples. The disciples of the Buddha, the monks, the nuns, and the arhats organized councils in due course of time to further systematize the teachings and orders including documentation of the teachings in the written form.

i. **First Buddhist Council and Compilation of Two Baskets of Dharma (Sutras)**

- ✿ The 1st Buddhist Council was held in Sattapanni (Saptaparni) Cave or Cave of Mount Vaibhara at Rajgir during the time of Ajatasattu, the king of Magadha 2 (or 3) months after the mahaparinirvana of the Buddha. Under the patronage and full support of the King Ajatasattu, and the chairmanship of Mahakassapa, the council was attended by 500 arhats and continued for 7 months and established the canon of the Dharma. Upali, the foremost of the *vinayadharas*, recited the Vinaya rules, the rules of ordination and praatimoksha, which the council later formed *the Vinayapitaka* (the basket of discipline) and Ananda recited the teachings of Dharma (or the Sutta) which the council later formed *the Sutrapiṭaka* (the basket of sutras).

As per the Sarvastivadian account, the 4th Buddhist Council was held in 1st century AD probably in Kashmir (Kundalavana Vihara) under the patronage of King Kanishka of Kushana. The council was attended by about 500 monks and scholars. Prominent scholars Vasumitra and Ashwaghosha were the president and vice-president of the council respectively. The council concluded with compilation of a new Vinaya and preparation of a

commentary called Mahavibhasa Shastra (great Exegesis) on the basis of *Tripitaka*. The council was also called the council of the Sarvastivadian School.

- ✿ As per the Theravada account, the 4th Buddhist Council was held in Sri Lanka in 1st century BC, instead of Kashmir. Convened by the King Vattagamani, the council was organized to produce a written record of the Tripitaka. Accordingly, 500 reciters and scribes from the Mahavihara of Anuradhapura (founded by Mahinda, the son of Ashoka) wrote the Tripitaka on palm leaves in Pali script. Mahinda, the son of Ashoka, also compiled the first of the Tripitaka commentaries in the Sinhala language.

3.1.4. *Development of Various Buddhist Canons/Schools*

- ✿ The seed of schism in the Buddhist sangha first shown, as Mahasanghika and Sthaviras, soon after the completion of 2nd Buddhist Council, and in the due course of time, as many as 30 different sects emerged. Globally, majority of the Buddhist followers nowadays belong to the Mahayana Canon (about 56%) followed by Theravada Canon (about 38%) and Vajrayana Canon (about 6%) (www.wikipedia.org). These three canons are not mutually exclusive in character as the core doctrines and principles of the initial canons have also been incorporated, with appropriate modifications, in the canons developed in the later stage.

i. **Theravada (Hinayana Canon, The Smaller Vehicle)**

- ✿ The present day Theravadin followers are the descendants of one of the Hinayana schools, the oldest and conservative (orthodox) school of Buddhism. Followers of Theravada canon have maintained the teachings of Buddha intact even after the mahaparinirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ✿ Followers of Theravadin (also called Sthaviraravadins) consider the Buddha as a human being with many super human qualities. Attainment of arhat-hood (arhatship) for the salvation of oneself alone, through practice of monkhood, is the major doctrine of Theravada. For Theravadins, an arhat is a perfect person who reaches the stage of nirvana but has no chance of fall from arhat-hood.

- ❁ Theravada followers believe that a total liberation from the cycle of sufferings and rebirth can ideally be aspired by only the *monks* and *nuns*. An *Arhat* must endure an infinite number of virtuous lives in order to escape the enchainment of cause and effect. Only the *Sravaka*, who had received teachings from the Buddha himself, could attain the enlightenment in a single lifetime. An *Upasika* who made donations could accompany the renounciates and thereby accumulate merit enabling them to attain a better rebirth in the future. Theravadins, therefore, consider that all worldly things which are subject to decay are *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. They admitted that the *majjhimaṇṇasikāya* which was also the *ariyatthaṅgikamagga* was the real path.
 - ❁ Followers of this canon believe that the spiritual ideal is embodied in the austere figure of the Arhat and mokṣa (emancipation) or *arhatship* is attained through insight into the transitory (*anitya*) and painful (*dukkha*) nature of conditioned things, as well as the non-selfhood (*Nairātmyata*) of all the elements of existence (*dharma*s), whether conditioned or unconditioned. To follow the spiritual life, Theravadians therefore insisted upon the necessity of the monastic life.
 - ❁ The doctrine has a Tripitaka written in Pali and comprises Suttapitaka, Vinayapitaka and Abhidhamma pitaka. According to Theravada (Hinayana) the sutras comprise four great collections (also known as Agamas in Sanskrit and Nikayas in Pali), including Dirghagama (Dirga Nikaya), Madhyamagama (Majjhima Nikaya), Samyuktagama (Samyutta Nikaya), and the Ekottaragama (Anguttara Nikaya).
 - ❁ Theravada tradition flourished in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam etc.
- ii. Mahayana Canon (The Bigger Vehicle)**
- ❁ The schools and sub-schools of Mahayana can be considered as the spiritual descendants of the Mahasanghikas, representing the more progressive wing of the Sangha, though it is also equally



considered that Mahayana canon is an outcome of a gradual renovation of thoughts and concepts of many schools in Nikaya Buddhism. Mahayana is believed to have first developed in the southern part of India between 100 Century BCE to 100 Century AD, however, many of its basic ideas go back to the 4th or 5th Century BC. Etienne Lomotte, a great western scholar on Indology and Buddhism has an opinion that Mahayana scripture was first compiled in northwest India. Likewise, in the view of Akira Hirakawa, a Japanese Professor, Mahayana Canon developed from among the lay community who were basically the worshippers of stupas, a symbol of the Buddha. Worship at stupas might have led to meditations in which the Buddha was visualized (Paul Groner, 1993).

- ✿ Unlike the doctrine of Theravada (Hinayana), the teachings of Mahayana canon aims for salvation of all sentient beings. Thus, to attain enlightenment, the Mahayana canon claims that not only the Buddha's teachings but, also the compassion of the Buddha, be followed. The ideal of this canon is the Bodhisattva, the heroic being who aspires to the attainment of *Supreme Buddhahood* for the sake of all sentient beings by practicing six or ten perfections (paramitas) throughout thousands of lives. Hence, the Mahayana school proposed the state of Bodhisattva as the model for both monks and the laity. Bodhisattva is filled with compassion for all suffering sentient beings and has supernatural powers. The Bodhisattva also plays the role of protector to devotees.
- ✿ The followers of Mahayana canon consider that supreme Buddhahood is therefore attained not merely by piercing the gross veil of passions (*klesavarana*) but, in addition, by piercing the subtle veil of cognizable objects (*jneyavarana*) by realization that the so-called ultimate elements are only mental constructs and, therefore, themselves devoid of self-hood (*dharma-nairatmya*) and unreal.
- ✿ Thus, the doctrine of Mahayana reduces all possible objects of experiences to the void (*sunyata*), which is not the state of non-existence or privation but, rather, the ineffable (inexpressible)

non-being, self and things exist in a state of suchness or thusness (*tathata*) and, also in a state of sameness (*samata*). The teachings of the Mahayana school is also known as the **Second Turning of the Wheel of Dharma** (the second wave of teachings) focus on *teaching of emptiness and on the Prajnaparamita*.

- ✿ Mahasanghika stresses on the concept of Buddha as a transcendent and an omniscient (all-knowing) figure; omniscient even before birth. The Mahayanists gave rise to the concept of the Bodhisattvas, who are also supra-mundane, and do not pass through the four embryonic stages of ordinary beings.
- ✿ The ideals of Mahayanists, as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, include *Amitabha* (the Buddha of infinite light, the principal Buddha of the Pure Land School), *Manjushree* (the Bodhisattvas of wisdom), *Avalokiteshvara* (the Bodhisattvas of compassion) and *Vajrapani* (the Bodhisattvas of power). Focusing on Amitabha, who can save his devotees from the cycle of samsara by having them be reborn in his 'Western Paradise of Sukhavati', the idea of *pure land tradition* was established in Mahayana.
- ✿ The philosopher Asanga (during the end of 4th century) envisioned the doctrine of the 3 bodies (Triakaya) in Mahayana. The three bodies (trikaya) include the *dharmakaya* (the body of the law, the body of absolute and eternal truth,), the *sambhogakaya* (body of reciprocal enjoyment, the body of bliss, glorious and eternally visible only to Bodhisattva), and the *nirvanakaya* (the transformation body, created body-corresponding to the absolute, the celestial and the mundane planes of existence). In due course of time, Mahayanists introduced the practice of worshipping the image of Buddha (s) and Bodhisattva (s).
- ✿ The sutras of Mahayana canon are more comprehensive than the Tripitaka of early Buddhism. The *Astasahasrika-prajnaparamita* (the Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines) which is believed to be the earliest authentic Mahayana scripture, is believed to be completed in the 1st Century BC. The sutras of Mahayana canon comprise

six great collections (Sangharakshita 2001). The first five groups represent natural divisions, and known as *Prajnaparamita*, whereas the 6th group consists of independent miscellaneous collections and known as *Sadharmapundarika* (The White Lotus of True Dharma). *Prajnaparamita* is the perfection of wisdom sutras and their principal subject matter is sunyata or voidness.

- ✿ Renowned philosophers like Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Sthiramati, Dharmapala, Dignaga, Dharmakirti, and others contributed immensely to develop and systematize the doctrine of Mahayana canon. Mahayana philosophy is represented by *two great schools, the school of Madhyamika* (following the *madhyamika sastra*) and the *school of Yogacara* (following the *vijnanavada sastra*) both based primarily on the *doctrine of Sunyata* (emptiness). Founded (or systematized) by Nagarjuna the *school of madhyamika* (represent absolute truth) or the *followers of the mean* emphasize wisdom, and their method is dialectical. They reduce mind and matter directly to sunyata. Great Mahasiddha Nagarjuna, in his great work- *Madhyamika sastra*, defined the philosophy of sunyata, and established the Middle Way thought in the 2nd century AD.
 - ✿ Likewise, the *school of Yogacara* (represent relative truth) founded by Asanga (initially a Hinayana follower and later converted into the Mahayana) and his brother Vasubandhu, stresses on meditation and their approach is intuitive. They reduce *matter to mind* and then *mind to sunyata*, the truth of which draws upon the purified consciousness in the depths of meditation.
 - ✿ Mahayana Buddhism brought the new concept of Bodhisattvas and began to make and worship the image of the Buddha. Mahayana tradition flourished in North-West India, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Japan, Korea etc.
- iii. **Vajrayana Canon (The Tantrayana Buddhism or Diamond Vehicle)**
- ✿ A new sect upholding beliefs along with mantras, postures and

other tantric practices evolved as Vajrayana. Vajrayana is also called Tantric Buddhism, Tantrayana, Mantrayana, Esoteric Buddhism, the Way of the Diamond, Thunderbolt Vehicle etc. It is also called *Diamond Vehicle* as it immediately annihilates all obstacles that led to the attainment of Buddhahood as done by Vajra (meaning both thunderbolt and diamond).

- ✿ Mantrayana, developed as early as 6th Century AD in India, is considered to be one of the strongest schools that led to the formation of Vajrayana. Mantrayana when combined with the paramitayana (the six parapitas of Mahayana) formed the Tantrayana, and Tantrayana when enhanced with the complex systems of ritual, symbolism, and meditation ultimately formed the Vajrayana canon.
- ✿ Most of the scholars believe that Vajrayana practice (tantric practices) was first developed in Bengal and South India, and by 8th Century, it entered into Northern India, especially in Uddiyana (present day Swat Valley in Pakistan) and was further synthesized and flourished during the mid-8th to the mid-9th Century AD. The earliest Vajrayana texts appeared around the early 4th Century AD. Whereas Nagarjuna (150-250 AD) wrote several commentaries on *Guhyasamaja Tantra*; the *Manjushree-mulakalpa* was written in 6th century. The Kalachakra Tantra, written in mid-10th Century AD, is believed to be the latest tantra.
- ✿ Though tantric ideas and practices flourished more outside the monasteries, especially with the tradition of the 84 mahasiddhas between the 8th and the 12th Centuries AD, most scholars agree that such tantric ideas and practices were also started to be incorporated into the monastic curricula, initially at Nalanda (during late 8th to early 9th Century AD) and later in Vikramasila. Vajrayana canon is credited to have added a new dimension of statue, vihara, stupa and chaitya in Buddhist practices.
- ✿ Vajrayana is considered to be the extension of Mahayana Buddhism consisting of differences in the adoption of additional techniques

(Upaya Kausala-skillful means), such as some **esoteric practices**, rather than in philosophy (A K Mishra, 2010).

- ✿ Though Vajrayana puts particular emphasis on the teachings of the Mahayana monks Nagarjuna and Asanga (of 2nd Century AD), Padmasambhava is often considered to be the founder of Vajrayana. The best known highly esoteric tantras include (i) Guhyasamaja or Esoteric Integration, (ii) The Hevajra Tantra, (iii) The Sricakra-sambhira or Binding Wheel, (iv) The Maya-jala or Glorious Assembly, (v) The Vajra-bhairava or Fearful Adamantine One, (vi) Anuttarayoga Tantra (by Tilopa), (vii) The Kala-chakra or Wheel of Time etc.
- ✿ Kalachakra is considered to be the most advance form of Vajrayana practice. The Kalachakra tradition resolves around the concept of time (kala) and cycles (chakra): from the cycles of the planets, to the cycles of human breathing. Today, Kalachakra is practiced by all 4 Tibetan Schools of Buddhism, most prominent among Gelug lineage. The current (14th) Dalai Lama is the most prominent Kalachakra lineage holder alive today. Hevajra, one of the 8 Hidams, is also known as King of Tantras.
- ✿ The Vajrayana canon is predominantly a yogic-magical in character in which the Samadhi is attained through practice of meditation that includes the meditative repetitions of the mantras of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattva and the complex visualization of their forms. Siddha, a man who is able to manipulate the cosmic forces, is the ideal in this canon. Vajrayana aims at the realization of sunyata not only mentally but also physically. Scholars also opine that Vajrayana seems to be a combination of *Madhyamika viewpoints* founded by Nagarjuna and *Yogacara viewpoints* founded by Asanga.
- ✿ Vajrayana tradition believes that complete enlightenment is possible even in single earthbound life, each person having recourse to different means according to his spiritual evolution. The goal of this canon is the transformation of the body, speech and mind of the

initiate into body (*nirvanakaya*), speech (*sambhogakaya*), and mind (*dharmakaya*) of the Tathagata. Transformation, which involves the spiritual evolution, can be achieved within a single life or may take several lives based on the level of tantra (s) used. The guru occupies the noble position in Vajrayana as the transformation requires both the special *transmission of spiritual power* from an enlightened guru and the concentrated *practice of various highly esoteric yogic exercises*. It considers two worlds: *real world* and the *transcendental world*. The transcendental world can be seen only through tantra practice and enlightenment. Thus to practice tantra sadhana, the entire world is conceptualized as a mandala (sacred circles) portraying the world of a particular deity (imaginary goddesses). Each tantric school has its favourite bodhisattvas, divine forces, secret teachings and initiation ceremonies.

- ✿ While practicing tantras, the practitioners adopt a guru, a spiritual preceptor (a Lama in Tibet or a Vajracarya or Vajra-master in Newar Buddhism) and also receive abhiseka (empowerment or consecration) for various tantric practices. While practicing tantras, the practitioners use esoteric language, keep the aspects of the rites and their meaning secret, and visualize the teacher as the Buddha. In addition to ordinary monastic precepts and Bodhisattva vows, the Vajrayana practitioners undertake samayas, tantric vows, recite a sadhana (sacred formulas) or carry out certain practices, such as to pay special respect to women. The realization of universal emptiness is considered to be the highest wisdom (prajna).
- ✿ In Vajrayana, the Triple Gem (*Tri-ratna*) is represented in the form of three-roots, including Guru, Hidam (Istadevta) and Dakinis (the tantric equivalent of Bodhisattvas). Vajrayana doctrine further paved the way for the evolution of Tantric cult, invoking elaborate rituals with Mantras (magic spells), Mudras (symbolic hand-gestures), Kriyas (religious rites), Charyas (ritual ceremonies) etc. as means of obtaining divine grace.
- ✿ Vajrayana is considered to be the fastest method for attaining

Buddhahood. Esoteric Tantric schools are more common in Tibet, Nepal, Laddakh areas. Nepalese Newar Vajrayana, Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism (Lama Buddhism), Chinese Esoteric Buddhism, Shingon Buddhism, Shugendo, Tandai Buddhism are some of the popular traditions within the Vajrayana canon.

3.1.5. *Major Traditions within the Tibetan Buddhism/Himalayan Buddhism*

- ❁ Tibetan Buddhism is the body of Buddhist religious doctrine and institutions characteristic of Tibet and certain regions of the Himalayas, including Northern Nepal, Bhutan, India (Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh and Sikkim), Northeast China, Mongolia and parts of Russia (Kalmykia, Buryatia and Tuva) (A K Mishra, 2010). Buddhism, since its formal advent in Tibet during 8th Century AD, has passed through the development of four major traditions such as Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug. Key philosophical tenets used in Tibetan Buddhism include Vaibhashika and Sauutrantika schools belonging to Theravada canon and Yogacara and Madhyamika schools belonging to Mahayana.

i. **Nyingma Tradition**

- ❁ Founded by Guru Rinpoche in 8th Century, the Nyingma tradition, also known as the 'The 'Red Hat' is the oldest school of Mahayana in Tibet. The followers of Nyingma tradition are known as Nyingma-pa. Nyingma School has beautifully and tactfully combined the traditional bon philosophies, practices and deities with the Buddhist teachings and practices, and formally established the monastic tradition in Tibet. Nyingma school is characterized by its white-colored monasteries and red-robe wearing monks. Nyingma School gives much emphasis on tantric practice. Like Kagyu, the doctrine of Nyingma tradition is considered to have inherited from Vajrayana canon.
- ❁ Major schools of Nyingma include Dzogchen, Kathok, Sechen, Mindrolling, Palyul and Dorje Drak. The Nyingma tradition classifies the corps of Buddhist teachings into nine yanas, among the highest of which is known as Atiyoga or Dzogchen (Great

Perfection). Nyingma followers venerated Padmasambhava, whom they regarded as a *Bodhisattva*, in eight principal forms. They considered Samantabhadra as a *supreme divinity* and carried out exorcism rituals and the Bardo ceremony.

- ✿ The practice of *Dzogchen* (seeking to examine the fundamental nature of mind directly; without relying on visualizations and images) and the presence of hidden scriptures, 'Terma' of Padmasambhava are the typical aspects of Nyingma School with strong spiritual and historical implications. The path of Dzogchen cultivates rigpa through meditation. Dzogchen is also one of the components of living Bon tradition in Tibet. The concept of *Bardo*, embodiment of heart practice, is considered to be a major historical breakthrough in Tibetan Buddhism.

ii. Kagyu Tradition (Oral lineage school)

- ✿ Kagyu refers to the tradition of Buddha Bachana. It is a prudent integration of vinaya and tantra. This tradition started in 11th century with the direct influence of Marpa Lochaba, the translator (1012-1097 AD) and Khyungpo Nyaljor (978-1079 AD). Marpa received the lineage of tantric teachings, *Four Commissioned Lineages*, from his guru Naropa (who received it from Tilopa). Also known as Dakpo Rinpoche, Gampopa Sonam Rinchen (1079-1153), a student of Milarepa, was the founder of the monastic order of the Kagyu School. In 12th century, Gompopa combined the two streams of teachings: Kadam and Mahamudra traditions, and wrote *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*.
- ✿ Naropa, the guru of Marpa, gained *amrita* from his guru Tilopa and founded Kagyu lineage. The lineage fountain is *Adi Buddha Vajradhara*. Tilopa who developed the *Mahamudra* method, was the proponent of the principle of the Kagyu lineage. Milarepa, who is said to have attained a Buddhahood in single lifetime, is considered to be the famous practitioner and master in this lineage.
- ✿ Practice of Mahamudra of Guru Advaya-Vajra, Six Yogic Practices of Naropa and Chakrasambhara are the key typical aspects of the



Kagyu tradition. The Chakrasambara Tantra scripture is the major basis of this school. Kagyu tradition attempts to make the lives of monks hard as it involves the combined lineage of philosophical teachings and meditation, including yoga, isolation (hermitage), concentration etc.

- ❁ Various sub-schools of Kagyu lineage include the Karma Kagyu (founded by Karmapa), the Drikung Kagyu and the Drukpa Kagyu. Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa, one of the disciples of Gampopa, became the Golden Rosary lineage heir of Gampopa, the First Karmapa. 17th Gyalwa Karmapa- Ogyen Trinley Dorje is the current head of Kagyu School.

iii. Sakya Tradition

- ❁ Sakya refers to the dry soil or grey earth. The Sakya tradition was founded by Sakya Kunga Nyingpo, the son of Khon Konchog Gyalpo (1034-1102), who built the first Sakya monastery (Pandubhumi monastery) and was a disciple of the great translator Drogmi lotsawa, in the Tsang region of Tibet around 1073 AD. Drogmi Sakya Yeshe (992-1074 AD) received teachings on the Kalachakra from Virupa.
- ❁ The followers of Sakya tradition are called Sakya-pa. They consider *Vajraguru-Padmasambhava* as the chief religious scholar, *Vajrayogini* as the root deity and *Dorje Phurba* as the clan deity (Hidam). *Lamdrey*, founded by Guru Virupa- leading to state of Hevajra, is the central teaching and practice of Sakya tradition.

The Shakyas were very much influenced by the Kadam lineage, propounded by 11th Century Indian famous mahasiddha-Atisha Dipankara (982-1054 AD). The root texts of this lineage are Hevajra, Guhyasamaja tantra, and Vajrakilaya.

- ❁ Sakya Monastery served as the seat of the Sakya Order and of the Sakya Trizins from 1073 to 1959 AD. Sakya masters ruled Tibet till the 1354 AD before the ruling authority over Tibet was given to the monk Changchub Gyaltzen (a non-Sakya monk). 42 Sakya

Trizin Rinpoche- Ngakwang Kunga Thekchen Palbar Samphel Ganggi Gyalpo is the current head of Sakya School.

iv. Gelug Tradition

- ✿ Popularly known as 'Yellow Hat', the Gelug tradition was founded by Tibetan Leader Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419 AD), a student of Rendawa- a Sakya teacher. Gelug school of thought emerged with the establishment of Ganden monastery in central Tibet (the first Gelug monastery) by Je Tsongkhapa in 1405 AD. The *Kadam lineage*, propounded by Atisha (Dipankara Srijnana, 982-1054 AD) is the major basis for the propagation of Gelug tradition. Je Tsongkhapa further clarified all teachings of Kadam Dharma and made them very accessible to the people and beautifully amalgamated Sakya's *Lamrim* and *Lojong* with Mahamudra Tantra.
- ✿ The tradition of Gelug puts emphasis on strict monastic discipline (strict celibacy), purity and strict cultural observances (precepts). Main Buddhist teachings are collected in the *Lamrim* presentation, based on the teachings of Atisha Dipankara. The fully qualified and authoritative spiritual masters in this tradition are called as *Geshe*. Whereas *Tsongkhapa* is identified as lineage master, *Vajrabhairav* is considered as the main clan god (Hidam), and *Vajradakani* (Khandoma), *Gonpo Chhyog Dugpa* (Shadbahu Mahakal) are regarded as the protector of the religion. After 16th century, the tradition of re-incarnation also started in this school.
- ✿ In 1578 AD, Mongol ruler Althan Khan offered the title 'Dalai Lama' (ocean of wisdom) to Sonam Gyatso (1543-1588 AD) and in 1642 AD the 5th Dalai Lama obtained the semi-divine leadership after obtaining the temporal and spiritual leadership of Tibet from the Mongol ruler Gushri Khan. From 1578 AD, the Dalai Lamas' "Immense Wisdom", were seen as the incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara: and from the middle of the 18th century the Panchen Lama, the incarnation of the Jina of the west, Amitabha.

3.2. *Dissemination and Expansion of Buddhism*

✿ The transmission of Buddhism as of today is the result of the continuous hard works and dedicated morale support of many dharma kings, emperors, dharma missionaries, masters/pundits, mahasiddhas, disciples, translators, merchants, artists, travellers and pilgrims who, by means of dharma teachings, establishment of Buddhist monuments, propagation of various doctrines and scriptures, documentation of sutras, production of travelogues, biographies and translated sutras etc. not only survived the dharma but, also expanded it into the larger geographical territories.

✿ Born and nurtured in the Northern Indian territory of the Gange's Plain and the foothills of the Himalayas, Buddhist teachings and dharma practices gradually, and sometime rapidly, disseminated northward into Nepal Mandala (Kathmandu Valley), China, Tibet, Mongolia; eastward into Bangladesh, Myanmar, Korea, Japan; southward to Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam; westward to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central and Western Asian countries up to the Mediterranean Sea by 8th century AD. A brief profile of temporal and spatial expansion of Buddhism and Buddhist teachings is presented below:

3.2.1. *Expansion of Buddhism in Nepal Mandala and the Himalayas*

✿ The profile of development and expansion of Buddhism in Nepal gives ideas on the major Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal and key routes taken by the dharma missionaries, monks and mahasiddhas for the expansion of dharma along with their pilgrimage. The profile of Buddhists in ancient Nepal can be broadly examined in three different geographical territories i.e. (i) Territory of Ancient Shakya Kingdom and Koliya Kingdom (present day Greater Lumbini Area that comprises Kapilavastu, Lumbini, Devadaha, Ramagrama and other associated sites), (ii) Nepal Mandala (present day Kathmandu Valley and surroundings), and (iii) The Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan region.

✿ Though there are proven archaeological facts and figures about the Birth of Buddha Dharma and expansion of Buddhism in the ancient Shakya Kingdom and Koliya Kingdom; the introduction and expansion

of Buddha Dharma in Nepal Mandala and the Nepal Himalayas can only be described by combining both the archaeological and epigraphical facts as well as the widely accepted Buddhist scriptures, legends and myths.

- ❁ Shakyamuni Buddha was born in Lumbini (present day Rupandehi); spent his princely life in the palace of Ancient Kapilavastu, visited Devadaha, the maternal hometown of his mother Mayadevi, several times and finally renounced the worldly life at the age of 29 through the eastern gate of Tilourakot Durbar. At the age of 35, Shakyamuni Buddha got enlightenment at Bodhgaya and then started teaching Buddha dharma.
- ❁ About one year after his enlightenment, Shakyamuni Buddha visited to his home-town Kapilvastu along with his Sangha members for the propagation of dharma. The Buddha met his father King Suddhodhana, step-mother Prajapati Gautami, wife Yasodhara and his son Rahula. King Suddhodhana invited the Sangha to the royal palace for a meal, he became a sotapanna followed by a dharma talk. King Suddhodhana also became an arhat prior to his death after the preaching of dharma by Shakyamuni Buddha. Buddha's son Rahula was ordained from Buddha's disciple Sariputta; became a novice monk at the age of 7, and later became one of the 10 chief disciples of the Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha's half-brother Nanda also joined the sangha and became an arahant.
- ❁ The death and cremation of King Suddhodhana led to the creation of the order of nuns as his step-mother Mahaprajapati Gautami along with Yashodhara and many Sakya and Koliya ladies approached the Buddha to give them permission for the formation of the Order of Nuns (Vikkhuni Sangha). The Buddha first refused the proposal but at the request of Ananda, the Buddha accepted their proposal 5 years after the formation of the sangha, but he gave them certain additional duties of subordination (gurudharma). Mahaprajapati later became an arhat whereas Yashodhara adopted Buddhism as her religion. Many Koliya ladies including Suppavasa Koliyadhita and Pataliyagamani also became lay devotees of Buddha. Later, Siha, Jenta, Vesethi and several Lichchhavi ladies from Vaisali also joined the Order of Nuns.

- ❁ Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples also delivered discourses on Dharma in Koliya country and converted many Koliyas to Buddhism. According to *Theragatha*, there was a big dispute between the Shakyas and Koliyas regarding the use of water from a dam in Rohini River and the Buddha is said to have pacified both parties quelling the feud by his discourses. The Buddha and his disciples visited several Koliya towns, including Devadaha, Ramagrama etc.
- ❁ After the mahaparinirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha, the Shakyas of Kapilavastu got one share of Buddha's relics and built stupa in Kapilavastu. Likewise, Koliyas of Ramagrama and Devadaha received one share of relics and built a stupa over it in Ramagrama.
- ❁ The reign of Emperor Ashoka (circa 271-235 BC) marks a significantly important stage in the development and expansion of Buddhism. During the 14th year of his reign, Ashoka sent a mission to expand the Stupa in Niglihawa, and during the 20th years of his reign, Ashoka himself visited Lumbini and Kapilavastu and erected Ashokan Pillars, with inscriptions engraved in Pali Language, in Lumbini (birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha), Niglihawa (birthplace of Kanakamuni Buddha) and Gotihawa (birthplace of Kakrechhanda Buddha).
- ❁ It is also believed that Ashoka exposed and took relics out of Buddha's all except Ramagrama's relic stupas and built as many as 84,000 great stupas in the region. Thus, Ramagrama stupa is considered to be the only stupa containing the sacred (unexposed) relics of the Buddha.
- ❁ After the massacre by Virudhaka, son of Prasenajit, Shakyas of Kapilavastu were believed to have left their homeland and took shelter in nearby foothills of the Himalayas.
- ❁ According to **Swayambhu Purana** (a work of the 15th century AD) **Santa Tathagata** (seven human Buddhas: Vipasvi, Sikhi, Viswabhu, Krakachhanda, Kanakmuni, Kasyapa and Shakyamuni) visited Swayambhu. The purana tells that **Vipashvi Buddha** (the first of the seven Buddhas) came to Nagavasada (present day Kathmandu Valley) in Satyayug and entered into Samadhi at Jatamatra Parvat (Jamacho Hill or Nagarjuna Hill). After rising from Samadhi, he threw a lotus

seed into the lake. As prophesied by Lord Vipashvi, a thousand-petalled lotus emanated and a divine light of Adi-Buddha manifested as Swayambhu Mahachaitya from the lake after the mahaparinirvana of Vipashvi Buddha. At that time, Shakyamuni Buddha was following Lord Vipashvi as **Bodhisattva Satyadharma**. As proclaimed, Bodhisattva Manjushree drained the water out of valley and made it a habitable land.

- ❁ The history of Buddhism in Nepal in general and Kathmandu Valley in particular can be discussed with references to the various periods, including Kirata (Before 200 AD), Pre-Lichchavi Period (Until 200 or 400 AD), Lichchavi Period (200 or 400 to 800 AD), Thakuri or Early Medieval or Transitional Period (880 to 1200 AD), Early Malla Period (1200-1400 AD), Late Malla Period (1400-1768 AD) and Shah Period (1769 to 2001 AD).
- ❁ The genealogy of Wright suggests that Shakyamuni Buddha visited Kathmandu Valley during the period of 7th **Kirata King Jitedasti**.
- ❁ Though the history of Nepal didn't have a definite shape before the 5th century AD with the inscription of Manadeva, dated 464 AD at Changu Narayan Temple, and no epigraphic evidence has been found so far, it is likely that Buddhism was introduced in Nepal Mandala even before the reign of Lichchavi dynasty.
- ❁ According to Nepalese chronicles, 32 Kirata kings ruled the valley for several centuries, till 200 AD. Though, no epigraphical evidence has been found yet, Tradition also has it that during the time of 14th ruler of Kirata dynasty- Sthumko, **Emperor Ashoka** visited Kathmandu Valley with his royal preceptor Upagupta and daughter Charumati in the 3rd century BC; paid homage to Swayambhu Maha Chaitya, Guhyeshvari and 8 Viharas, and founded the royal city of Patan (Lalitapatan) and erected 4 **Great Stupas** (popular as Four Ashokan Stupas) in 4 cardinal directions and one in Pimbahal near Patan. His visit is also mentioned in the genealogy prepared by scholar Daniel Wright. Chronicles also suggest that **Charumati**, the beloved daughter of Ashoka, married to the prince Devapala in Devapatan (near Pashupati) and built a Vihara



called Charumati. Scholars of Newar Buddhism like Siegfried Lienhard also suggests that Buddhism in Nepal Mandala was introduced either during or soon after the reign of Ashoka.

- ❁ After the annexation of the republic of Vaisali to Magadha by Ajatasatru, the King of Magadha and contemporary of the Buddha, the Lichchavis probably might have fled to the neighboring states, including the foothills of the Himalayas. About nine hundred years later, the Lichchavi appeared as rulers of the Kathmandu Valley as appeared in the inscriptions of the Lichchavi King, Manadeva of Nepal.
- ❁ The Kirata dynasty was followed by the Lichchavis who entered Nepal as early as the 1st Century AD. Lichchavis ruled Nepal for about 800 years with short breaks at regular intervals. Lichchavis were regarded as Vratya, Buddhist who worshiped Chaitya. Buddhism and Saivism flourished side by side in Nepal and in the Indo-Gangetic plains during 2nd and 3rd century AD. (Regmi 2007).
- ❁ Nepalese chronicle suggests that **Gopalas**, the nomadic people from the Mathura regions of India were among the earliest Indo-Aryans to migrate into Kathmandu Valley, as early as 1st century BC. Historical evidences also suggest that the Lichchavis (of Vaisali), **Shakyas** (of Kapilavastu), Mallas (of Pava), Koliyas (of Ramagrama) and Abhiras (Guptas-cow herders) were the earliest Indo-Aryans to have migrated and settled in the Valley of Kathmandu after Gopalas.
- ❁ Lichchavi period is also considered as the **Golden Age for the growth of Buddhism**, particularly the Mahayana School, in Kathmandu Valley, and marked by the development of Vihara architecture and establishment of many Viharas of Mahayana origin. Guh Vihara, Swayambhu Vihara, Tham Vihara, Rudravarna Mahavihara, Khasti Chaitya are some of the prominent Viharas of Lichchavi period. As a court language, the Buddhist teachings during Lichchavi period was dominated by Sanskrit.
- ❁ The first contemporary evidence of the presence of Buddhism in Kathmandu Valley comes from the inscriptions of Changunarayana and Jayadeva II ranging from 464 to 8th century AD.

- ❁ History has it that **Vrisadeva** (387-412 AD), probably the first Lichchavi king and a pious devotee of Lokeshvara used to feed Vajrayogini before taking his meal; renovated the Chaitya built by Dharmadatta (Dhando Chaitya, Chabahil) and several viharas, erected the images of five celestial Buddhas, and completed the construction of Swayambhu Maha Chaitya. He is also credited for placing images of Panca Buddha at Vandyagaun (near Godavari) and establishing a village called **Bandegrama**. According to Swayambhu Purana, Swayambhu Chaitya was first erected by Pracandadeva, king of Gauda, who abdicated his throne and became a monk, **Santikara bhiksu**.
- ❁ Just before Sankaradeva (son of Vrisadeva) was born, Sankaracharya entered to Nepal from southern India and converted many Buddhists to Saivism. During 5th century AD, both the Saiva and Buddhist cults were supposed to have flourished side by side.
- ❁ Though the Gokarna Inscription of Lichchhavi King Amshuvarma (606-622 AD) mentions the words: '(Va) jrayana' and '(swayam) bhu'- which suggests that **Vajrayana Canon** entered Nepal at least before the 6th Century, **Mahayana cult** was in its developed form during early 6th century of Lichchavi period in Kathmandu marked by a number of viharas, chaityas, stone sculptures of **Lokeshvara Padmapani** and also mentions of the **five celestial Buddha**. The mention of Mahasanghika Bhikshu Sangha in the **Sankhu Inscription** also indicates the existence of vikchhus belonging to Mahasanghika in Kathmandu Valley at that time.
- ❁ **Huan Tsang** (7th century AD) in his travel account has made a reference about the practice of Buddhism in Kathmandu Valley and devotion of Amsuvarma and the Lichchavi King to Buddhism (Regmi 2007). His account also reveals that about two thousand monks were engaged in the study of literatures related to Hinayana and Mahayana.
- ❁ The **Handigaon inscription of Amsuvarma** (600-605 AD) can be regarded as the first inscription giving reference to Buddhism as it **mentions the name of six viharas**, including Guna Vihara, Mana Vihara, Raja Vihara, Kharjurika Vihara, Madhyama Vihara and

Samanya Vihara. **Two additional viharas** i.e. Abhayaruchi Vihara and Kalyanagupta Vihara have also been referred in another inscription (Regmi 2007).

- ❁ As per Gopalraj Vamsavali, the **Guh (or Gvan) Vihara**, situated on the site of **Vajrayogini** above the hill of **Sankhu**, is considered to be one of the oldest Viharas of Nepal Mandala, probably a pre-Lichchavi Vihara of Nepal. The Vamsavali has linked Guh Vihara as the place for meditation by **Manadeva (464-506 AD)** that resulted the creation and consecration of Boudhnath Mahachaitya (Khasti Chaitya). According to vamsavali, Manadeva was also a great Lichchavi king who promoted Buddhism while also giving equal status to Vaisnavism and Shaivism. The **Manavihara**, situated in Patan near Sivadeva Vihara, is named after the King Manadeva. The Tyagal inscription of Amshuvarma mentions the deities like Amitabha, Akshobhya, Shakyamuni, Samantakusum and Manjushree. Another Buddhist King **Shivadeva (590-604 AD)** become first a monk and then a Vajrayana Acharya.
- ❁ Lichchavi kings contributed greatly to ensure the longevity of the already flourishing Buddhism in Nepal Mandala. Lichchavi kings Simhadeva, Manadeva, Rudradeva and Narendradeva abdicated throne to enter Buddhist monkhood and ended their days in vihara. **Narendradeva** built a vihara in Alagbahal, at the southern end of Bhadgaon. During the reign of King Narendradeva, Lokeshvara Matsyendranatha entered into Nepal. Narendradeva, with support from Acharya Bandhudatta, started the practice of the chariot procession of Matsyendranath (or Lokanath or Karunamaya or incarnation of Avalokitesvara) in Patan. With the arrival of Gorakhnatha (in 850 AD) in Nepal, a new Nathapantha cult or Matsyendranath cult that mixed Hathayoga and Buddhist tantricism was evolved in Kathmandu Valley.
- ❁ Acharya Silamanju, Bandhudatta, Anangavajra, Thalarinwa, Smiriti, Buddhakirti etc. played a great role in propagating Buddhism in Kathmandu Valley during Lichchavi period.
- ❁ The **Pala kings** who ruled Bengal and Bihar in the northern India from 750-1160 AD, succeeding the Guptas, **patronized** both the **Hindu**

and the **Buddhist faiths**, eventually resulting the evolution of a new Tantric cult of Buddhism, **Vajrayana**, which later greatly influenced the religions of the mountain people of Nepal, roughly during **Thakuri Period**. The Thakuri period (or early medieval period) is marked with the flourishing of Vajrayana Buddhism, advancement in Buddhist monasticism, and cultural exchanges with India and Tibet. From the beginning of the 10th century AD, Vajrayana dominated Nepal for about 5 to 6 centuries and is still very influential in Nepalese Buddhism. Some scholars also consider that the Vihara Culture reached its height during Thakuri period, as many viharas such as Padma Chakra Mahavihara, Dharmachakra Mahavihara etc. were added during Thakuri period. King **Rudradeva** who accepted monkhood in 1028 AD is said to have retired to the Ankuli Vihara (Rudra Varna Mahavihara). King **Bhaskardeva** (1042-1052 AD) is credited for establishing several monasteries, including Itum Baha (Kesacandraparavarta Mahavihara), Kwa Baha (Hirandya Varna Mahavihara), Hemvarna Vihara etc.

✿ Though Vajrayana cult had probably entered into Nepal from Bengal, it flourished in Nepal as a synthetic product of Hindu Tantra and Buddhist Mahayana ritualism. During 7th to 11th century, Nepal not only made Kathmandu Valley a study and teaching hub for Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, but also contributed significantly to the dissemination of Buddhism into Tibet.

✿ During 7th century AD, with the marriage of **Princess Bhrikuti** (617-650 AD), the beloved daughter of Amsuvarma, with the **Tibetan King Tsrön-tsen-Gampo** (620-649 AD), Nepal Mandala started becoming a hub and transit point for Indian Buddhist Mahasiddhas traveling to Tibet and vice versa. Either Kathmandu-Banepa-Kuti Pass or Kathmandu -Kerung Pass leading to Tibet/Lhasha also served as one of the routes for transmission of Indian Buddhism to Tibet, eventually making Kathmandu Valley a transit Buddhist hub. Amsuvarma also built **Kailashkut Bhawan Palace** a famous state of the art palace in the Kathmandu Valley. **Princess Bhrikuti**, an ardent Buddhist, had carried with her the images of Buddha, Tara, Maitreya, Akshobhya and other Buddhist deities to Tibet and together with Chinese Princess **Wencheng**, she contributed to establish Buddhism in Tibet.

- ❁ King **Gunakamadeva** (986-990 AD) revived Matsyendranatha Ratha Yatra and converted four Nathapantha centers into Buddhist ones (Matsyendranath, Adinatha, Sristikantha Lokeshwara and Amoghapasa Lokeshwara).
- ❁ Charumati Vihara, Hiranyavarna Mahavihara, Rudravarna Mahavihara were some of the big viharas and Buddhist study centers in Kathmandu Valley inhabited by great scholars and priests from Nalanda, Vikramashila, Odantapuri of India and Tibet who created great collections of books. In the later stage, Bouddha Mahachaitya became an institutionalized Buddhist center for the Himalayan Buddhism due to Padmasambhava. Nagarjuna, Vasuvandhu, Santaraksita, Padmasambhava and Kamalashila were the prominent Indian Mahasiddhas and Philosophers visiting Kathmandu Valley and contributing to Buddhism. Likewise Nepalese Buddhist scholars and vikchhus such as Vagisvarakirti, Santibhadra, Anantasri, Ravindradeva, Shakyabhiksu Gautamsri, Shakyabhiksu Subhasri played a crucial role in expanding Buddhist Dharma in Kathmandu Valley and in Tibet during late Lichchavi and Thakuri period.
- ❁ **Acharya Nagarjuna** (c 150-250 CE) who founded the Madhyamika doctrine based on Prajnaparamita Sutra also visited Kathmandu Valley; stayed for a long time in Nagarjuna Hill and Santipur Cave and also acted for some time as a priest of Swayambhu Chaitya. **Acharya Vasubandhu** (400-480 AD), who composed **Adhidharmakosha** is also said to have visited Nepal to meet Sanghbhadra. He is also credited to have introduced various sutras, such as *Saddharmapundarika*, *Amitabha Vhyuha* etc.
- ❁ During 8th Century AD, Nepal Mandala became a learning and meditation hub for Tantric Masters and Siddhas and accomplished monks, including **Padmasambhava**. Tibetan scriptures suggest that Padmasambhava came to Nepal (possibly in 743 AD); stayed for four years and perfected his meditation in various sacred caves in Nepal, including Asura Cave in Pharping, Sailung and Maratika (Haleshi), Swayambhu, Vajrayogini (Sankhu) etc. before leaving for Tibet to establish the first monastery in Tibet - the Samye Monastery and

forming Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism. Legend has it that Padmasambhava subdued Dakinis and built monasteries in **Lo Gakar** in Upper Mustang and **Dho Tarap** in Upper Dolpa before completing the construction of Samye monastery in Tibet.

❁ The Nalanda Acharya and Logician **Santaraksita** came to Nepal in 743 AD and spent 6 years in Kathmandu and presented his thesis *Tattwasamgraha* to Nepalese Buddhist scholars; Indian Buddhist philosopher **Kamalasheela** visited Swayambhu and Bouddha Mahachaityas in 762 AD; Tibetan Monk **Dharmaswamim** spent 8 years in Swayambhu Chaitya in early 13th century. Towards the end of 1040 AD, **Atisha Dipankhara Srijyana** had entered Nepal en-route to Western Tibet and established Tham Vihara (or Dharmadhatu Vihara or Vikramashila Vihara). The stupa built in front of Vihara always had a brilliant disc like light shining at its top, which Atisha had witnessed and interpreted as a mandala of Buddha Kasyapa. Atisha also preached the Kalachakra system (Aisvarika) in Kathmandu Valley during his travel to Western Tibet. Vajrayana is considered to be formally consecrating in Nepal with the arrival of Padmasambha in 8th century and further getting matured with the **arrival of Atisha in the 11th century AD**. **Tilopa** (988-1069 AD), the great renunciate and mahasiddha who practiced Anuttarayoga Tantra is said to be obtaining siddhi in the cave of Pashupatinath Temple. Mahasiddha **Naropa** (956-1040 AD), a disciple of Tilopa and a founder of Six Yogas, also initiated his siddhi here in Pashupatinath. **Marpa** Lotsawa also visited Nepal several times and studied with Naropa. **Brog mi Lo-tsa-va** spent a year in Nepal under the famous Guru Santibhadra. Tibetan monks not only acquired tantric initiations, rituals, esoteric practices and texts from Newar masters, but also influenced the practices of Newars, to some extent.

❁ Soon after Tibet entering into the dark phase of disintegration and internal feud with the massacre of King Ralphachen by Langdarma, **Kasha Kings (Challa and Malla Kings)**, the descendants of Nagas emerged as a powerful ruler of the Khasha Kingdom and ruled the entire Yakche empire from 11th to 14th Century AD. Available inscriptions, chronicles, archaeological remains and literary evidences suggest that Buddhism was the court religion of the powerful Khasha kingdom. The



dominant Khasha kings who had claimed themselves as the Parama Sugata (devout follower of the Buddha) had built several Buddhist monuments with inscriptions, “Om Mane Padme Hum”. Almost all art and architectural works of the Khasha Kingdom were related to Buddhism and largely influenced by Tibetan Buddhism.

- ❁ Shikhara Style **Kakre Vihara** built during the reign of King Ashoka Challa (1255–1278 AD) in Surkhet was the most beautiful and largest monument in the kingdom equally revered by Buddhist and Hindu followers. Other significant monuments include Devals, Pillars, Naulis, Chaityas, Temples and images of Buddha and Chaitya with inscriptions in Dullu, Dailekh, Kalikot, Jumla, Sinja, Jajarkot etc.
- ❁ Buddhist monasteries of Khasha Kingdom include **Halji Gomba** (In Limi Valley), Namkha Khyung Dzong Gomba (in Yalbang Humla), Raling Gomba (near Simkot), Shey Gomba (Shey, Dolpa), Ribo Bhumpo Gonpa (Dho Tarap), Jampa Gonpa (Dho Tarap) Margom Yetsher Gonpa (Saldang), Langgon Nesar Gonpa (Bijer), Tiyaar Gomba (in Upper Mugu) and so on.
- ❁ In Khasha Kingdom, Dolpa is a district where **Bon and Buddhism** have long existed side by side, and where the age-old practices of Bon religion can still be observed through visiting Bonpo monasteries.
- ❁ In contrast to Khasha Kingdom, the Malla Period in Kathmandu Valley is considered to be but a **shaky period for Buddhism** in Nepal though it is considered to be the **golden period of Nepalese arts, and architecture, and literature**. Malla period is broadly known for the marginalization of vigorous monasticism and dominant Buddhist culture with the institutionalization of social reforms based on age-old Hindu Vedic Sastras and Manusmriti, particularly during the time of **Jaya Sthiti Malla** (1382 to 1395). Bhupatindra Malla built Pachapanna Jhyale Durbar, and Nyatapal Durbar; Siddhi Narsingha Malla built Krishna Mandir (in Patan), Pratap Malla built Hanuman Dhoka Durbar (Temple) etc. all contributed to the flourishing of Hindu religion.
- ❁ However, the Malla Kings are also credited for giving shelter to a number of priests, monks, poets, artists, and learned men who **fled**

from India, especially from Nalanda, Vikramasila and Uddandapur, on account of the Muslim invasions in Northern India during 13th Century AD bringing with them the Tantric Tradition and heritage of scholarship. Moreover, the **procession of Karunamaya** (Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara) occupied an important place in Kathmandu Valley during the Malla period. However, **Pratap Malla** also introduced Seto Matsyendranath Jatra (Procession of White Lokeshvara). Though widely known to be the codifier of the Hindu caste system, Jaya Sthiti Malla is credited for restoring the Swayambhu Mahachaitya and bringing order into the monasteries. King Yaksha Malla (1428-1480 AD) constructed the temples of Minanath, Bodhisattva Padmapani Lokeshvara.

- ❁ After the invasion of Islam in India, vast majority of the tantric practices and texts were also taken to Nepal and Tibet. Since the reign of **Jaya Sthiti Malla**, Buddhist monastic members were forced to start living family lives and intermarriages occurred between Buddhist and Hindu followers, eventually resulting the domestication of sangha and emergence of **Shakya Vikchhu** and **Vajracharyas** as householder monks. The tradition of celibate monastic life was confined only to the sanghas of Himalayan Buddhist (Tibetan Buddhist). Newar sanghas started focusing on performance of rituals drawing upon deities and powers of the Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhist tradition. The tantric Buddhism of the Newar (Vajracharyas) became the dominant for eclipsing all earlier forms (John L Locke). **Newar Buddhism** is considered to be the last representative of Indian Buddhism as it represents the oldest continuous form of Buddhism in the world. It derived its lineages from Siddha tradition of Nalanda and Vikramashila Monastic University in India, with the greater role of Shakyas and Vajracharyas. Brian B. Hodgson (in 1824 AD) has revealed the recitation of Nine Vaipulya Sutras (Navakhanda) by the Buddhist followers of Kathmandu Valley (especially the Newars), including Lalitavistara, Lankavatara, Suvarnaprabhas, Gandavyuha, Saddhaarmapundarika, Dasabhumika, Tathagataguhyaka Sutra, Samadhiraja and Astasahasika Prajnaparamita.

- ❁ During Shah Dynasty, the Newar Buddhism expanded into some business hubs in the foothills of Siwalik and the Mid Hills such as



Dharan, Dhankuta, Baglung, Tansen, Pokhara, Bandipur, Trishuli, Dolakha, Bhojpur, Chainpur etc. with the internal migration of Newar families for business purposes.

- ❁ King **Dravya Shah** (AD 1559-1570) is said to have laid the foundation of the Shah dynasty. On the day of Indrajatra in 1768 AD, the last Malla **King Jaya Prakash Malla** was dethroned by the Gorkhali Shah King Prithvi Narayan Shah. However, both Jaya Prakash Malla and Prithvi Narayan Shah contributed to the restoration of Swayambhu Mahachaitya in 18th century. Dominant influence of Hinduism and lack of vigor in the Buddhist Sangha resulted the second half of 18th century to the first quarter of the 20th century as the **darkest period in the history of Buddhism** in Nepal.
- ❁ Since mid-20th century, Theravada Buddhist reform movement was started in Kathmandu, particularly by some Newars. In 1928, Ven. Mahaprajna became a Theravada monk in Kusinagar. Ven. Mahaprajna and Ven. Amritananda started preaching the Dharma in Nepal. In 1944, **Ven. Amritananda** formed **Dharmodaya Sabha** in Sarnath, India. The 4th General Conference of the World Federation of Buddhists was held in Kathmandu in 1956 under the patronage of late King Mahendra. Various viharas such as Anandakuti, Vishwa Santi, Nagarmandap Sri Kirti (Kirtipur), Dharmakirti Dormitory (Nunary) were established in Kathmandu Valley and several viharas were established outside Kathmandu Valley, including Tansen.
- ❁ Largest number of Tibetans also came to Nepal after 1959, living mostly in and around Swoyambhu and Bouddha Mahachaitya areas. Many meditation and retreat centers were founded in Kathmandu Valley, including Kapan, Bouddha, Swayambhu, Pharping, Namobuddha. Now, Kathmandu Valley has become one of the **Global Dharma Centers** for Himalayan (Tibetan) Buddhism.
- ❁ Many Nepalese Mahasiddhas, Yogis and Siddhas such as Santibhadra, Paindapa (Nepalese Yogis), Lila Vajra (Mahasiddha), Surata Vajra aka Garab Dorje, Vak Vajra aka Ngak Dorje, Manju Vajra (Siddha), Chitherpa and Paindapa (two masters of Pharping), Luipa (Adi Siddha)

etc. not only contributed to the development and expansion of Buddhism in Nepal but also in Tibet.

3.2.2. *Expansion of Buddhism in the Central and Northern Indian Territories*

- ❁ Teaching of dharma by the Buddha during his own lifetime has played a significant role in establishing and expanding the Buddha Dharma and teachings. According to the *Anguttara Nikaya*, one of the early Pali canonical texts, Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa and Avanti were some of the powerful kingdoms out of sixteen *Mahajanapadas* (kingdoms) flourished during the time of the Buddha in between Hindukush and the Godavari shortly before the time of Shakyamuni Buddha in the 6th century BC. The Lichchavi of Vaisali, Shakyas of Kapilavastu, Koliyas of Devadaha and Ramagrama, Mallas of Pava, and Moriyas of Pippalivan were other popular states ruled under the Vijjian (Vaisalian) republic.
- ❁ Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples became able to travel through the vast array of the Ganges Plains ranging from Kajangala and Campa in the east to Varanja and Avanti in the west, and up to the foot-hills of the Himalayas including Rajgir, Varanasi, Kausambi, Sravasti, Saketa, Kapilavastu etc. and delivered dharma teachings to many people by securing pro-active and voluntary supports, cooperation and patronage from various institutions and individuals including rulers, kings, queens, ministers, merchants, yogis, laity etc.
- ❁ Yasa, a son of a rich merchant of Vanaras became the first layperson to be converted and entering the Order. Four friends of Yasa - Vimala, Subahu, Purna and Gavampati and fifty others also became the Buddha's disciple. The formal Sangha, also called **Arya Sangha**, was formed when the number of disciples became one thousand. The first five disciples were the pioneers of the Order (Sangha).
- ❁ The Buddha then reached Rajgir, met Bimbisara, the king of Magadha, his ministers and his citizens, and delivered discourses related to *danakatha*, *silakatha*, the four noble truths, the *anicca* and *anatta* of the five skandas and the doctrine of *pratityasamutpada*. Up on receiving the discourses on the Maha-Narada Jataka, the king became the *sotapanna*.

In Rajgir, Sariputta and Moggallana, the two disciples of Sanjaya, a noted spiritual teacher, also became the monk of the Order. Whereas Sariputta is considered the foremost in wisdom, Moudgalyayan is considered the foremost in psychic power. Brahmin Pippali, who is considered to be the foremost in ascetic discipline, also joined the Order in Bamboo Grove.

- ❁ Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples also visited Kapilavastu and Koliya Kingdom; delivered discourses on Dharma, and converted many Shakyas and Koliyas to Buddhism.
- ❁ The Lichchhavis of Vaisali built the Kutagarasala in the Mahavana as the residence of the Buddha from where the Buddha delivered several jatakas such as Sigala, the Telovada, the Bahiya, the Ekapanna and so on. Upon request by Anathapindika, a wealthy treasurer, the Buddha came to Sravasti where the merchant gave the Sangha the Jetavana Grove (monastery). Jetavana became the headquarters of Buddha's retreat where he spent his significant years (about 24 years) preaching the dharma to his disciples.
- ❁ Ajatasattu, the king of Magadha, built several Dharma-Chaitya and repaired 18 Mahaviharas at Rajgir. King Prasenadi of Kosala built the Kajakarama monastery near Jetvava which was later given to the nuns by the king. Canda Pajjota, the king of Avanti, also built several monasteries at Kuraraghara, Papatapabbata and Makkarakata. Udena, the king of Vatsa also built several monasteries in his country and used to invite many monks to his palace for meals. Pukkusati, the king of Gandhara, is also said to have joined the Sangha and preached on the Dhatuvibhanga Sutta by the Buddha up on the king's homage to the Buddha at Rajgir. Rudrayana, the king of Roruka (the Lower Indus Valley) is also said to have joined the Buddhist Sangha and established Buddhism in his kingdom during the time of the Buddha (Kanai 2009).
- ❁ Distribution of the relics of the Buddha and construction of relic stupas by the respective kingdoms also played a significant role for the continuation of dharma. The Shakyas of Kapilvastu, Koliyas of Ramagrama and Devadaha, Ajatasattu of Magadha, Mallas of

Kushinagara & Pava, Bulis of Allacappa, and Kalamas of Kesaputta built stupas in their respective kingdoms over the respective share of the relics of the Buddha they received.

- ❁ Organization of Buddhist councils, soon after the mahaparinirvana of the Buddha, also contributed to the further purification of sanghas and expansion of teachings by means of formulation and documentation of Buddhist scriptures in the form of Tripitaka, propagation of various doctrines/canons and dissemination of these teachings and doctrines to the wider audience through the different channels of monks, dharma missionaries, disciples, masters, rulers and so on. The first, second and third Buddhist councils held in Rajgir, Vaisali and Pataliputra respectively formed the complete Tripitaka in Pali language with three separate baskets: Vinaya Pitaka, Sutra Pitaka and Abidharma Pitaka.
- ❁ From the time of the king Ashoka to King Kaniska (the 3rd century BC to 1st Century AD), Buddhism had undergone a great change and development in India and Buddhist philosophy was spread throughout the continent.
- ❁ The reign of Emperor Ashoka (circa 271-235 BC, some say 271-232 BC) marks a significantly important stage in the development and expansion of Buddhism almost throughout the Mauryan empire, stretching from present day Afghanistan to Bengal. Racked by the remorse following the bloody conquest of Kalinga, Ashoka himself got converted to Buddhism. In the ninth year of his reign (in 261 BC) he adopted Buddhism as his state religion. Ashoka popularized the teachings of Dharma for the first time by endowing temples, collecting the scriptures, instituting festivals, and generally making the doctrine more accessible by writing and carving many inscriptions in Pali language. By erecting edicts on rocks and pillars. King Ashoka proclaimed himself to be the first dharma king to rule not by military force, but by the power of the Buddhist dharma. Numerous edicts engraved on rocks, caves and stone pillars, including one erected in 249 BC in Lumbini, and great stupas (as many as 84,000) are among the earliest surviving Buddhist architecture with written testimony of the subcontinent.

- ❁ The third Buddhist Council held under the patronage of the dharma king, Ashoka also formed and deputed *Dhamma Missionaries* to disseminate dharma teaching in nine various regions (countries), including Kashmir and Gandhar (Majihantika/Mahyantika), Mahismandala/Mysore (Mahadeva Thera), Vanavasi/South India (Rakkhita Thera), Aparantika/Northern Gujarat and Sindh (Yona Dhammarakkhita), Maharastra (Mahadhammarakkhita), Yona/Greece (Maharakkhita), Himavanta/Himalayan region (Majjhima), Suvarnabhumi/Myanmar and Thailand (Sona and Uttata), Lakshadweep and Srilanka (Mahindra and Sanghamitra).
- ❁ Majority of the cave monuments, both monasteries (vihara) and assembly hall (Chaityagriha) including those of **Sanchi and Bhaja** were constructed during the 2nd to 1st century BC.
- ❁ Buddhism is believed to have introduced in **Gandhara and Central Asia** during the time of Mauryan Emperor Ashoka and Kusana King-Kaniska II and it flourished throughout the entire frontier until the 10th century AD. Travel Account of Huan Tsang (in 7th century) suggests that he encountered Hinayana communities in Balkh and Bamiyan, and Mahayana at Kapisa, and both Hinayanaya and Mahayana at Hadda and Gandhara. His travel account also suggest that Bamiyan in Afghanistan had 10,000 monks, whereas Sindh area had 460 monasteries, and the coastal region towards Iran had 180 monasteries and 11,000 monks (Johan Elverskog, 2010).
- ❁ By the 1st Century, Theravada Buddhism was well established in Bactria and Gandhara. Buddhism was first introduced to Central Asia, in the form of Sravakayana (Theravada), by the Ashokan Dharma Missionary from India to Kabul Plain via the Khyber pass and then reached to Gandhara by crossing the Hindu Kush Himalaya. From Gandhara, it reached to Bamiyan Valley, kingdoms of Bactria, Sogdiana, Parthia and finally to Uzbekistan.
- ❁ During the 1st Century AD, Mahayana Buddhism started expanding towards Central Asia via Gilgit (Kashmir) to Khotan and other hubs in Tarim Basin. The 2nd Century AD was the golden age of Buddhism in

Central Asia as the Central Asia and the surrounding territories were dominated by the Kusana Empire, including the prominent Kaniska II, who convened the 4th Buddhist Council of the Sarvastivada School in Kashmir, compiled the **jnanaprasthanam** and formed the basis of Mahayana Buddhism.

- ❁ A number of monasteries and stupas were built in **Gandhara region and Bamiyan** became the seat of Buddhist learning and the arts until the mid-6th Century AD. Mahayana Buddhism brought the new concept of Bodhisattvas and began to make and worship the images of the Buddha. Buddhist iconography reached its height during the time of Kanishka and countless images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas were carved in Greeco-Roman style and Gandhara became the great center of Buddhist art during the reign of Kushana. During the same period, Mathura School became another important center of Buddhist art where Indian style of Buddha images were produced by the indigenous artists.
- ❁ In the early period of 7th century, Vajrayana canon evolved, probably in the Western Bengal. Kashmir became and remained a vital region for Tantric Buddhism until the 14th Century AD. The Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra (Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra), was written in Kashmir in the 4th century AD
- ❁ The present day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the ancient kingdom of Gandhara, which included Swat Valley, Taxila, Buner, Bajaur region etc. were the key Buddhist sites in Pakistan. **Gandhara** also played important role in the development and propagation of Buddhist religion. Gandharan civilization (6th century BC to 5th century AD) is credited with **creating the first carved images of Shakyamuni Buddha** in stone, stucco, terra-cotta and bronze. People flocked to Gandhara to collect the Buddhist texts and for pilgrimage.
- ❁ **Swat** had been a central valley in ancient Uddiyana, where Buddhism prevailed over a millennium. Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsian, had recorded about 500 Buddhist monasteries in Swat, all belonging to the Hinayana School. In the 7th Century AD Huan Tsang recorded about 1400 Buddhist monasteries with 18000 priests. Swat Valley had always been



a sacred place for Tibetan Buddhist followers as it was the birthplace of Padmasambhava, the the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. Due to its geographical position, it had an important link with the ancient caravan routes which served as a commercial and cultural medium between China and the West.

- ❁ **Bamiyan**, lying at the heart of the Hindu Kush, en-route to the caravan trail from Bactria and Taxila; was in the climax of Buddhist religion during the time Huan Tsang travelled through in 623 AD. Bamiyan Valley consisted of 740 man-made caves cut into the rocks and several **colossal images/statues**. Unlike the Indian cave monasteries, these caves did not house the monastic communities. As described by Huan Tsang, the cliff has three Buddha carved out of the rock (53m tall, 38m tall and unknown height of Buddha in Mahaparinirvana).
- ❁ The **Harsa Vardana** (606-647 AD) was the last Buddhist monarch in Central Asia. By the middle of the mid-8th Century, Islam controlled the Silk Road trade and Islamization process gradually entered into the rural areas. By the middle of the 9th Century, Buddhism in Central Asia was gradually displaced by Islam and by the 15th Century, Buddhism had completely disappeared from Central Asia. Sogdians, who were the famous Buddhist missionaries in China and elsewhere, though never institutionalized Buddhism in their own place, Central Asia.
- ❁ By 7th Century AD, the Mahayana Buddhism had become deep rooted in the **Tarim Basin** and had further reached to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Samarkand, Tajkistan and Kyrgyzstan as the international trade route moved to the northern side of the Taklamakan Desert along the southern edge of the Tianshan mountain. Development of Buddhism in Tarim Basin had played a crucial role in the expansion of Buddhism into China, Tibet, Korea and Japan. Khotan became an international Buddhist center, housing as many as hundred monasteries with some five hundred Buddhist monks. During the time, Kucha was predominated by Hinayana Buddhism whereas Khotan and Yarkand were predominated by Mahayana. Miran, Tumchug (300 km east of Kashgar), Kucha, Kizil (70km to the northwest of Kucha), Turfan area were some of the important Buddhist sites in the region.

- ✿ The flowering of Buddhism around the Bay of Bengal and in Inner Asia from the 8th to 11th centuries was occurring at the same time that Islam was making inroads on the other side of the sub-continent-in north and west India and Central Asia (Johan Elverskog, 2010). During the consolidation of Muslim power in northwest India and Central Asia, the Buddhist world had developed into two new religio-economic units: Buddhist Mediterranean around the Bay of Bengal and Tantric bloc in Tibet (in the 11th century).
- ✿ By the beginning of 11th century AD, Afghan and Gandhara were conquered by the Muslims and only Kashmir escaped for another 3 centuries in the face of the inexorable advance by Islam. Bamiyan and Fondukisthan are the two Buddhist sites that remained saved from that long lost time. Most of the sites, including the big Buddha statue, were vandalized in 2001 by Taliban.
- ✿ **Silk Route** became the symbol of commerce which linked **Roman** and later **Byzantine world with the capital of China**. Merchants, trade caravans were the primary agents for the adoption, adaptation and cultural assimilation of Buddhism into religious landscape of Central Asia linking India, Tibet, China, and the Roman Empire through Silk Road (Keith A. Leitich in Northern Buddhism in History 2008).
- ✿ The rise of maritime trade resulted in migration of Buddhist merchants and followers toward the new trading networks in both the north and south along the rim of the Indian Ocean. The flowering of Buddhism around the Bay of Bengal and in Inner Asia was occurring from the 8th to 11th centuries at the same time that Islam was making inroads on the other side of the sub-continent-in north and west India and Central Asia (Johan Elverskog, 2010). By 11th century, the Buddhist world had developed into two new religio-economic units: Buddhist Mediterranean around the Bay of Bengal and Tantric bloc in Tibet.
- ✿ However, after the 8th century Buddhism began an inexorable decline in the majority of the Indian Subcontinent. From 8th to 11th century, Buddhism was under severe pressure by Hindus with mainly Shankara's Advaita Vedanta and Bhakti system, and Islamic invasion after 13th



century eventually collapsed Buddhism in India. **Muhammad Bhakiyar Khalaji** (or Khilji) massacred the Buddhist monks and scholars and destroyed Nalanda and Vikramshila universities. It is said around 9 million books were burnt and it took almost 6 months to settle the fire in Nalanda. During the Islamic invasion, numerous small pieces of sculptures and scriptures were taken by the masters and refugees to neighboring countries, notably the Himalayan countries such as Nepal.

- ❁ Many dharma masters and mahasiddhas contributed to propagate and expand the major Buddhist canons such as Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana and its doctrines. **Acharya Nagarjuna** (c 150-250 CE) founded the Madhyamika school (Middle Path) which became influential in the Middle Ganges basin and in Nalanda University in Bihar. Nagarjuna is credited with re-discovering the hidden treasures of the Buddha, which included the Prajna Paramita and Avatsamsaka Sutras. In the early 5th century AD, **Asanga** founded the Yogacara School, the second major Mahayana school.
- ❁ **Naropa** studied Buddhism in Kashmir, stayed for 6 years in Pullahari and wrote several commentaries on Guhyasamajatantra, Abhidharma-uttaratantra, Samvara-udbhava and Hevajratantra. Naropa taught in many places and established a number of monasteries in Kashmir and Zanskar. Born in Uddiyana (of Swat Valley), **Padmasambhava** (8th century) is credited with bringing Vajrayana to Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan, and is revered as the founder of the Nyingma school.
- ❁ The growing number of Buddhist scholars and scholarly discourses on Buddhist teachings and philosophies eventually resulted the establishment of many universities such as Nalanda University, Vikramasila University etc. in India. Gopala I (circa 750-770 AD) founded the Pala dynasty, and Buddhism expanded hugely under the reigns of Dharmapala and Devapala. Dharmapala founded the University of Vikramashila in Bihar that specialized in the teaching of esoteric doctrines. Profound Buddhist scholars such as Acharya Nagarjuna (c 150-250 CE) and many other scholars were closely associated with the Buddhist Universities such as Nalanda.

3.2.3. *Expansion of Buddhism into China, Tibet, Bhutan and Mongolia*

i. **China**

- ✿ Buddhism is believed to have entered into China in the form of Mahayana during the second wave of Buddhism during the reign of Han dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD). By the mid-1st Century, Mahayana Buddhism was said to have brought to China by the Dharma missionaries, Indo-Scythian, Sogdian, Parthian and Indian merchants from Gilgit, Khotan and other cities of the Tarim Basin crossing the Takla Makan Desert.
- ✿ Gansu, Hebei, Henan, Shaanxi, Shandong, Sichuan and Xinjiang are some of the ancient Buddhist sites in China. **Chinese Ashokan Statue** (dated to 551 AD) in Sichuan Province is one of the highlighted Buddhist arts of Indian Gupta period in China.
- ✿ Indian monks started visiting China from the 4th century for the propagation of Buddha dharma and for translating the sutras. At the same time, Chinese monks also started making pilgrimage to India primarily for learning Sanskrit and sutras, learning Buddhist dharma and making pilgrimage to the sacred Buddhist sites. Eminent pilgrimage visits to India by Chinese monks such as Fa-hsian (377-422 AD), Huan Tsang (602-664 AD), and I-Tsing (Yijing) (635-713 AD) contributed a lot in acquiring knowledge on Buddhism and Sanskrit in India and transmitting it to China.
- ✿ Chinese pilgrims followed routes along the **ancient Silk Roads** on the northern and southern fringes of the **Tarim Basin** and didn't cross the Central Asian mountain plateau that later became known as Tibet, till the beginning of Tang period. Nepal became a transit passage for Chinese and Indian pilgrims soon after the Tang dynasty in China. Improved relations between the Tang Empire and the Tibetan kingdom in the early 7th century allowed the opening of route across Himalayan passes through Tibet.
- ✿ The opening of this route also seems to have coincided with the flourishing of trade as well as cultural and religious activities in



the Kathmandu Valley and adjacent regions under the Lichchavi kings, especially **King Amsuvarman** (ruled ca 605-621) and **Narendradeva** (ruled ca 641-680).

- ✿ The famous Chinese traveler **Fa-hsian** used both the mainland silk route and maritime routes during his complete pilgrimage to India and recorded his pilgrimage experience in a book named **Fo-guo Ji** (A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms). He left Xi'an, China in 399 AD via Zhang-ye, Dunhuang, Khotan, Kabul, Peshawar, Punjab and entered into the valley of the Ganges in Central India. After learning Buddhism and gathering a great many Buddhist sutras, returned to China via the sea route in 412 AD. He left India to Sri Lanka, Srivijaya, Malacca, Sumatra, and to South China Sea and arrived Qing-zhou in Shandong.
- ✿ 7th century Tang dynasty celebrated monk **Huan Tsang** started journey from Chang'an in 627 AD; continued his journey via Gandhara and entered to Central India. After staying and studying Buddhism in India for 17 years, he returned home (Chang'an) via the southern Silk Road in 645 AD. Huan Tsang recorded his pilgrimage routes and his findings in his book **Da-tang Xi-yu Ji** (Pilgrimage to the West in the Tang Dynasty).
- ✿ In the summer of 631 AD, **Huan Tsang** reached Kapilavastu from Sravasti. He visited Sangarama and many other sacred sites in Kapilavastu, including the site of Krakuchhanda Buddha, Kanakmuni Buddha, Sagarhawa, Sarakuwa etc. and after walking about 50 km, he arrived at the pagoda (it should be the Ashokan Pillar at Lumbini) built by Emperor Ashoka. He then visited Ramagrama and then moved to Kushinagar and Sarnath. After Sarnath, he visited Vaishali and proceeded to Bodhgaya. He then headed to Nalanda University and reached there in the autumn of 631 AD. HuanTsang became the disciple of Silabhadra (529-645 AD), the chief abbot of Nalanda. Huan Tsang finally left India for China via land in the late spring of 643 carrying a large number of Buddhist books and scriptures. He brought back 699 Buddhist scriptures, seven invaluable Buddhist sculptures, over

100 Sarira relics and exotic plants and flowers.

- ✿ I-Tsing travelled through the maritime route back and forth from 671 to 695 C.E via the southeast coast of China, including Guangzhou, Jiaozhou, Kedah, Srivijaya, and several ports in the Bay of Bengal. I-Tsing recorded his pilgrimage routes in his book **Nan-hai Ji-gui Nei-fa Zhuan** (A Record of Buddhist Practices Sent Home from South and Southeast Asia).
- ✿ Bodhidharma who was said to be an Indian arrived in Guangzhou in the 5th century and became the **founder of Chan Temple** which, after the major persecutions of 843-845 AD, together with Amidism became **one of the two principal Buddhist schools in China** and remained so far four centuries until the revival of Vajrayana under the Yuan emperors between 1260-1368.
- ✿ The first Chinese monastery the **White Horse (Baimasi)** in China is believed to have constructed at Luoyang in 148 AD by **An Shigao**, a missionary of Parthian origin. The collapse of the Han dynasty (206 BC -220 AD) encouraged the expansion of Buddhism in China.
- ✿ During the 4th century AD, Buddhism and Daoism were the subject of much controversy. Buddhism continued to enjoy imperial protections including the complete reunification of China by the Sui dynasty (581-681 AD). The first Sui sovereign, Wendi (r. 581-600), declared himself Chakravartin, the idea monarch in Buddhist beliefs.
- ✿ The first period (618-755 AD) of the Tang dynasty **coincided with the high point of Buddhism** in China. The **Chan School** (Dhyana in Sanskrit) experienced an unprecedented development during the period of 1127 to 1279 AD.
- ✿ **Kublai Khan** (r. 1260-1294) who became emperor of China and founded the Yuan dynasty (1260-1368), **converted to Buddhism** and increased the number of Buddhist religious foundations.



ii. Tibet

✿ Though surrounded by many Buddhist countries and areas heavily influenced by Buddhism, most notably, India, Nepal, China, the Tarim Basin, Kashmir etc. Buddhism entered into Tibet quite later, during 7th century AD, about 13 hundred years later than the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. Although, Tibetan traditions suggest that Buddhism in Tibet was introduced during the **reign of Lha-tho-tho-ri** (233 AD). However, Tibetan chronicles and other published documents propose that Buddhism was transmitted in Tibet through the two different phases of diffusion of Buddhism; first during 7th to 8th century AD and second during 11th century AD.

✿ The first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet started during the time of First Dharma King **Tsong Tsong-Gampo** (r. 618-648 AD), with his marriage to Buddhist princess Bhrikuti from Nepal and Weng'chen from China and construction of Buddhist temples such as Jokhang in Lhasa, and completed with the huge contributions from the Second and Third Dharma Kings: **Trisong Detsen** (r 755 to 794 AD) and **Tri Rapolhachen** (r 817-837 AD) during 8th and 9th century respectively. With the contribution of **Great Buddhist Pandit Santaraksita** and **Great Tantric Master Padmasambhava**, the first diffusion of Buddhism resulted the establishment of first monastery in Tibet (Samye), first monastic Singha, development of Tibetan script and translation of Sanskrit written Buddhist scriptures into Tibetan, and foundation of **Nyingma school** of Tibetan Buddhism. Recognizing the contributions, the two princesses from Nepal and China are still venerated and worshipped in Tibet as Green Tara (Harit Tara) and White Tara (Sweta Tara), respectively, whereas the three dharma kings, Tsong Tsong-Gampo, Trisong Detsen, and Rapolha Chen are venerated as the incarnations of Avalokitesvara, Manjushree, and Vajrapani.

✿ After passing through the Dark Age for more than one hundred years, Buddhism again re-flourished for second time in Tibet during the late 11th century with the contributions from the Great

monks and Tantric Masters, including **Atisha Dipankara**. Besides further advancing the Nyingma tradition, the second diffusion of Buddhism also raised the seed of more traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, including **Sakya, Kagyu and Gelug**.

- ✿ Tibetan chronicles, Chronicle of Laddakh and other various published books, including Blue Annals describe that the entire Tibet was dominated by Bon followers practicing **animism and shamanism** (both Black Bon and White Bon); Zhang Zhung (Mt. Kailash area) being the epicentre, before they were dethroned during 7th and 8th century by Yarlung dynasty kings.
- ✿ During the time of 38th Yarlung Dynasty King Trisong Detsen (r 755 to 794 AD) Buddha Dharma and Shangha were established in Tibet with the help from great Indian masters such as **Santaraksita** and tantric mahasiddhas such as **Padmasambhava** from India. The first monastery in Tibet - **Samye was established in 779 AD**, following the model of Odantapuri in northern India and seven Tibetan youths were given sermon; became first monks in Tibet and formed a **community of monks** (Sangha). Buddhism was declared the state religion by King Trisong Detsen and a large number of Buddhist texts, including **Kangyur** (Buddha's sermon) and **Tengyur** (a religious text) were translated into the Tibetan language.
- ✿ The 39th Yarlung dynasty Dharma King **Tri Ralpachen** (r 817-837 AD) further contributed to the flourishing of dharma through intense translation of Buddhist scriptures and strengthening monastic traditions. He even had donned the dress of a Buddhist monk, for these reasons he was assassinated by Langdarma in 837 AD.
- ✿ **Langdarma**, the grandson of King Trisong Detsen, and the 42th king (r. 838-842) of Yarlung dynasty, a protector of Bon tradition, killed his brother Ralpachen; destroyed Buddha dharma in Tibet and re-established Bon as the official religion of Tibet. Surprisingly, Lagdharma too was assassinated by a Buddhist monk named

Lhalung Pelgye Dorje in 842, entering Tibet into a dark age of feudal fragmentation and civil war for about 100-150 years.

- ✿ By 978 AD, the residues of Buddhism began to be re-propagated in different parts of Tibet. Tibetan renaissance appeared prominently with the help of great mahasiddhas and masters, including Atisha (Jowo Je Palden Atisha) from West Bengal, India. The arrival of **Atisha Dipankara Shrijnana** (980-1054 AD) is considered to be the key milestone event for the second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet. At the request of **Lha Lama Yeshe O** (King Jangchubwo), the grandson of king Kyi-de Nyi-ma-gon, Atisha came to Tibet; wrote a book, 'Lamp to the Path of Enlightenment' (Byang-chub lam-gyi sgron-ma) for the king, and delivered teachings of dharma in Tibet and distinguished the doctrinal differences between the Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism and purified monastic traditions.
- ✿ Atisha introduced Sarma (new treasure), later known as Kadam (pa) one of the doctrines was followed by his chief disciple Dromton or **Dromtonpa Gyelwe Jungne** (1005-1064), the founder of Reting monastery, Tibet. Lha Lama Yeshe O was observing that the practice of Buddhism in western Tibet was degenerating and he decided to send twenty-one lads to Kasmir to learn Sanskrit and to study the Buddhist doctrine. Of those twenty-one, only two were survived due to the heat and rigors of the journey and these two lived to become famous translators in western Tibet called Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) and Lekpe Shenrab.
- ✿ **Rinchen Zangpo** founded one hundred eight monasteries in Guge, Purang, Ladhak areas. Also known as Samye monastery of western Tibet, **Tholing monastery** was the first in western Tibet built during the reign of Lha Lama Yeshe O and under the abbot of Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo. **Rincheling Monastery** in Halji (Waltse) village, Humla was the **last monastery** founded by Rinchen Zangpo.
- ✿ **Guge** ruled by the descendants of the 16 kings of Yarlung dynasty

for over 700 years from 9th to 17th Century became a safe harbour for the persecuted Buddhists and later they revived the Buddhism and Guge as a Buddhist Kingdom. Guge later played a significant role in spreading Buddhist doctrines. Probably in 1624 AD, P. Antonio de Andrade, a Portuguese missionary reached the capital of Guge (Zhaburang) via northern India and the king tried to establish **Catholicism** as a new religious weapon against his own Buddhist monks. The rebellion of Guge monks and invasion of Laddakh ended the glory of Guge in 17th Century.

- ✿ Tibet was ruled by **Sakyas** from 1073 AD with the establishment of first **Sakya monastery** by Khon Konchok Gyalpo till 1358 AD when central Tibet came under the control of the Gelug tradition. The **Gelug** tradition remained prominent in Tibet from 1358 AD with the construction of first Gelug monastery, Ganden monastery by great master **Je Tsongkhapa** in 1409 AD. The succeeding **Dalai Lama** and their successors became the spiritual and temporal leaders of Tibet until Tibet came under the full control of China in 1950 and the exile of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1959. Besides Santaraksita, Padmasambhava, Kamalashila, other great scholars and mahasiddhas who contributed to the revival and propagation of Buddhism in Tibet include Tilopa (989-1069 AD), Naropa (1016-1100 AD), Marpa Chokyi Lodro (1012-1097), Milarepa (1040-1123 AD), Gampopa (1079-1153 AD) etc.

iii. Bhutan

- ✿ Legends have it that Buddhism entered first into Bhutan in the form of Tantric Vajrayana during 8th century with the arrival of great tantric master **Padmasambhava** (Guru Rinpoche), in Bumthang who subdued the widely prevailed Bon deities, including eight classes of demons, and converted them as protector deities. Padmasambhava is believed to have hidden several termas in Bumthang area which were later revealed by tertön **Pema Lingpa** in the 17th century.
- ✿ Many religious masters of Sakyapa, Drukpa Kagyupa, Chanzampa, Kathogpa and Nyingmapa came to Bhutan from Tibet during

13th century and started establishing monasteries of the various traditions. **Kathogpa tradition** was spread in Bhutan during 15th century by the abbot of Kathog Monastery-Shayla Yeshe Bumpa from Tibet. Bhutan entered into the **modern Buddhism** only after the arrival of **Ngawang Namgyal** (also disputed as Gyalwang Drukchen in Tibet) a young **incarnate of the Drukpa tradition** in 1616 AD. He became **the Shabdrung** (the spiritual leader of Bhutan), and transformed the country profoundly. Today, Vajrayana Buddhism is the **state religion** and Drukpa Kagyu and Nyingma-pa are the most prominent schools in Bhutan. Paro Taksang Monastery (Tiger Nest Monastery) is one of the big icons for Bhutan.

iv. **Mongolia**

- ✿ In 1247 AD, Mongolian prince Godan Khan conquered Tibet and gave temporal authority over Tibet to Lama Kunga Gyaltsé (known as Sakya Pandit), one of the earliest major figures in Sakya lineage. In 1254, Mongol emperor Kublai Khan invited Chogyal Phagpa for teachings; and made Buddhism the state religion of Mongolia.
- ✿ In 1578 AD, Mongol ruler Alshan Khan offered the title 'Dalai Lama' to Sonam Gyatso (1543-1588 AD) and in 1642 AD the 5th Dalai Lama obtained the semi-divine leadership after obtaining the temporal and spiritual leadership of Tibet from the Mongol ruler Gushri Khan. With the influence of Dalai Lama, most Mongols today practice the **Gelug tradition** (Yellow Hat) of Tibetan Buddhism.

3.2.4. *Expansion of Buddhism in South and South-East Asian Countries*

i. **Bangladesh**

- ✿ Mahasthangar, Paharpur (Somapura), Bikrampur, Bharat Bhayna Mainamati and the relics of Chittagong are the key Buddhist sites in the present day Bangladesh.

- ✿ Bangladesh holds a unique place in the history of Indian Buddhism as it was the last stronghold of Indian Buddhism where it survived as a socio-cultural force until the twelfth century AD. It is also claimed that Bengal was the home to a Tantric Buddhism.
- ✿ The extensive ruins of **Mahasthangarh** represent Pundranagar, the provincial capital of Pundravardhan Bhukti, was established by the Mauryans in the 3rd century BC. Historical significance makes **Mahasthangarh** an ideal tourist site for religious and cultural tourism for all three major religions of SAARC countries.
- ✿ The most imposing Buddhist monument is the gigantic monastery at Paharpur, known as **Somapura Mahavihara** in Naogaon district. This second largest single monastery, south of the Himalayas was erected by Dharmapala, the great Pala emperor, in the 8th century CE
- ✿ The famous Buddhist scholar named **Atisha** was born in the city of Bikrapur in Bangladesh during the Pala Dynasty, who spread Mahayana Buddhism into Nepal and Tibet.
- ✿ Vihara at Paharpur in Rajshahi district, Bhasu Vihara at Mahasthan in Bogra district, Vikramapur Vihara in Dacca district, Bhavadeva Vihara on Mainamati Hill in Samatata, and Pandit Vihara in Chittagong district were the viharas of 7th to 12th century A.D.,

ii. Sri Lanka

- ✿ Sri Lanka is considered to be the Headquarters for the Theravada Buddhism in the present world. Known as Ceylon until 1972, Sri Lanka not only became the centre of the Theravada order of Buddhism but also the transit point for the transmission of Buddhism into the countries of South-East Asia. Spread of Buddhism in Ceylon took place during the time of Ashoka and Kaniska. The sacred Bodhi Tree Shrine and the Temple of Tooth Relic are some of the most significant Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka along with other built sacred monuments.
- ✿ Early chronicles and epigraphic evidences suggest that Mahinda,



the beloved son of Emperor Ashoka founded the **First Sangha at Mihintale**, established the **Mahavihara** (Grand Monastery) at **Anuradhapura** and the first stupa, **Thuparama Dagaba** in Sri Lanka during 3rd century BC. Mahinda also built the monastic complex of Mirisavatiya and erected the largest stupa (dagaba).

❁ **Sanghamitta** (the sister of Mahinda), the Nun, established the Vikchhuni Sangha in Sri Lanka and brought a shoot of the Bodhi Tree, a distinguished relic, to Sri Lanka from Bodh Gaya. Around 89 BC, under the reign of Vattagamani, a schism occurred within the **Mahaviharavasin**, leading to the foundation of the **Abhayagirivihara** (Dharmmarucika). During the reign of Mahasena (334-362 AD), the rivalry between Mahaviharavasin and Abhayagirivasin led to the foundation of Jetavanarama (Jetavana Vihara), the largest Vihara built by Mahasena.

❁ Under the reign of Sirimeghavanna (301-328), a Buddhist tooth was brought from Kalinga (Orissa) and installed in the Abhayagirivihara. During the reign of Parakramabahu I (r. 1153-1186 AD), **Polonnaruwa** became another Buddhist hot spots in Sri Lanka. In 1160 AD, the Supreme Order (Sangha Nikaya) was formed.

❁ During the twelfth century AD, Sri Lanka became a second “Holy Land” of Buddhism. It became a sacred Buddhist land for monks of Myanmar throughout the 13th to 15th centuries for ordination, training under the Sihala Sangha. Sigiriya and Adam’s Peak are other additional Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka. **Sigiriya (Lion Rock)** used to be the Buddhist monastery until 14th century after the King Kassapa (477-495 AD) made Sigiriya his kingdom. Pilgrimage to worship the foot print on the **Adam’s Peak** is considered as one of the most meritorious act.

iii. Myanmar (Burma)

❁ Buddhism is believed to have entered into Myanmar, presumably established Theravada Buddhism in **Thaton**, during 3rd century BC with the arrival of dharma missionaries Sona and Uttara sent

by Emperor Ashoka in various stages. Whereas the Mahayana Buddhism entered the country during 3rd century AD, the Vajrayana entered only during 9th century AD.

- ❁ Legend suggests that Buddhism was **first introduced in Irrawaddy Basin** during the **5th century**. Burmese who established themselves in the middle basin of Irrawaddy and founded their capital city of Pagan in 849 AD gradually abandoned their animist practices and became adherents of Buddhism. More than 2000 Buddhist structures were built in the capital city Pagan and its surroundings during 9th and 10th centuries. Lokananda stupa (mid-9th century), Shwesandaw stupa (mid-9th century), Seinnyetnyima stupa (mid-11th century) are some of the remarkable monuments of Pagan.
- ❁ The King **Anawrahta** (r. 1040-1077 AD) of Pagan who unified the country was converted to Theravada Buddhism by a monk Shin Arahan. The **Shwedagon Stupa**, the most beautiful creation of Burmese art, was built in Rangoon to house the hairs of the Buddha. The construction work started from the middle of the 18th century (1759 AD). King Alaungpaya, founder of Rangoon, ordered that the entire structure be systematically **covered in gold**. Burma hosted the 5th Great Buddhist Council in 1868-1871 AD. After getting full independence from British Empire, Burma again hosted the 6th Great Buddhist Council in 1954-1956 AD.

iv. **Maldives**

- ❁ Maldives is believed to have remained as a Buddhist country up to 1153 AD. Though very little was done to explore more about Buddhism in Maldives. H.C.P. Bell, a British commissioner of the Ceylon Civil Service who visited Maldives thrice in 1879 AD is the first person ever to study Buddhist remains in Maldives. In 1920 and 1922, he studied the Buddhist mounds in Addu, Hithadhoo, Fuvahmulak and Hadhdhunmathi atoll and confirmed that by the fourth century AD, the ancient Maldives followed Theravada Buddhism (originating from Ceylon).



v. Cambodia: The Khemer Empire

- ✿ Buddhism is believed to have entered into Siam as early as the 1st century AD. By the end of the 5th century, Buddhism, particularly the Mahayana, had spread in Funam (Cambodia) due to the flow of merchants between India and China. Scripture has it that King **Kaudinya Jayavarman** (circa 478-514 AD) had maintained regular relations with China. Nagasena, an Indian Buddhist Monk is said to have brought the Chinese Emperor gifts from his ruler, which included Buddha statues made in Funan.
- ✿ For several hundred years, the Buddhism and Brahmanical traditions coexisted in Cambodia. However, the installation of the royal cult of Shiva on the hill of Phnom Kulen by Jayavarman II (r. 802-850) in 802 AD relegated Buddhism to the margins for several centuries in the shadow of official Hinduism. **Buddhism (Mahayana Buddhism) became the** official religion and the foundation of the state **during Jayavarman VII** (circa 1181-1219). The greatest work of Jayavarman VII is the construction of the city of Angkor Thom and at its center the building of the Bayan temple.
- ✿ Buddhism again had a strong presence during the early and late phases of the Khemer Empire (late 12th to early 13th century). During the twelve century AD, a Burmese monk introduced the Theravada tradition into Cambodia and with the support from the Khemer ruler, Mahayana tradition was eventually displaced from Cambodia. During the **reign of Jayavarman VII (r. 1243-1307)**, a violent persecution against Buddhism led to the mutilation and destruction of numerous statues. Tantric themes and the majority of Mahayana depictions disappeared at the end of 13th and during the 14th century. Later, Theravada Buddhism became the official religion of Cambodia. In 1975 AD, the Khemer King freed the country from French colonies but **destroyed Buddhism** severely.

vi. Thailand

- ✿ The Angkor civilization continuously became the source of inspiration for flourishing Buddhism in Thailand. From the end

of the 6th century until the 11th century, the Theravada Buddhism dominated the religious life of **Mon population** during the reign of **Dvaravati**, in present day Thailand until the Khmer armies Suryavarman I or Jayavarman VII ended the Dvaravati reign. Mahayana schools occupied second rank during the time.

- ❁ **The Thai people** (originally from the Nanchao in Yunnan) penetrated through upper tributaries of the Chao Phraya and the Mekong River and came into power in the 13th century. Thai people gradually converted to Theravada Buddhism by their contact with the Mon population.
- ❁ Under the reign of King Loe Thai (r. 1318-1347), a Sinhalese monk from Burma, introduced the order of **Forest Monks**. The pious **King Tilokarat** in 14th century erected the **Phra Chedi** at Wat Chedi Chet Yot in Chiang Mai to celebrate the 2nd millennium since the birth of the Buddha.
- ❁ In 1782, Rama I (r. 1782-1809) founder of the **Chakri dynasty** moved the capital to Bangkok and started preserving and building many monasteries. Wat Phra Keo (The Emerald Buddha Temple) is the most sumptuous temple in the capital (1785).

vii. Srivijaya

- ❁ The large quantity of Avalokiteshvara images proves the hegemony of Mahayana Buddhism in this region during the time of Srivijaya (around 684 until the end of 13th century. Despite several archaeological restorations, notably at the end of the 18th century, in 1901 and 1930, the Phra Boromthat Chaitya located in Caiya town, preserves traces of its 8th century.

viii. Java

- ❁ As per the Chinese texts, the Theravada teachings would have been brought to the court of Shebo (Java) by a Kashmiri missionary, **Gunavarman during 396-424 AD**. The Sarvastivadin monk succeeded in converting the queen mother followed by the king. The sovereign **ordered the construction of a vihara** to house the

community. Fa-hsian, on his return to China from Northern India in 414 AD, reported that the monk (Fa-hsian?) spent 4 months in the west of Java in the kingdom of Yebodi. However, **Java** fairly rapidly became a center with a reputation for Buddhist studies, eagerly visited by Chinese pilgrims. **Chinese pilgrims, Yijing**, in the course of their voyage to India visited Java.

- ✿ Vajrayana Buddhism flourished in Java in the mid-8th century. The construction of the **immense stupa of Borobudur** (9th century) **dominates** the period. Each side of stupa is 113 meters and the whole is 42 meter high. The plan evokes that of an esoteric Buddhist Mandala. Borobudur **witnesses to a primordial phase of Vajrayana Buddhism**, which no doubt originated in Nalanda. Other Buddhist monument sites in central Java include Candi Sewu, Candi Plaosan, Candi Kalasan etc. Key monument site in East Java includes Candi Singasari.

ix. **Vietnam (The Kingdom of Champa)**

- ✿ Buddhism entered into Vietnam, the kingdom of Champa, through various sources, including China and Cambodia (Funan). During the end of 2nd century AD, Buddhism took root in Guangzhou and in the north of Vietnam. Indian Master Vinitaruci is credited to have brought the Chinese Ch'an Buddhism into Vietnam in 580 AD. **Indravarman II**, a Buddhist king, dedicated a Mahayana monastery in Dong Duong in 875 AD. It is one of the largest archaeological sites in Champa. Buddhism is said to have flourished in Vietnam during Ly (1010-1225 AD) and Tran dynasties (1225 - 1400 AD) with the construction of many stupas, temples and shrines. Since then Buddhism started diminishing due to many reasons, including the colonization by French. Buddhism seems reviving in a slow motion after the second half of 20th century as it is signified by the founding of Unified Buddhist Church by Vanhanh University in Saigon in 1964.
- ✿ Buddhism appeared in **Laos** only during 14th century AD.

x. **Korea**

- ✿ Buddhism reached Korea from China in 372 AD (4th century AD) in the form of Mahayana. During the time, **three kingdoms were ruling** the peninsula: **the Koguryo** (in the north), the **Paekche** (in the southwest) and the **Silla** (in the southeast).
- ✿ Buddhism in the kingdom of **Koguryo** and other states entered from the closest Chinese ally- the Tuoba (Wei rulers) in Northern China (386-534 AD). **Paekche** in the southwest of the peninsula was converted by the missionaries from Nanjing, Southern China, in 384 AD. The Silla kingdom, in the southeast of Korea, received the **first monk Ado from Koguryo** (northern Korea) in 528 AD. The monk converted local monarch Munmu to Buddhism (r. 661-681). Built by Chinese craftsmen, the famous Kyongchonsa Pagoda (1348 AD) in Seoul represents a unique work of Korean Buddhist art.

xi. **Japan**

- ✿ Buddhism entered into Japan from Korea in 552 AD (6th century AD). The Indian monk Bodhidharma is believed to have visited China during 5th century AD for the religious reform movement and after founding Chan Buddhism in China, he is believed to have entered into Japan founding the Zen Buddhism in Japan. Supported by the **Soga clan**, who had a close relation with the Korean Kingdom of Paekche, **Buddhism** managed to impose itself at court of Japanese Emperor Kinmei-Tenno around 522 AD.
- ✿ Buddhism flourished in Japan during the **reign of Sutoku**, accounting more than 40 temples housing more than 800 monks and 500 nuns. During the **Tempyo period** (710-794 AD), the main period of **Nara epoch**, Buddhism **reached its apogee**, making it a **state religion**. During the time, **six Nara schools** (*Tha Sanron sect, the Jojitsu sect, the Hosso sect, the Kusha sect, the Kegon sect and the Ritsu sect*), derived from China were common in the contemporary society.
- ✿ **The Ritsu sect**, which highlights the importance of monastic

discipline, was **introduced in Japan in 754 AD** by the Chinese monk Jianzhen (688-763). In 784, **Emperor Kanmu left Nara** for Nagaoka and decided to build a new capital in present day Kyoto in 794 AD. The six Nara schools (sects) gradually lost their importance. Instead two **new sects emerged**- (i) The Tendai sect and (ii) Shingon Sect.

- ❁ **From 7th century onwards**, particular ideas concerning meditation (Dhyana, Chan, Zen) arrived in Japan. In the 9th century, the ideas of meditation (**Zen**) **were incorporated** into the **Tendai doctrine**. From the **Kamakura epoch** (1185-1333) onwards, Zen influenced numerous areas of Japanese life. In the **Muromachi period**, Zen phenomenon expanded in an unprecedented way.

3.2.5. *Expansion of Buddhism beyond Asia (Europe, America, Australia, Africa)*

- ❁ Scholars like Guignes, Leland, and Mertz are of the opinion that first contact between Buddhism and the Americas held during the mid-5th century when a Chinese Buddhist monk, **Hui-shan**, reached the coast of North America- possibly Mexico in 458 AD, with his six fellow monks, crossing the coast of Asia and the Bering strait and taught dharma teaching and other aspects of livelihoods (Jack Maguire, 2001).
- ❁ However, Buddhism got attention in the western frontier only during the 19th centuries after the famous scholar **Burnouf** published his landmark work on **Lotus Sutra** in France in 1844 AD. A translated version of the same was published in the magazine, Dial, as an article, 'The Preaching of the Buddha' becoming the first ever published dharma (Buddha) article in English language. In 1881 AD, another famous scholar Max Muller published a book, **Sacred Books of the East** (a series of annotated translations of Hindu and Buddhist scriptures) and established the Pali Text Society (PTS). In 1879 AD, Sir Edwin Arnold published a book, **'The Light of Asia'**- the English version of the life of Shakyamuni's life.

- ❁ Two white Americans- Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott who entered into India in 1878 AD and then to Sri Lanka in 1880 AD were considered to be the first westerners to have converted into Buddha dharma. Olcott composed the Buddhist Catechism (a basic tenets of Buddhism). Olcott also worked hard to revive Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka and contributed to the establishment of Buddhist colleges and schools.
- ❁ Buddhist followers started in-filtering into Europe during mid-17th century, the time of imperial expansion of Europe into Asia; and into America during mid-18th century. The World's Parliament on Religions (also called Columbian Exposition) held in 1893 AD in Columbia, US was the first formal milestone for the recognition of Buddhism in US when a Sri Lankan Theravada monk- *Anagarika Dharmapala*, a close friend of Olcott, delivered a speech on Buddhism. He was later honored as 'the American Ashoka'.
- ❁ The first Buddhist Vihara, *the Buddhist Vihara Society of Washington*, was founded in 1966 AD in America, basically serving the Sri Lankan Buddhist communities in US. In 1972 AD, the *Wat Thai Center* was established by five Thai monks in Los Angeles. During 1990s, two western-style of Theravada institutions, the Insight Meditation Center (Insight Meditation Society- IMS) and Spirit Rock Center were established, both focusing on vipassana practices.

3.3. ***Buddhist Heritage based Pilgrimage and Cultural Tourism***

- ❁ Pilgrimage to the sacred sites has been one of the important lifetime activities in the eastern culture for fulfilling vow, showing the feelings of devotion and fostering spiritual discipline from the very ancient time. The concept of **pilgrimage by Buddhist** followers started right from the very time of Shakyamuni Buddha as Buddha himself is said to have advised his followers to visit four sacred sites. As also mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*, the four pilgrimage sites include **Lumbini**: where the Buddha was born, **Bodhgaya**: where he achieved Enlightenment, **Sarnath**: where he delivered his first sermon, and **Kushinagara**: where

he entered into mahaparinirvana.

- ✿ In Buddhist dharma, *the Gandavyuha*, part of the Avatamsakasutra, is considered to be an important text for the study of pilgrimage in early Buddhism which describe the attainment of enlightenment through pilgrimage. In Buddhism, the act of pilgrimage is related to visiting the sacred sites and participating in the sacred events so as to collecting merit that would ultimately lead to rebirth in a higher realm.
- ✿ *Pilgrimage visit made by Emperor Ashoka* during 3rd century BC is considered to be the milestone in the history of Buddhism. Emperor Ashoka of Magadha was the first great royal patron to honour Buddhist sites and called himself as Devanam Priyadarsi. Rock Edict VIII describes that Ashoka went to 'sambodhi' (probably the Bodhi-tree at Bodhgaya) in the tenth year of his reign. On the 20th years of his reign, Ashoka organized dharma tours to various sacred Buddhist sites and had his edicts engraved in the rocks, caves and stone pillars, including one erected in Lumbini in 249 BC to commemorate his visit to the birthplace of the Buddha. These edicts/inscriptions can be regarded as the physical expression of the pilgrimage by emperor Ashoka and his adherence to the Dharma. Though, no epigraphical evidence is found yet, traditions say that Emperor Ashoka also made a pilgrimage visit to the Buddhist sites of Kathmandu Valley and founded the city of Patan by erecting four Ashokan Stupas during 3rd century BC. Physical objects such as pillars and stupas erected by the pilgrims like Ashoka in the earlier period have now become a site for worshipping by the Buddhist devotees.
- ✿ Visiting the four major Buddhist sites (Four Buddhist Dham) became a tradition among the Buddhist communities after the great pilgrimage of Emperor Ashoka. Many Sri Lankan Buddhist Monks had made sacred visit to Bodhgaya as early as the 1st century. The pilgrimage visits made by two Chinese Monks Fa Xian and Huan Zian during 5th and 7th century AD to the sacred Buddhist sites in India (and Nepal) are considered to be one of the longest and extensive pilgrimages in the history of Buddhist pilgrimage. The pilgrimage routes of these two Chinese monks can be considered as the pathways of Buddhism from

India to the East and Southeast Asia.

- ✿ Buddhist pilgrimage increased gradually with the expansion of Buddhism, Buddhist teachings and Buddhist Sangha. Sites and routes used by the great mahasiddhas and yogis such as Padmasambhava and Milarepa as well as the great Buddhist monks and scholars such as Nagarjuna, Atisha Dipankara etc. have also become a great pilgrimage site for Buddhist pilgrims. Asura Cave in Pharping, Martina Cave in Haleshi and Bumthang in Bhutan are some of the great pilgrimage sites associated with the great tantric master Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava). Likewise Lapchi in Rolwaling Valley is one of the most important pilgrimage site associated with great yogi Milarepa.
- ✿ Legends have it that Swayambhu Mahachaitya in Kathmandu Valley is the greatest site of pilgrimage for even the primordial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, including Manjushree. Since 8th century, Bouddha Mahachaitya in Kathmandu has been a great pilgrimage site for the followers of Vajrayana, Mahayana Buddhism, particularly the Himalayan Buddhism. Some pilgrimage sites such as Kailash, Maratika (Haleshi), Muktinath etc. have become equally revered site for more than one religious communities, including Buddhist, Hindu, Bon etc.
- ✿ This sub-chapter attempts to explore and analyse the current state of Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage in Nepal, India, south Asia and other major Buddhist practicing countries/areas.

3.3.1. *Buddhist Heritage based Pilgrimage and Cultural Tourism: Global Context*

- ✿ About 535 million population worldwide, accounting for about 10% of the global population, are the followers of Buddhism. Buddhist pilgrims are divided into followers of Theravada, mainly from Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka etc.; and those of the Mahayana mainly from Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, northern Himalayas (Lamaism), Japan (Zen) and Peoples Republic of China (Ch'an) including Tibet. Globally, the followers of Mahayana and Vajrayana account for about 62% of all Buddhists, whereas Theravada followers account for about 38%.

Table 2: Comparative number of Buddhist population in selected countries

Country	Estimated Buddhist population	Percentage of Buddhists per country
PR China	244,130,000	18.20%
Thailand	64,419,840	93.20%
Myanmar	48,415,960	87.90%
Japan	45,820,000	36.20%
Vietnam	14,380,000	16.40%
Sri Lanka	14,222,844	70.20%
Cambodia	13,701,660	96.90%
South Korea	11,050,000	22%
Taiwan	8,000,000	35%
Malaysia	5,620,483	19.80%
Laos	4,092,000	66%
Singapore	1,725,510	33.90%
Mongolia	1,520,760	55.10%
Bhutan	563,000	74.70%

Source: www.wikipedia.org

✿ Though Buddhism was evolved and spread over Northern India in the Northern India (present day territories of India and Nepal), the current number of Buddhist followers are much higher in South-East Asian countries. China is the topmost country by Buddhist population accounting for about 244 million population; about 50% of global Buddhist population. By percentage of Buddhist followers, Cambodia has the highest percentage of Buddhist population accounting for about 97% of its total population.

✿ In terms of the countries with the highest proportion of Buddhists as indicated in Table 1, Thailand leads with 93.2% of the population. Japan (36.2% proportion of Buddhists) will remain important with its historical connections and high disposable incomes, as is Vietnam (16.4%), and Taiwan (36%). Other countries with high proportions of

Buddhists in their populations are Cambodia (99.9%), Myanmar (88%), Bhutan (75%), Sri Lanka (70%), and Lao PDR (66%).

❁ Four Buddhist Dham (Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Kushinagara) are the major global Buddhist pilgrimage centers for the followers of all types of Buddhist schools as well as the spirituality and peace seekers from around the world.

❁ Three Sacred Pilgrimages (Tin Tirthas): Following tirthas are popular among the Buddhist pilgrims:

- ❁ Lumbini Tin Tirtha (Lumbini, Kapilavastu, Ramagrama/Devadaha).
- ❁ Kathmandu Tin Tirtha (Swoyambhu, Bouddha, Namobuddha)
- ❁ India Tin Tirtha (Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar)
- ❁ Tibet Tin Tirtha (Lhasa Potala Durbar, Samye Monastery, Kailash).

❁ For the followers of Tantric Vajrayana and Mahayana Buddhism, also referred to as Tibetan/Himalayan Buddhism, Kathmandu Valley, Lhasha, Kailash, Laddakh, Bhutan are the major sacred sites for pilgrimage, spiritual retreat and yoga. For the followers of particular sects and sub-sects of Buddhism, such as Zen in Japan, there are hundreds and thousands of such places for pilgrimage by the followers of particular sects.

❁ On the top of all, **Kathmandu Valley** has maintained its image as a melting pot of all Buddhist schools, including Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana (Newar and Tibetan Vajrayana) plus Bon Buddhism, and thus has remained a pilgrimage site and spiritual hub for the followers of all sects from around the world.

❁ In recent decades, sacred Buddhist sites are not visited merely for pilgrimage but also for spirituality, peace and mind therapy. The growing demand for tantric vows by the western people is the clear example of this. Countries with the larger share of Buddhist population are also the major visitor source markets for Nepal. In 2017, Nepal received total 940,218 international visitors, and China and Sri Lanka

remained the second and fifth largest international source markets for Nepal (NTS 2018).

- ✿ The growth projection of Buddhist population for 2010 and for 2050 shows that the % share of Buddhist population in 2010 and 2050 will remain almost same except some changes, including decline in Buddhist population share from your 9.4% in 2010 to 5.6% in 2050 and inclusion of US in the top 10 Buddhist population list in 2050. The presented below provides a more complete set of estimates of the top 10 Buddhist populations in 2050 AD.

Table-3: Countries with share of Global Buddhist Population

Rank	Country	2010 Buddhist Population	% of World's Buddhist Population in 2010	Country	2050 Buddhist Population	% of World's Buddhist Population in 2050
1.	China	244,110,000	50.0	China	241,580,000	49.7
2.	Thailand	64,420,000	13.2	Thailand	61,190,000	12.6
3.	Japan	45,820,000	9.4	Myanmar	44,710,000	9.2
4.	Myanmar	38,410,000	7.9	Japan	27,030,000	5.6
5.	Sri Lanka	14,450,000	3.0	Cambodia	19,090,000	3.9
6.	Vietnam	14,380,000	2.9	Vietnam	16,590,000	3.4
7.	Cambodia	13,690,000	2.8	Sri Lanka	16,310,000	3.4
8.	S Korea	11,050,000	2.3	India	11,080,000	2.3
9.	India	9,250,000	1.9	S Korea	8,620,000	1.8
10.	Malaysia	5,010,000	1.0	US	5,480,000	1.1

Source: Wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism by country

Now, Buddhism and Buddhist teachings are already common in US, Canada (more than 50,000 Buddhist followers), UK (more than 100,000 followers), Austria, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy Switzerland and so on.

3.3.2. *Buddhist Heritage based Pilgrimage and Cultural Tourism: South Asian Context*

- ✿ SAARC is a region where various cultures and religions have been coexisting for millennia and continues to show their common cultural continuum that has influenced, and metamorphosed into a common

culture that is unique and distinct (SAARC Cultural Center 2014).

- ❁ The countries in the region are positioned as the “Buddhist Heartland” and feature some of the world’s major Buddhist attractions, many of them recognized as World Heritage Sites (ADB 2011). Whereas the nations in the South Asia are popular for Buddhist Art and Archaeology, the Himalayan region are famous for living Buddhism with tantric vows, traditional healing, meditation retreat etc. Thus, there exist an immense potential to develop and promote a multi-national Buddhist Circuits or Mega Buddhist Circuits by connecting trans-national Buddhist heritage sites/routes in South and South East Asian countries keeping Lumbini at the epicentre.
- ❁ Considering the huge potentials of SAARC member countries for promoting Buddhist heritage based tourism, several multi-lateral, bi-lateral and country-specific efforts have already been initiated in the region.
- ❁ The 18th SAARC Summit held in Nov. 2014 in Kathmandu approved the proposal on “South Asian Cultural Trails” and has proposed to create a SAARC Heritage List with operational Guidelines and to develop cultural trails linking major Buddhist historical sites in the region. The 18th Summit also proposed various Buddhist Cultural Trails primarily based on the sites proposed by Dr. Ronald Silva in his Keynote address at the SAARC International Conference on “Archaeology of Buddhism Recent Discoveries in South Asia” held from 22-24 August 2012. List of Buddhist routes proposed by Dr. Silva is presented in **Box-3**. Accordingly, SAARC Cultural Center Sri Lanka organized a Research Seminar on Buddhist Cultural Trails from 26-27 August 2017 in Sri Lanka as the first research fora.

Box- 3: List of Buddhist Routes Proposed by Dr. Silva

- i. The paths of the Buddha-Lumbini (Nepal), Bodh Gaya (India), Sarnath (India) and Kusinagara (India).
- ii. Sites of Relics of Buddha: Ramagrama (Nepal), Rajagriha, Vaisali, Kapilavastu, Allakappa, Vethadipaka, Pava, Kusinagara and Pipphalavana (India).



iii.	The way of Arhat Mahinda-Pataliputra, Sanchi (India), Mihintale and Anuradhapura (Sri Lanka).
iv.	The path of Their Sanghamitta- Pataliputra, Bodh Gaya, Tamralipti (India), Dambakolapatuna, Tivakka Bamunu Grama, Anuradhapura (Sri Lanka).
v.	The Fa Xian (Fa Hsien) Route- Chang'an, Dunhuang, Kasagar, Khotan (Xinjiang), Udyana, Pesawar, Nagarahara (Afghanistan), Punjab, Mathura, Sankissa, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, Vaisali, Magadh, Rajagriha, Bodhgaya, Varanasi, Pataliputra, Tamrapali (India), Anuradhapura (Sri Lanka), Jiaozhou, Nanjing, Chang an (China).
vi.	The Huan Tsang (Huan Tsang) Route- Changan-Kucha, Kapisa, Balkh, Bamiyan, Nagarahara, Maniyakkala, Udyana, Taxila, Jalandhar, Kanyakubja, Ayodhya, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, Kusinara, Varanasi, Vaisali, Pataliputra, Bodhgaya, Rajagriha, Nalanda, Samatata, Karnasuvarna (Bangladesh), Tamrapali, Kanchipuram, Kankan, Maharastra, Malwa, Journey back via Taxila, Kapisa, Kashgar, Bukhara (Uzbekistan), Luoyang, Chang'an (China).
vii.	The Cave Caravan Routes of the Western Ghats- Kanheri, Karna, Bhaja, Nasik, Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad (India).
viii.	The pilgrimage route of King Nissankamalla to Sri Pada (Sacred Footprint) in Sri Lanka.
ix.	Sixteen sacred places of Sri Lanka.
x.	Footsteps of Guru Rinpoche- Tiger's Nest (Taktsang), Baylandra, Jambay Lhakhang etc. (other sites to be identified).
xi.	Buddhist Cultural Trails in Maldives- Havitta site on Foh Mulah (Gnaviyani Atoll), Haddunmati Atoll, Gamu Island, South Miladunmandulu Atoll, Landu Island, Miladu Island, Suvadiva and Addu Atolls, Ari Atoll, Toddu Island....
xii.	Buddhist Cultural Trails in Bangladesh- Mahastangarh, Paharpur, Bikrampur, Mainamati and Chittagong (this is for modern trail).

xiii.	Traditional Centers of learning.-Taxila (Pakistan), Nalanda, Kashmir, Tharpa Choling Monastery, Zang Dhok Palri Phodang, Bhutia Busty Monastery, Ghum Monastery, Ging Gomba, Mag-Dhog, Yolmowa Monastery, Salugara Monastery, Gaden Tharpa Choling Monastery, Zang Dhok Parli Phodang Monastery (India), Abhayagiriya, Mahavihara (Sri Lanka).
xiv.	New Buddhist Cultural Trails for Tourism Promotion and Pilgrims- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.
xv.	Buddhist Manuscript Trails- Gilgit (Pakistan), Bamiyan, Hadda, Najigram, Shahr-I, Zuhak, Shiwaki, Nadara, Passani, Kotpur, Chakhi-I, Ghundi, Tapa Shutur (Afghanistan), Kuche, Khotan, Turfan, Dunhuang etc. (P. R. China).

- ❁ The 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu in 2014 proposed the following Buddhist Cultural Trails (BCT):
 - ❁ The paths of the Buddha- India and Nepal.
 - ❁ Sites of Relics of the Buddha- Nepal and India.
 - ❁ The ways of Arhat Mahinda- India and Sri Lanka.
 - ❁ The path of Their Sanghamitta- India and Sri Lanka.
 - ❁ The Fa Xian (Fa Hsien) Route- P. R. China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and Sri Lanka.
 - ❁ The Xuanzang (Huan Tsang) Route- P. R. China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Frontiers of Persia and Uzbekistan.
- ❁ The BCT has been expanded to include other trails as listed in **Box-3**. Unfortunately, many significant Buddhist sites of Nepal have not been incorporated in the list.
- ❁ SASEC -Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting held in 2007 and 2008 agreed and affirmed the nine multi-country tourism circuits, including **The Footsteps of Lord Buddha Circuits** under the broader framework of “*South Asia Buddhist Circuits*” and a “*South Asia Ecotourism Circuits*” and related multi-country tourism sub-circuits. Later the Kathmandu workshop and subsequent meetings finalized the name of Buddhist Circuits as “**In the Footsteps of Lord Buddha and**

His Followers” that comprises The Footsteps of Lord Buddha; The Sri Lanka Buddhist Heritage Route as its core; and The Bangladesh Heritage Route (ADB (2011).

- ✿ Accordingly, the TWG proposed long-term vision for tourism in the SASEC as, *“To develop South Asia’s unique Buddhist heritage, natural and other tangible and intangible heritage assets into well-developed, integrated, conserved and sustainably managed and globally branded and marketed most preferred destinations.”*
- ✿ Where Buddhism is understood to include “pilgrimage” and that Buddhist heritage is understood to mean “Buddhist Culture including architecture, philosophy, and way of life” not just “religion or pilgrimage travel”.
- ✿ Under South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC), the South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (SATIDP) is implementing connectivity and destination management related projects in Nepal, India and Bangladesh. **In Bangladesh** SATIDP is focusing its efforts in Buddhist Monastery at Paharpur (WHS), Mosque City of Bagerhat (WHS), Fortified City Mahasthangarh (WHS Tentative List). In Nepal Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA) upgrading project is one of the largest projects.
- ✿ During the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Nepal in 2014, Nepal and India have signed an agreement on tourism cooperation and collaboration tourism promotion and highlighted the immense scope that exists in developing spiritual tourist circuits such as the Buddhist Circuits (Lumbini- Bodhgaya -Sarnath -Kushinagara). The subsequent coordination meetings of the Government of **Nepal and India** have also agreed a resolution to develop and promote Buddhist Circuits and Ramayana Circuits connecting the related heritage sites of Nepal and India.
- ✿ Ministry of Tourism in **Sri Lanka** has set up a special Buddhist committee to coordinate tourism with their religious leaders. India consolidated its position as a Buddhist destination by actively positioning itself as a hub for Buddhist tourism.

✿ Interestingly, Muslim country like **Pakistan** has also expressed its interest and commitment for the promotion of its important Buddhist heritage sites such as Taxila. Pakistan today is trying to connect its Buddhist sites with the nations with large Buddhist populations such as China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Singapore, South Korea etc. In recent years, Pakistan has undertaken various promotional efforts, including organization of Buddhist conference for scholars and tour operators; exhibition of Buddha's relics, inviting Thai travel writers in Gandharan heritage, translating books on Buddhist art and architecture, organization of exhibition of Buddha's relics in Sri Lanka. Pakistan is also working with the Government of China to promote pilgrimage and arts in and along the ancient Silk Road with the completion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. Pakistan has recently unveiled the 1,700 year-old (3rd century AD) statue of reclining (sleeping) Buddha at Bhamala Buddhist Complex in Haripur district of north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The reclining Buddha is considered to be a major iconographic image in Buddhist art and symbolism, representing the historical Buddha before his mahaparinirvana.

✿ At present, about 450,000 foreigners are estimated to have visited the famous stupas of Bouddha Mahachaitya and Swayambhu Mahachaitya (in 2017), or about half of all Nepal's non-Indian visitors (MoCTCA, 2018). Lumbini's estimated total of 1.55 million visitors in 2017 included 146,000 non-Indian foreigners, 7% more than in 2016 (LDT). In Bhutan, nearly 30% of foreign visitors cite Buddhism as the major attraction. In 2017, about 7 million domestic and 1.2 million international visitors visited in key 6 major Buddhist sites (Nalanda, Vaisali, Bodhgaya, Kushinagar, Rajgir and Sarnath) of India.

3.3.3. *Buddhist Heritage based Pilgrimage and Cultural Tourism: Indian Context*

✿ India, especially the Northern territories has been the significant pilgrimage center for Buddhist followers and pilgrims since the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. Though many kings and scholars also paid visit to Shakyamuni Buddha and received dharma teachings from Buddha, it is the Emperor Ashoka of Magadha who established the pattern of

pilgrimage and worshipping of the sacred sites of Buddha during 3rd century BC more formally and more visibly (with inscriptions).

- ✿ Since then many kings, scholars, mahasiddhas, yogis, monks, nuns and laity followers from within Indian territories as well as from Central and Western Asia, Tibet, China, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Japan, Korea etc. have made pilgrimage visits to several Buddhist sites of India (including Nepal) and made several monuments, including stupas, to honour Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ✿ From the very time of Emperor Ashoka, pilgrims used to make a sacred visit to four core (including Lumbini in Nepal) and four secondary Buddhist heritage sites. The four core Buddhist sites include the following:
 - ✿ **Bodhgaya:** Where Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment.
 - ✿ **Sarnath:** Where Shakyamuni Buddha delivered his first Sermon to 5 Disciples; Turned the Wheel of Law. Here Buddha delivered his dhammacakkapabattana sutta.
 - ✿ **Kushinagara:** Where Shakyamuni Buddha entered into Mahaparinirvana. Major features include Mahaparinirvana Temple, Reclining Buddha, Mahaparinirvana Stupa.
- ✿ Likewise, the four secondary Buddhist sites include the followings:
 - ✿ **Rajgir:** Buddha's favourite Resort; where he preached and delivered many important Sermons.
 - ✿ **Vaishali:** Where Buddha received the gift of honey from the monkey and where Buddha delivered his last Sermon.
 - ✿ **Shravasti:** The site of Great Miracle, it was from here that Shakyamuni Buddha emerged to walk the jewelled rainbow and perform the Pair and Great Miracles.
 - ✿ **Sankasya:** Where Buddha descended from Trayastrimsa Heaven after preaching his deceased mother.
- ✿ Unfortunately, Buddhism was almost completely declined in the land of its origin (India) since 13th century due to many reasons, including the invasion by Muslims.



*Table- 4 Visitor Arrival in Major Buddhist Sites of India
(2010 - 2017)*

Years	Nalanda		Vaishali		Bodhgaya		Kusinagar		Rajgir		Sarnath	
	Domestic	Foreigner	Domestic	Foreigner	Domestic	Foreigner	Domestic	Foreigner	Domestic	Foreigner	Domestic	Foreigner
2010	255469	47773	81004	15600	832364	961031			1971456	130570		
2011	891799	177884	63322	29951	1006132	293519			1341433	201137		
2012	934125	190162	53276	37533	933153	207933			3700446	373186		
2013	502341	104580	90346	71701	398826	139556	750171	62292	1381121	162452	838566	362113
2014	1057317	124810	202509	60108	1647701	225668	774872	65435	1525107	164314	899457	374268
2015	926995	139066	775844	88871	1751602	236539	805553	68803	4381293	166610	924552	388102
2016	1041240	145339	918067	100307	1694321	241514	825218	73514	1568285	170334	957320	409242
2017	961635	163390	916323	90993	1757509	283116	861760	76221	1514279	169444	1024589	430682

Source: Bihar and UP State Tourism Development Corporation (2001-2017)

3.3.4. Buddhist Heritage based Pilgrimage and Cultural Tourism: Nepalese Context

Recent trends in the search for Buddhist spiritual wellbeing (such as religious studies, traditional healing, Himalayan spas, yoga practices and meditation retreats) show up strongly in many source markets. Buddhist and cultural sightseeing visitors are attracted by Nepal's historic monuments and Buddhist centres, particularly the Living Buddhism found today in Nepal at Lumbini, Kathmandu Valley and mountain Buddhist centres along the Great Himalaya Trail.

i. **Buddhist Pilgrimage in Lumbini and Surrounding Areas**

- ❁ Lumbini used to be the great place of pilgrimage for the Buddhist pilgrims at least since the time of **Emperor** Ashoka till 13th century AD when the Khasha (Malla) King Ripu Malla had visited Lumbini, Ancient Kapilavastu and had engraved inscription on the Ashokan Pillar at Lumbini and Niglihawa (Kapilvastu) depicting Ripu Malla Jayete.
- ❁ Between Emperor Ashoka and King Ripu Malla many Buddhist monks, pilgrims and travelers, including Chinese monks Fa-hsian and Huan Tsang during 5th and 7th century AD respectively have visited the sacred site of Lumbini. King Ripu Malla who paid homage to Lumbini in 1312 AD, leaving the written evidence of his visits over the Ashokan Pillar erected at Lumbini and Niglihawa, is considered to be the last high profile visitor visiting this sacred land.
- ❁ Inscriptions, Buddhist scriptures and history suggest that Lumbini, Ancient Kapilavastu and Devadaha/Ramagrama remained forgotten for about 600 years until the discovery of the Ashokan Pillar at Lumbini by General Khadga Shamsher JBR, the governor of Palpa and Dr. A.A. Fuhrer, an eminent German archaeological surveyor in British India in 1896 AD who re-established Lumbini as the birthplace of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. Lumbini and associated Buddhist sites remained wild for more than six hundred years of time after the visit by Ripu Malla and till the time it was re-discovered in 1896 AD by General Khadga Samsher JBR and German archaeologist Dr. A.A Fuhrer.
- ❁ Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha, along with other associated Buddhist heritage sites in the region, is increasingly becoming a popular pilgrimage and tourism destination not only for the Buddhist pilgrims but also for other visitors. In 2017, Lumbini attracted a total of 1,552,586 visitors including 1,251,346 domestic, 155,444 Indian and 145,796 third country visitors (Table 5). Amongst the third country visitors, Sri Lanka has the highest arrival (48,528) followed by Thai (27,603),

Myanmar (21,531), Chinese (15,770) and so on.

- ❁ The systematic efforts for making Lumbini a pilgrimage center and tourist hub started with the visit of UN General Secretary U Thant in 1969.
- ❁ Accordingly, a Lumbini Development Master Plan was designed by Prof. Kenzo Tange and approved by the Government of Nepal in 1978.

Table-5: Visitor Arrival in Lumbini (2011 to 2017 AD)

Year	Foreigner	Domestic Nepali	Indian	
	Arrivals (Market share %)	Arrivals (Market share %)	Arrivals (Market share %)	Total arrivals to Lumbini (%)
2011	128,259 (21.83)	395,570 (67.33)	63,709 (10.84)	587,538 (100)
2012	136,001 (17.09)	539,210 (67.76)	120,583 (15.15)	795,794 (100)
2013	125,492 (14.77)	573,529 (67.53)	150,252 (17.70)	849,273 (100)
2014	133,308 (11.20)	902,621 (75.84)	154,216 (12.96)	1,190,145 (100)
2015	129,180 (17.26)	488,852 (65.33)	130,262 (17.41)	748,294 (100)
2016	136,253 (10.60)	1,015,158 (78.96)	134,269 (10.44)	1,285,680 (100)
2017	145,796 (9.39)	1,251,346 (80.60)	155,444 (10.01)	1,552,586 (100)

Source: LDT 2018

- ✿ The GoN/MoCTCA is currently implementing an ADB funded SATIDP project in Lumbini to develop and improve connectivity and destination infrastructure and services in Lumbini, by upgrading of Gautam Buddha Airport as an international airport, construction of visitors information centre and other facilities at Lumbini, and also including local community strengthening programs at surrounding villages.
- ✿ Nepal's National Tourism Strategic Plan (2016-2025) has also given a high priority to the promotion of Buddhist heritage

based pilgrimage and tourism in the country. The strategic plan has ranked Greater Lumbini as 2nd of Nepal's 6 priority Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) after Pokhara.

ii. Pilgrimage to Nepal Mandala (Kathmandu Valley)

- ❁ Nepal Mandala has long been a sacred site for pilgrimage, meditation and learning for many pilgrims, mahasiddhas, monks and nuns since the very time of Shakyamuni Buddha. Legends have it that various Manusi Buddhas, including Vishvabhu Buddha and various Bodhisattvas, including Manjushree have made homage to the sacred Swayambhu Mahachaitya before the birth of historical Buddha Shakyamuni.
- ❁ According to Swayambhu Purana Shakyamuni Buddha appeared on Gopuchchara Hill with 500 disciples along with his chief disciples Sariputra, Moudgalyana, Mahakasyapa and Ananda; came to Swayambhu area from Sravasti in his late 70s and declared that he had come to pay homage to Swayambhu seven times in seven different births. The Gosringa Parvat Vyakarana Nama Mahayana Sutra also suggests that Shakyamuni Buddha visited Kathmandu Valley.
- ❁ Shakyamuni Buddha's one of the chief disciples Ananda is believed to have visited Nepal Mandala during the lifetime of the Buddha. According to *Mulasarvastivada Vinayavastu*, compiled by Jinamitra and translated by I-tsing in 700 AD, **Ananda**, Buddha's one of the close disciples, travelled to Kathmandu Valley and came back to Sravasti with his toes bitten by frost. Seeing his condition, a group of Bhikshus who were in Sravasti en-route towards Nepal enquired Ananda about the climatic condition in Nepal.
- ❁ Though, no epigraphical evidence found yet, traditions say that **Emperor Ashoka** had made a pilgrimage visit to Kathmandu Valley with his beloved daughter Charumati during 3rd century BC, paid homage to Swayambhu Mahachaitya and erected four Stupas in Patan city.
- ❁ Kathmandu Valley became a sacred pilgrimage and learning center

after 7th century AD with the marriage of **Princess Bhrikuti** (617-650 AD), the beloved daughter of Lichchavi King **Amsuvarma** with the **Tibetan King Tsrön-tsen-Gampo** (cr. AD 620-649). And, the movements became more frequent after the arrival of Tantric Masters Padmasambhava in the 8th century, possibly in 743 AD.

- ✿ Though the travel account of **Huan Tsang** (7th century AD) describes about the practice of Buddhism in Kathmandu Valley, it is not yet clear whether he himself made a pilgrimage visit to Kathmandu Valley or acquired information about Kathmandu distantly from Lumbini.
- ✿ Various Indian and Tibetan Buddhist scholars, masters, mahasiddhas, yogis, and monks such as Acharya Nagarjuna (c 150-250 CE), Acharya Vasubandhu (400-480 AD); Acharya and Logician Santaraksita (743 AD); Kamalasheela (762 AD); Atisha Dipankhara Srijyana (1041 AD), Dharmaswamim (13th century); Tilopa (988-1069 AD); Mahasiddha Naropa (956-1040 AD), etc. also came to Nepal Mandala and spent several months and years doing meditation, studying Buddhist philosophies, translating manuscripts and practicing various rituals, sadhanas and tantras.
- ✿ During the 12th to 14th century, the Malla kings of Khasha kingdom, including Ripu Malla and Jitari Malla used to make a pilgrimage visit to various sacred sites of Nepal Mandala.
- ✿ Tibetan monks again started visiting Nepal Mandala during the 14th century to acquire tantric traditions and ritual practices from Newar Shakya and Vajracharya vikchhus. Many Chinese, Tibetan and Bhutanese monks contributed to the maintenance and restoration of many Buddhist monuments in Nepal Mandala, especially in Swoyambhu and Bouddha.
- ✿ Newar of Nepal Mandala who migrated to Dharan, Sankhuwasabha, Bhojpur, Dhankuta, Khotang, Dolakha, Nuwakot Trishuli, Bandipur, Pokhara, Baglung, Myagdi, Tansen etc. also established new viharas and occasionally visit to the major viharas of Nepal Kathmandu for major celebrations.



- ❁ Kathmandu Valley became one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage centers for the followers of Himalayan Buddhism and Western visitors after the arrival of Tibetan refugees in Kathmandu Valley and establishment of many monasteries, dharma study centers, Vipassana centers and spiritual retreat centers in the peripheral areas of Bouddha, Swoyambhu and Pharping as well as along the foothills of the rims of Nepal Mandala. Now Bouddha Stupa and peripheral area have become the Macca for the followers of Himalayan/Tibetan Buddhism.

iii. **Buddhist Pilgrimage to the Buddhist Heritage Sites in the Nepal Himalayas**

- ❁ Buddhism in Nepal Himalayas is the way-ward journey of Tibetan Buddhist practices and it is influenced by Tibetan cultural geographies located to the north of the Himalayas.
- ❁ However, if legend has to be believed, the journey of Padmasambhava to Lo Ghekar (Mustang) can be considered to be the first Buddhist pilgrimage to Nepal Himalaya by the Indian (Tibetan) pilgrims and masters.
- ❁ The first wave of Buddhist pilgrimage in the higher Himalayas of Nepal started gradually with the advent of Buddhism in Tibet along with the establishment of first monastery-Samye in Tibet. Monks from Dolpa, Mustang, Nyeshang, Nubri, Tsum, Langtang, Helambu etc. used to travel to Central Tibet to learn Buddhism and monastic rules.
- ❁ Tibeto-Burman language speaking monks and laymen from the lower Himalayas used to travel to the monasteries in the higher Himalayas, such as Halji (Limi), Saldang and Dho Tarap (Dolpa), Upper and Lower Lo (Mustang) etc. and learned with the elder householder lamas as apprentices.
- ❁ Buddhist pilgrimage to the monasteries of Western Nepal, especially in the Halji Gomba in Limi Valley started during the 2nd dissemination of Buddhism in the 11th century AD. During 11th to 13th century, many Buddhist and Bon scholars, monks and practitioners used to visit various parts of Dolpa and Mustang

from Ngari region and western Tibet to establish monastery and undertake Buddhist/Bon teachings.

- ✿ Lapchi Gomba (Dolakha) became a regional pilgrimage and meditation center during 13th century, especially due to the influence of Yogi Milarepa. With lavished monasteries and Tsuglag Khangs, Lomangthang in Mustang became a regional Buddhist pilgrimage and study center for the followers of Buddhism from Eastern and Western Tibet, Ladhakh, Kashmir, Jumla, Dolpa, Tsum Valley and so on. Lo Kingdom had a very special relation with the Sakya masters of Sakya (Tibet), including Sakya Guru Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo.
- ✿ Bhutanese Drukpa monks started making pilgrimage to Nepal since late 16th century AD. Many prominent Buddhist Drukpa Kagyu monks contributed to establish Buddhist monasteries in Lapchi, Bigu area in Dolakha and Tsum-Nubri Valley in Gorkha.
- ✿ The tradition of making pilgrimage to the three chaityas (Swoyambhu, Bouddha and Namu Buddha) of Nepal Mandala by the Buddhist devotees of the Himalayan region started from the late Malla period. The pilgrimage to Lumbini, Haleshi (Maratika) and other Buddhist heritage sites started with the initiation of Senior Monk's Desh Darshan (Pilgrimage) programme by the then Gomba Development Committee.
- ✿ In Helambu, Rolwaling, Khumbu, Lower Khumbu, Makalu and Upper Arun, Walungchung Gola and Ghunsa areas Buddhism started mostly after the 15th century AD. In these areas, Buddhist monasteries and Buddhist traditions (including festival and costumes) have now become an essential component of mountain tourism.
- ✿ As of Baishakh 2075, a total of 2,700 monasteries have been registered at Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Monastery Development Committee (BPPMDC) from 61 districts (Gorkhapatra, Baishakh 23, 2075 BS). A separate report has revealed that there are about 1800 monasteries in Nepal and about 1300 (more than 75%) of them belong to Nyingma tradition. Bon Monasteries are mostly



widespread in Dolpa, Mustang, Mugu.

- ✿ Most of the Himalayan Buddhist communities belong to Nyingma tradition though they have respect for other traditions such as Kagyu, Gelug and Sakya. Moreover, the influence of sacred beyul, terma center and meditation seats of Padmasambhava is deeper amongst the Himalayan Buddhist communities. Buddhist monuments and traditions in Upper Mustang are influenced more by Sakya tradition. Likewise, monasteries in Dolakha and Upper Gorkha are influenced by Kagyu tradition due to the influence of Milarepa.
- ✿ The influence of Gekug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism has increased in the Nepalese Himalayas as well as in Kathmandu Valley especially with the arrival of Tibetan refugees after 1960s.



PART B

SELECTED BUDDHIST CIRCUITS

CHAPTER 4

SELECTED BUDDHIST CIRCUITS

4.1. *SELECTION OF BUDDHIST CIRCUITS AND SUB-CIRCUITS*

- ✿ So far, nine major circuits and other several ancillary circuits have been selected by connecting the significant Buddhist heritage sites. However, additional circuits and sub-circuits may also be added in the course of time, based on the outcomes of the further research and changes in the pattern of pilgrimage and physical infrastructures, including connectivity and access.
- ✿ The circuits and sub-circuits were designated by connecting the significant Buddhist heritage sites of outstanding pilgrimage, archaeological, historical, cultural and spiritual values. The presence of rich culture and traditions of other religions, such as Hinduism, and the presence of outstanding natural landscape and rich biodiversity have further added the touristic value of the selected circuits and sub-circuits offering full range of visitors experiences.
- ✿ The selection of circuit and sub-circuits are directed by the assessment criteria set in chapter two, primarily guided by the Footsteps of



Shakyamuni Buddha and His Followers. So far nine circuits have been selected under the broader framework of Buddhist Circuits of Nepal (BCN). The selected circuits with appropriate tag-line for each circuit, include the following.

i. Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC)

Following the birthplace and footsteps of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha and other previous Buddhas.

ii. Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit to Mt. Kailash

Pilgrimage connecting the two most sacred sites (Lumbini and Kailash Manasarovar) in the region through the ancient Silk Road corridor.

iii. Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit

Sacred pilgrimage to the ancient Buddhist and Bon heritage sites in the forgotten kingdom.

iv. Lumbini-Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit

Journey to the Land of Sacred Caves and Monasteries through the Ancient Silk Road Corridor.

v. Tsum -Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit

A Pilgrimage to the Sacred Beyul and the Land of Non-Violence.

vi. Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit-Kathmandu Valley

A Spiritual journey through the sacred Buddhist power places representing almost all schools/traditions and periods with unbroken Buddhist traditions and rituals.

vii. Maratika (Haleshi)-Sailung-Timal Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit

Following the perfected meditation caves and footsteps of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche).

viii. Everest-Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit

Spiritual Journey to the Roof of the World through the sacred beyul, monasteries and spiritual meditation centers.

ix. **Beyul Khempalung – Upper Arun-Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit**

A sacred pilgrimage to Beyul Khempalung, Arun Valley and Tamor Valley.

✿ Likewise, significant Buddhist heritage trails that are connected with the key Buddhist heritage sites of the selected circuits, and offer additional merit to the pilgrims, have been designated as Extension Buddhist Circuits. The study team has selected such extension Buddhist Circuits only in the Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit as it was the Buddhist center at least after Lichchavi Period and witnesses the foot-steps of many Buddhist Mahasiddhas and scholars, including Padmasambhava and Milarepa. The selected extended Buddhist Circuits include the following:

- i. *Swayambhu - Nuwakot Mahamandala - Sing La - Beyul Namgo - dagam (Langtang) Sub-circuit*
- ii. *Sankhu - Vajrayogini - Beyul Hyolmo Sub-circuit*
- iii. *Pharping - Chitlang - Daman - Rekheshtwor - Sub-circuit*

✿ Amongst the 9 selected Buddhist circuits, Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC) outperforms the others in terms of its significance for Buddhist pilgrimage, spiritual, peace and cultural tourism value. Due to the variation in Buddhist schools/traditions and the geographical coverage of the selected Buddhist heritage circuits, not all pilgrims and visitors can visit these circuits, and only interested relevant pilgrims and visitors may complete the visit these circuits and sub-circuits in at least more than one go. The selected circuits and sub-circuits broadly fall under 4 different categories based on the specific characteristics of each circuit, including significance, cultural and physical setting, historicity, accessibility, stages of pilgrimage/tourism development, vulnerabilities to the existing and proposed development etc.

a. Category A

✿ The circuits around key Buddhist centres which are of international significance are included in the World Heritage List. These would include the following two circuits:



✿ Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC).

✿ Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit- Kathmandu Valley

- ✿ These circuits are well connected, however need to be managed and promoted in an appropriate manner, linked also to the requirements of World Heritage. This means that the development of these circuits would need to follow strict guidelines, particularly in respect to conserving the specific sites and their immediate surroundings.

b. Category B

- ✿ The circuits around key Buddhist centres which are of international significance are connected with the sites included in the World Heritage List. These would include the following two circuits:

✿ Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit to Mt. Kailash.

✿ Lumbini-Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit.

- ✿ These circuits pass through the ancient trade routes that cross the Himalayas and Trans-Himalayas and are closely related to the Silk Road. These circuits would also need to deal with the planned infrastructure development along the north-south corridors, including construction of the motorable roads.

- ✿ The approach for these circuits would be to ensure that inventories of all the cultural and natural sites along the route are prepared and that mechanisms to protect them from the inappropriate change are put in place as soon as possible.

c. Category C

- ✿ The circuits in the high Himalayan regions that are linked to various monastic traditions or sites with particular significance. These would include the following four circuits:

✿ Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit.

✿ Tsum -Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit.

✿ Everest Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit.

Map-1: Buddhist Circuits of Nepal (BCN)





Sacred pilgrimage and cultural trails connecting the outstanding Buddhist sites associated with the birth, foot-steps and perfected meditation sites of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, other previous Buddhas, Buddhist Mahasiddhas and Masters.



❁ Beyul Khempalung-Upper Arun-Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit.

❁ Opening up of the high passes due to the melting of ice and snow mass in the high mountain areas has created greater opportunities for the pilgrims and trekkers to make sacred pilgrimage in the hidden valleys/Beyuls crossing high passes.

❁ In some areas such as Khumbu region, tourism has developed over the past half century and is well established. However, the other sites still need development and the local communities will need to be able to adapt and profit from this accordingly. These landscapes are fragile and great care must be given to protect them.

d. Category D

❁ The circuits linked to a site with specific significance along the Mahabharat and Himalayan Foothills that could be linked to a larger narrative. These would include the following circuits:

❁ Maratika (Haleshi)-Sailung-Timal Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit

❁ The routes such as the one to Haleshi would need to be linked to other circuits with the same narrative to ensure that this gets integrated into the overall Buddhist network. The access and links to these sites need to be developed. The significance of the site itself must however be strictly safeguarded so that the attributes of significance are not lost.

4.2. GREATER LUMBINI BUDDHIST CIRCUIT (GLBC)

Following the birthplace and footsteps of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha and other previous Buddhas.

4.2.1. Background

❁ Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC) has been designed by connecting the sites associated with the birthplace and foot-steps of

Lord Shakyamuni Buddha and other previous Buddha. GLBC connects four major sacred Buddhist sites in Greater Lumbini Area (GLA), Nepal, including Lumbini, Ancient Kapilavastu, Ramagrama and Devadaha. Having Lumbini been at the core of the circuit, the GLBC can be considered to be one of the holiest Buddhist pilgrimage circuits in the world.

- ❁ In the present geo-political map of Nepal, GLBC is located entirely in Province No. 5 and expanded in four districts, namely Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Parasi and Palpa.
- ❁ The significance of the major sites connected by the GLBC stands as given below:

- ❁ **Lumbini** is the birthplace of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha; fountain of Buddhism and World Peace.
- ❁ **Ancient Kapilavastu** is the capital of the ancient Sakya Kingdom, and the hometown of prince Siddhartha. Here, through the Eastern Gate of the palace, Siddhartha renounced his princely life (*Mahaviniskramana*) at the age of 29. Equally significant other sacred Buddhist sites include Niglihawa (the birthplace of Kanakamuni Buddha), Gotihawa (the birthplace of Krakuchhanda Buddha), Kudan (the ancient Nyigrodharama), Sagarhawa (the massacre site of the Shakyas), Sisahaniya etc.
- ❁ **Devadaha** (including Panditpur) is the capital of the ancient Koliya Kingdom, and the maternal hometown of Queen Mayadevi, the mother of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ❁ **Ramagrama** is the only stupa believed to have contained the sacred relic (still unexposed) of Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ❁ **Tansen:** The nearest Shakya Settlement from Lumbini; hometown of the great Mahasthviras (including Amritananda, Shakyananda, Kumara Kasyapa, Vimalananda and so on) who re-invented Theravada Buddhism in Nepal; one of the learning centers of Thervada Buddhism.

- ✿ Though there are several hundred archaeological sites related to the foot-steps of Shakyamuni Buddha and Buddhism in the Greater Lumbini Area (GLA); remarkably important sites associated with the GLBC also include **Sainamaina** (in Rupandehi) and Tansen (in Palpa).

4.2.2. *Significance of the Sites Contained in the GLBC*

i. **Significance for Pilgrimage, Spirituality and Peace**

- ✿ Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit connects the sites with exceptional pilgrimage, spiritual and peace value. It is considered to be the heartland of Buddhism and Buddhist pilgrimage as it comprises the birthplace of three Buddhas; the sacred maternity trail of Queen Mayadevi; the great site of renunciation by Prince Siddhartha; the only sacred relic stupa of Shakyamuni Buddha, nirvana stupa of Kanakamuni Buddha (described in the Ashokan Pillar inscription); exact location yet to be verified), nirvana stupa of Krakuchhanda Buddha (Gotihawa), nirvana stupas of Queen Mayadevi and King Suddhodhana, and many more. This is the only region that gave birth to three Buddhas, and eventually the great religion- Buddhism. Major sites with significant pilgrimage, spirituality and peace value include the following:

ii. **Archaeological and Historical Significance**

- ✿ Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit has the sites of outstandingly remarkable archaeological and historical values, including monuments, edicts and inscriptions depicting the birth place of three Buddhas, including historical Shakyamuni Buddha; palatial sites of ancient Kapilavastu and Koliya Kingdom; viharas, stupas and monasteries devoted to Shakyamuni Buddha, Kanakamuni Buddha and Krakuchhanda Buddha; nirvana stupas of Mayadevi and Suddhodhana; stupas built in the ancient Nyigrodharama to commemorate the various events, including Shakyamuni Buddha's first meeting with his father king Suddhodhana after becoming Buddha; and sacred paths and sites related to the maternity walk by Queen Mayadevi and route of great renunciation by Prince Siddhartha, pilgrimage route of Emperor Ashoka, pilgrimage of

early Chinese monks, pilgrimage of Malla (Khasha) king, and so on.

- ❁ GLBC is built by connecting at least one Permanent (Lumbini) and two Tentative List (Tilaurakot (Ancient Kapilavastu) and Ramagrama) of UNESCO World Heritage Site inscription.
- ❁ The sacredness and significance of the sites contained in the GLBC are also described in many edicts/inscriptions and travel books by many emperors/kings, pilgrims and travelers, including Emperor Ashoka (249 BC), Fa-hsien (5th century AD) Huan-Tsang (7th century AD), King Ripu Malla (14th century AD) etc.

iii. Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value

- ❁ Surprisingly, as is the case of northern Indian territory, the entire Greater Lumbini Area (GLA) lacks settlements and communities of the followers of Buddhist dharma and Buddhist traditions.
- ❁ Though the sacred Buddhist heritage sites are known to have visited by many kings and pilgrims till 13th century AD, including the pilgrimage visit by Ripu Malla, neither the descendants of Shakyas and Koliyas were known to have existed in GLA nor any community who practiced Buddha dharma and Buddhist traditions was found till the time Lumbini was re-discovered during the late 19th century AD.
- ❁ It is, however, worthy to note that some researchers and political activists from Tharu community have claimed themselves to be the true descendants of Shakyas based on their physical attributes as well as their distribution, though no historical and archaeological proof has been found to prove this claim yet.
- ❁ Located in the beautiful hill station, **Tansen**, Palpa is considered to be the **nearest Shakya settlement** from Lumbini, though they are considered to have migrated from Kathmandu Valley in the later period (around 300 years ago), instead of being the direct descendants of Shakyas of ancient Kapilavastu. Whatsoever be the

Map-2: Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC)





case, Tansen is the only Shakya settlement (Buddhist community) where the real Buddhist dharma, traditions, and rituals can be observed and experienced. There are at least five Viharas founded by some of the Theravadin reformers/revivers during the first and second half of 20th century. The Theravada Buddhist reform movement was started in Kathmandu, particularly by some Newars.

- ❁ One of the venerated Theravadin **Vikchhu Amritananda**, from Tansen, joined the Buddhist reform movement started in 1928 AD by Ven. Mahaprajna. Ven. Amritananda started preaching the dharma in Nepal and in 1944 AD, Amritananda formed **Dharmodaya Sabha** in Sarnath, India. In the later stage, the movement was accepted by the government and various viharas were founded in Kathmandu Valley and other Buddhist settlements such as Tansen. Amritananda is also credited for founding Ganmala Sangha in Swoyambhu, Kathmandu.
- ❁ Today, visitors can visit at least five viharas (2 Theravadi and 3 Mahayani) in Tansen, including Ananda Viharas (locals claim it contains the relic of Shakyamuni Buddha), Mahachaitya Vihara (Taxar), Dharma Chakra Vihara (performing Chuda Karma), Holangdi Bouddha Vihara (Karuna Buddha Sangha), Buddha Chaitya (Sreenagar) etc. Other venerated vikchhus from Palpa include Kumara Kasyap (the only Tripitaka Acharya from Nepal), Bimala Nanda, Mahasthavir Shakyanda, Vikchhu Chuda Mahasthavira etc. A Brahmin lady from Rimgha Lekh, Papa is considered to become a first converted nun in the modern history of Buddhism in Nepal. The famous Indian Buddhist scholar **Atisha Dipankara Srijyana**, who contributed a lot in the 2nd dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, is said to have visited Tansen and spent one month before his departure to Kathmandu and then to Tibet. **Tansen Durbar Museum** is another added attraction for visitors in Tansen. Lumbini-Siddhababa-Tansen-Ridi-Resunga-Supadeurali-Kapilavastu circuit can be linked with GLBC.

- ❁ With the re-discovery of Lumbini in 1896 AD and the implementation of Lumbini Development Master Plan-LDMP (1978 AD) since 1985 AD (with the establishment of LDT) many national and international Buddhist organizations have founded monasteries (and viharas) in the monastic zone of LDMP and started practicing Buddhism dharma following its three jewels: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Accordingly, the monks/nuns and vikchhus/vikchhunis of these monasteries have not only conducted dharma teaching and chanting but have also made their efforts to expand Buddha dharma and teachings in the surrounding villages. Locals seem to have joined Vikchhu Sanghas, especially from Mahilwar area of Lumbini and have run various welfare activities, including operation of Karuna school. **Thou Panjara** (Panchadana) is still practiced in Tansen.
- ❁ Though pilgrims and visitors can't purchase the Buddhism related local traditional arts and craft products, they can buy Buddha and Lumbini related souvenir items including sculptures, photo frame, T-shirt, Postcards, CDs, Books, baskets etc.

iv. Other Added Attractions and Activities

a. *Other (Non-Buddhist) cultural attractions*

- ❁ While making visit to GLBC, visitors can also enjoy the rich culture, tradition and arts of other Non-Buddhist communities, including Terai Hindu, Muslim and migrant Pahadi Hindus who have been the true preserver and custodians of these significant Buddhist heritage sites.
- ❁ Key religious sites include Devghat (Chitwan), Triveni (Nawalparasi), Madarbaba (Muslim site in Daunne Hill), Siddhababa Temple, Baijnath Dham, Prakateshwor Nath Temple, Bolbam Temple (Parhowa), Laxman Ghat, Ramghat, Tauleshwor Nath Temple, Kapil Dham, Shringi Ashram, Madhuban Dham, Shivapurgadhi, Supadeurali etc.

- ✧ Key festivals and events that visitors can participate and/or enjoy include Nepali New Year celebration, Ramadan/Ramazan (May/June), Rice Planting Festivals (June/July), Bolbum Festival (July/August), Rakhi Festival (August), Gai Jatra (Tansen/August), Jitiya Festival (Tharu community), Durga Puja/Dashain, Deepawali, Chhata Parva, Nuhana Purnima (Kartik Purnima), Maghi Parva, Holi Festival, Chaite Dashain, Chaite Purnima and so on.
- ✧ Special cultural dances include Viraha Dance in Mahilwar (Lumbini) and Tharu Dance in many places, including Jagadispur (Kapilvastu).
- ✧ Local Governments have also requested to include Marchabari Mai, Narainaur Dham, Jit Gadhi Killa (Butwal), Paryowa Bolbom Dham, Sadhaniya Mai, Manimukundasen Park, Hill Park (Butwal), Parsaiha, Banjarawa, Prakateshwor Mahadev etc. with the circuit.

b. Outstanding natural landscapes and rich biodiversity

- ✧ Lumbini Crane Sanctuary (Lumbini), Jagadishpur Reservoir (designated in the Ramsar site of wetland), Tellar and Dano rivers, Gajedi Lake, Gaidahawa Tal, Churia Forest, Daunne Hill etc. are some of the natural sites with the outstanding natural landscape and rich biodiversity that can be combined with the tour package of GLBC. Chitwan NP and Bardia NP are two nearest eco-tourism destinations for wildlife safari and wilderness based tourism experiences in the region.
- ✧ Tansen (Palpa) and Narapani (Supadeurali, Arghakhanchi) are two nearest hill-stations that offers mild climate with the majestic view of outstanding mountain panorama.

4.2.3. Significant Heritage Sites

- ✧ Significance heritage sites contained in the GLBC include the followings:



i. Lumbini

a. *Pilgrimage, Spiritual and Peace Value*

- ✧ Lumbini Sacred Garden and Monastic Zone (MZ) are two great sites for pilgrimage in Lumbini.

i. Lumbini Sacred Garden- The birthplace of the Buddha and fountain of Buddhism:

- ✧ The Sacred Garden comprises of the most sacred spots and monuments related to the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. Here, at the sacred garden of Lumbini, Queen Mayadevi gave birth to the Bodhisattva Siddhartha in 623 BC.
- ✧ Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha is one of the four most sacred pilgrimage sites for the Buddhist pilgrims. Majority of the Buddhist followers (except some core Theravadin) believe that prince Siddhartha was born in Lumbini as a bodhisattva who later become a Buddha, making Lumbini the birthplace of Buddha as well a fountain of Buddhism.
- ✧ Sacred spots to pay homage in Lumbini Sacred Garden for pilgrims and spirituality seekers include Mayadevi Temple, Sacred Puskarini Lake and Sacred Bodhi Tree. The Mayadevi temple houses the **exact birth spot** of the Buddha marked by the **Marker Stone** and the **Nativity Sculpture** that depicts the birth scene of the Buddha. Other sacred monuments to visit in Sacred Garden include Ashokan Pillar, two monastic complexes and altogether 13 stupas.
- ✧ Inner Circumambulation (doing Kora) around the **Sacred Garden** and the Outer Circumambulation around the **Circular Levy** give visitors a rare opportunity to accumulate the highest degree of merit at the Birthplace of the Buddha.
- ii. Monastic Zone-: Pilgrimage to the Representative Buddhist World at the Birthplace of the Buddha
- ✧ The newly established monastic zone gives Buddhist

pilgrims and spiritual seekers a rare chance to pay homage to the monasteries of the various Buddhist countries at the birthplace of the Buddha; take part in daily, occasional and annual religious and spiritual events, including worshipping, chanting and reciting etc. and engage in the meditation and Vipassana sessions offered by most of the monasteries.

- ✿ Many national and international Buddhist organizations have founded monasteries (and viharas) in the monastic zone of Lumbini Development Master Plan-LDMP and started practicing Buddhism dharma teaching and traditions following its triple Gems: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Every monastery in Lumbini has its own unique cultural traditions and ascetical as well as aesthetical features that enhance the sacred ambience of Lumbini and entice a wide range of visitors towards this site of holy pilgrimage. These monasteries also offer pilgrims and visitors an extraordinary opportunity to acquire knowledge on different schools and traditions of Buddhism being practiced in the various parts of the world. For this very reason, Lumbini is being developed into a global centre for Buddhism encompassing and respecting multiple religious sects and systems of belief.
- ✿ So far more than 30 monasteries of various schools and traditions have already been founded in the Lumbini Master Plan area. World Peace Pagoda of Japan is situated in the New Lumbini Village while Rajkiya Buddha Vihara, Nepal and Dharmaswami Maharaja Buddha Vihara, Nepal are in the Sacred Garden of Master Plan area.
- ✿ There are eight Theravada Buddhist monasteries and one Vipassana meditation centre in the East Monastic Zone, including The Royal Thai Monastery, Thailand; 2) Canadian Engaged Buddhism Association (Bodhi Institute Monastery and Dharma Center) (under construction); 3) Mahabodhi Society Temple of India; 4) Nepal Theravada Buddha Vihar

(under construction); 5) Cambodian Temple, Cambodia (under construction); 6) Myanmar Golden Temple, Myanmar; 7) International Gautami Nuns Temple, Nepal; 8) Sri Lankan Monastery, Sri Lanka and 9) Dhamma Janani Vipassana Center, Nepal.

- ❁ Likewise, there are 18 Mahayana Buddhist monasteries and two meditation centres in the West Monastic Zone, including 1) Ka-Nying Shedrup Monastery (Seto Gumba), Nepal (under construction); 2) Zarong Tgupten Mendol Dogna Chholing, Nepal (under construction); 3) Urgen Dorjee Chholing Buddhist Center, Singapore; 4) Nepal Vajrayana Maha Vihara, Nepal (under construction); 5) French Buddhist Association, France; 6) The Great Lotus Stupa (Tara Foundation), Germany; 7) Drigung Kagyud Meditation Center, Laddakh; 8) The World Linh Son Buddhist Congregation, France; 9) Japanese Monastery, Japan (under construction); 10) United Tungaram Buddhist Foundation, Nepal; 11) Thrangu Vajra Vidhya Buddhist Association, Canada; 12) Vietnam Phat Quoc Tu, Vietnam; 13) Geden International Monastery, Austria; 14) Chinese Monastery, China; 15) Dae Sung Shakya Temple, South Korea; 16) Drubgyud Chhoeling Monastery (Nepal Mahayana Temple); 17) Dharmodhaya Sabha Nepal (Swayambhu Mahavihara); 18) Karma Samtenling Monastery, Nepal; 19) Manang Samaj Stupa, Nepal; and 20) Pandirarama Lumbini International Meditation Center, Myanmar. Some monasteries and viharas are still under the phase of construction in both zones.
- ❁ These monasteries and sangha members not only offer daily and full-moon prayer in the Mayadevi Temple and respective monasteries (viharas) on a daily/periodic basis, but also organize and/or celebrate various Buddhist festivals and events, including Buddha Purnima (Vaishaka Day), Lhosars (Tamu Lhosar, Gyalpo Lhosar, Sonam Lhosar) etc. These monasteries also observe rainy season retreat (Varsavasa),

Kathina Chivar Dana ceremony, organize ordination ceremonies, Buddha's Great Miracle Day (February), Guru Rinpoche Puja etc.

iii. Lumbini- The Fountain of World Peace:

- ✿ Since Buddha realized The Four Noble Truths (i) Dukha Arya Satya, (ii) Sumudaya Arya Satya, (iii) Nirodha Arya Satya, and (iv) Marga Arya Satya), and then showed the ways to liberate from these sorrows, or paths to nirvana based on The Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhism is considered to be a more scientific, inclusive and practical philosophy/religion of peace and non-violence. For Buddhists, nirvana means a condition of spiritual well-being, of security, emancipation, peace, bliss and salvation.
- ✿ Lumbini in the Greater Lumbini Area (GLA) is the place where the Buddha (the great philosopher), took his **miraculous birth** as Bodhisattva Siddhartha and, Ancient Kapilavastu in the GLA is the place where prince Siddhartha **took miraculous renunciation** (mahaviniskramana), and entered into deep meditation towards liberating himself and other sentient beings from suffering.
- ✿ As being the birthplace of Buddha and Buddhism, Lumbini, has also been considered to be the **fountain of World Peace** in recent decades. In 1986 **The Eternal Peace Flame** was brought from the United Nations (NY) and installed at the southern point of the Lumbini Central Canal to commemorate the International Year of Peace. Likewise, the World Peace Bell was installed 50m east of the flame in 2005. The first World Buddhist Summit held in 1998 in Lumbini also declared Lumbini as the "Fountain of World Peace". Accordingly, Nepal Government has established the Gautam Buddha International Peace Award In 2002. The International Buddhist conference held in 2016 again unanimously declared Lumbini, Nepal as the birthplace of Buddha and the Buddhism.



- ✿ Besides visiting this symbolic monuments, pilgrims and visitors may also enhance their eternal peace by entering into short and multiple-days meditation sessions offered at Pandirarama Lumbini International Meditation Center (Myanmar), and Dhamma Janani Vipassana Center (Nepal).
- ✿ Pilgrims and spiritual seekers may also visit **Sal Forest** (*Shorea Robasta*) at western and eastern monastic zone; visiting **Crane Sanctuary** at New Lumbini Village and visiting **Mango Groves** in the nearby villages; all related to the life of Shakyamuni Buddha.

b. Archaeological and Historical Value

- ✿ Because Lumbini Sacred Garden is the birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha, the monuments and sites associated with the birth and birthplace of the Buddha have a great archaeological and historical significance. At least 99 archaeological sites have already been identified in Rupandehi district.
- ✿ Recognizing its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for the greater benefit of entire humanity and its archaeological, religious and spiritual significance, UNESCO enlisted Lumbini as a **World Heritage Property in 1997** on the basis of following two OUV criterion:
 - ✿ Criteria III: As the birthplace of the Lord Buddha, testified by the inscription on the Ashoka Pillar, the sacred area in Lumbini is one of the most holy and significant places for one of the world's great religions.
 - ✿ Criteria VI: The archaeological remains of the Buddhist viharas (monasteries) and stupas (memorial shrines) from the 3rd century BC to the 15th century AD, provide important evidence about the nature of Buddhist pilgrimage centres from a very early period.

✧ Significant historical and archaeological sites within Lumbini include Mayadevi Temple, Ashoka Pillar, Marker Stone, Puskarini Pond, Nativity Sculpture, Stupas and Monasteries.

- i. **The Mayadevi Temple:** The Mayadevi Temple is the heartland of GLBC. It houses the Marker Stone, the Nativity Sculpture and the structural ruins, all related to the birth of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. The Marker Stone pinpoints the exact birth spot and the Nativity Sculpture depicts the birth scene of the Prince Siddhartha. Archaeological excavations have revealed that the structural ruins belong to the different phases of constructions and restorations of Mayadevi Temple over the centuries. Emperor Ashoka during his visit to Lumbini in 249 century BC, built a platform using the burnt bricks to safeguard the Marker Stone and the Nativity Tree under which Mayadevi had given birth to Prince Siddhartha. The Mayadevi Temple was re-discovered in 1896 by General Khadga Shamsher and Dr. Anton Fuhrer with the reference of Ashokan Pillar. Later, Keshar Shumsher excavated the mound of early Mayadevi Temple and reconstructed it in 1939 AD. The present day Mayadevi Temple was rebuilt in 2003 by Lumbini Development Trust. The structural ruins inside Mayadevi Temple belong to 6th century BC to 15th century AD. The archaeological excavation undertaken by Department of Archaeology, Lumbini Development Trust and Durham University (UK) during 2010-2013 AD uncovered a timber shrine dating back to the 6th century BC. During the excavation a pre-Mauryan brick structure, each brick measuring 49×36×7 cm in size and 20kg in weight from underneath the present visible layers of ruins was also uncovered.

The **Marker Stone** marks the exact location of the birth spot of Prince Siddhartha in Lumbini. The meticulous excavation of the Mayadevi Temple (1992-1996) discovered the Marker Stone on the top of a platform consisting of seven layers

of bricks from the 3rd century BC. It is a sandstone based conglomerate measuring 70 cm x 40 cm x 10 cm in size. **The Nativity Sculpture** The Nativity Sculpture depicts the birth scene of Prince Sidhartha. The red sandstone sculpture is said to have carved by Mathura School of Art in the 4th century. The scientific excavation by P. C. Mukherji in 1899 AD discovered the main part of the Nativity Sculpture.

- ii. **The Ashoka Pillar:** The Ashokan Pillar was erected here in Lumbini by the Emperor Ashoka in 249 BC to mark the birthplace of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha and to commemorate his visit to Lumbini. The Ashoka inscription engraved in Brahmi script and Pali language is **the first epigraphic evidence** to attest **Lumbini to be the birthplace** of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha.

The text written in Brahmi script and Pali language is translated as follows: “King Piyadasi (Ashoka) the beloved of the Gods, in the twentieth year of his reign, himself made a royal visit. Shakyamuni Buddha was born here, therefore the (birth spot) marker stone was worshipped and a stone pillar was erected. The lord having been born here, the tax of the Lumbini village reduced to the eight part (only)”. In 1312 AD, Ripu Malla, the king of western Nepal also paid homage to Lumbini and engraved the following words: **“Om Mani Padme Hum Ripu Malla Chiran Jayatu”** on the eastern side of the upper part of the pillar.

The pillar, was **rediscovered** by Dr. A. A. Fuhrer and General Khadga Shumsher JBR during the excavation carried out on December 1, 1896. The pillar is a conglomerate made up of sandstone and sedimentary rock. The excavation work by Indian archaeologist Mrs. Debala Mitra confirmed that the pillar has a Mauryan polish typical of finished stone from a quarry in the neighborhood of Chunar (near Varanasi, India). The pillar when first erected was about 40 feet long, and originally had three parts: (i) the monolithic pillar, (ii) a

lotus bracket, and (iii) a crowning figure, which was possibly a horse. The present monolithic pillar is 30 feet 10.5 inches (9.41m) long. The middle part of the pillar 'lotus bracket' is recently placed on a raised brick platform near the pillar. As mentioned in the travel account of Huan Tsang, the crowning part of the pillar was a horse image, which unfortunately is still missing.

- iii. **The Sacred Pond (Puskarini):** Located 25 paces south-west from the Marker Stone is the Sacred Pond, popularly known as Puskarini, where Mayadevi is believed to have taken a bath before giving birth to Prince Siddhartha and where the infant prince was also given the first purification bath. The pond is believed to have existed before the birth of Prince Siddhartha, probably in an oval shape.
- iv. **The Stupas and Monasteries:** The Mayadevi Shrine is surrounded by several groups of stupas. So far, **31 stupas** representing **3 different categories** have been excavated at the Sacred Garden of Lumbini. Of them, 29 are Votive Stupas, 1 Relic Stupa and 1 Dhamma Stupa. The large number of ancient stupas in the vicinity signifies the importance of Lumbini as one of the holiest sites of pilgrimage after the Mahaparinirvana of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. The stupas were constructed here from 3rd century BC until 8th or 9th century AD through the Mauryan, Sunga, Kushana and Gupta periods. Other significant archaeological monuments excavated and restored at the sacred garden include Monastery Group A (East), Monastery Group B (West), Temple Basement, Meeting Hall etc.
- v. **International Monastic Zone: The Miniature Buddhist World:** The newly established monastic zone give Buddhist pilgrims and visitors a rare chance to visit the monasteries of the various Buddhist countries constructed in the respective national styles forming it a Miniature Buddhist World.

- vi. **Lumbini Museum:** Lumbini Museum in Lumbini gives visitors a chance to observe the rare collection of monuments and artifacts collected from the Greater Lumbini Area, and associated with the birth and foot-steps of Shakyamuni Buddha and other previous Buddhas.

Other archaeological sites found around Lumbini include Paisaiya, Banjarahwa, Simrahawa etc.

ii. Ancient Kapilavastu

a. *Pilgrimage, Spiritual and Peace Value*

- ✿ Ancient Kapilavastu is another significant site for pilgrimage, spirituality and peace in the GLA as it harbors many sacred sites, including birthplaces and nirvana stupas of two previous Buddhas, great renunciation site of prince Siddhartha, Ancient Nyigrodharama (Kudan), sacred maternity path of Mayadevi, massacred site of Shakyas and so on.

i. Tilaurakot: The Ancient Capital of Shakya Kingdom from where Siddhartha renounced the princely life:

- ✿ It is the city where Lord Buddha spent the first 29 years of his life; It is from here that the Siddhartha renounced through the Eastern Gateway on his journey of spiritual enlightenment. This event is recorded as Mahaviniskramana or the **Great Renunciation**, one of the twelve deeds of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha in the Buddhist scriptures. Prince Siddhartha is said to have crossed the **Aroma River** (probably the present day Sapta Gandaki River); cut off his bejeweled long hair; and transformed into an Ascetic.
- ✿ The Northern **Twin Stupas** (also called Dhamnihawa Stupa), lying north of the Tilaurakot palace is thought to have built to commemorate the late King Suddhodhana and Queen Mayadevi. Other sites to pay homage include the Eastern Stupa and Monastery (Hastigarta).

ii. Gotihawa

- ✿ Gotihawa is identified as the holy place where Krakuchhanda Buddha was born and attained enlightenment. Key sites to pay homage in Gotihawa include the **Stupa**, and an **Ashokan Pillar**. A small stone statue with **image of Kakruchhanda Buddha** has been established in the nearby area.

iii. Niglihawa

- ✿ Niglihawa is identified as the holy place where Kanakamuni Buddha was born. Emperor Ashoka visited the site in 249 BC and erected the stone pillar with inscription on it. Key sites to pay homage in Niglihawa include the **Stupa** (though now missing), and an **Ashokan Pillar**. A small stone statue with **image of Kanakamuni Buddha** has been established in the complex. The Hometown of Kanakamuni Buddha, Araurakot, is also located nearby.

iv. Kudan

- ✿ Ancient Nyigrodharama (Kudan): The ancient Nyigrodharama (present day Kudan) is believed to be the place where **Shakyamuni Buddha first met his father King Siddhodhana** after becoming Buddha; where Rahula, the son of Shakyamuni Buddha, was ordained by Sariputra, the chief disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha; where about 300 Vikchhu and Shakyamuni Buddha spent one rainy season and performed retreat and where Shakyamuni Buddha preached five important suttas (sutras) of Majjhimanikaya. Key sites to pay home in Kudan include three stupas, a well and a pond (Nyigrodharama pond).
- ✿ Women from Sakya clan including Queen Prajapati Gautami (step-mother of Lord Sakymuni Buddha), Yasodhara (his wife) and other 500 Sakya women were said to have became the first nuns from here in the Ancient Kapilavastu and founded the **first nunnery**.



v. Sagarhawa

- ✿ Sagarhawa is identified as the place where the Shakyas were massacred by the King Virudhaka, the son of Prasenajita Raja of Kosala out of revenge. Key site to pay homage in Sagarhawa include the sacred Sagarhawa Lake and the remains of stupas, built in the memory of the noble Shakyas by their descendants.

vi. Other Sacred sites:

- ✿ Other sacred sites to pay homage in the ancient Kapilavastu include sites connected by the sacred renunciation route of Prince Siddhartha and sacred maternity route of Queen Mayadevi.

b. *Archaeological and Historical Value*

- ✿ Ancient Kapilavastu has many significant archaeological sites related to the Buddha Shakyamuni and other Buddhas. At least 136 archaeological sites have already been identified in Kapilavastu district.

i. Tilaurakot (Ancient Capital of Sakya Kingdom)

- ✿ The fact that **Tilaurakot** is the capital city of ancient Kapilavastu was first discovered in 1899 AD by P.C. Mukherji of the Archaeological Survey of India. The importance of Tilaurakot as an ancient capital city is reinforced by the close proximity of two Ashokan pillars at Niglihawa and Gotihawa, a fact also described by the early Chinese travelers Fa-hsian and HuanTsang.
- ✿ Recent geo-physical survey and archaeological excavation carried out by an archaeological team led by Professor Cunningham has revealed Tilaurakot to be **a fortified citadel** of about 500 by 400m surrounded by a series of associated monuments, including a large Mauryan Period monastery (in the east), and an industrial zone (in the south), suggesting it to be the most comprehensive plan of an early historic city to date in South Asia. At the centre of the city, a monumental

palatial complex measuring over 100 by 100 meters, with gates at each cardinal direction was also discovered.

- ❁ Important archaeological and religious monuments uncovered in Tilaurakot site include (i) The Western Gate, (ii) Central Structural Complex, (iii) Central Pond, (iv) Samai Mai Temple, (v) The Eastern Gate (**Mahabhiniskramana Dwara**), (vi) The Fortification Wall, (vii) The Northern Twin Stupa (Dhamnihawa Stupa), (viii) Eastern Stupa and Monastery (Hastigarta), and (iv) The Southern Industrial Mound (Lohasaudiya). A spectacular hoard of **497 silver punch-marked coins** of 3rd century BC has also been unearthed recently from the Hastigarta monastery.

ii. Kudan

- ❁ Also known currently as Kudan or Lori-Ki Kudan, this site is believed to be the ancient and **historical site of Nyigrodharama** where Lord Shakyamuni Buddha met King Siddhodhana for the first time after attaining enlightenment. Recent joint excavation carried out by the Department of Archaeology, Lumbini Development Trust and Durham University of the UK under the JaFIT project (2014–2016 AD) has identified the wooden post-hole dating back to the 8th century BC at Kudan. Significant structural ruins excavated and restored in Kudan include three stupas, a well and a pond (Nyigrodharama pond).
- ❁ Located in the southeastern corner, **Rahula Stupa** is believed to have been built to commemorate the event and spot where Rahula, the Buddha's son, was ordained by the Buddha's closest disciple Sariputta as a novice (shramanera). The Stupa also bears an octagonal Shiva temple on its top built later by the Hindus. The **largest stupa**, located in between two stupas, is believed to have been built to commemorate Lord Shakyamuni Buddha and king Siddhodhana's first meeting (after enlightenment); Lord Sakymuni Buddha's discourse



on the five Suttas of the Majjhimanikaya, and conversion of Shakyas into Buddhist. It bears some of the best-decorated carved brick structures. Located in the northernmost part of the garden, the **third stupa** is believed to have been built to commemorate the incidences and place where Queen Prajapati Gautami offered Lord Shakyamuni Buddha the Kashaya Vastra, and Yasodhara invited him and his Sangha for a meal at the Kapilavastu palace. The **Nyigrodharama Pond** and the Ancient Well are also believed to have built during the first visit of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha to this sacred garden.

iii. Gotihawa

- ✿ Gotihawa is identified as the holy place where Krakuchhanda Buddha was born and had attained enlightenment. Significant archaeological monuments include a stone pillar and a big stupa. The Ashoka Pillar was erected by Emperor Ashoka in 249 BC to commemorate his visit to the birth spot of Krakuchhanda Buddha. The inscription bearing upper portion of the pillar is broken off long ago and is still missing. Prominent Chinese travelers have mentioned about the erection of pillar, bearing a lion capital atop, at Gotihawa by Emperor Ashoka. The Stupa was built by the Emperor Ashoka to pay reverence to Krakuchhanda Buddha in 3rd century BC. At the center of the present village there is an ancient well, and in the south there lies an ancient water tank. Several ancient potteries, brick structures of stupas and monasteries outside modern Gotihawa village suggest that the village was started developing in 6th century BC.

iv. Niglihawa

- ✿ Niglihawa is identified as the holy place where Kanakamuni Buddha was born. Emperor Ashoka visited the site in 249 BC and erected the stone pillar with inscription. As translated by Smith (1969), the inscription reads as, “His Majesty King Priyadarsina in the 14th year of his reign enlarged for the second time the stupa of the Buddha Kanakamuni and in the

20th year of his reign, having come in person, paid reverence and set up a stone pillar”. However, the stupa is presently missing and the Ashokan Pillar is now in a broken state; into two pieces. Dr. AA Fuhrer discovered this pillar in 1895 AD. Celebrated Chinese pilgrims, Fa-Hien and Huan-Tsang, describe the Kanakamuni Stupa and Ashoka Pillar in their travel accounts. Unfortunately, both the basement and the capital of the pillar together with the lion atop of which Huan Tsang speaks are still missing. The pillar also bears an inscription, “Om mani padme hum and Sri Ripu Malla Chiram Jayatu 1234” of King Ripu Malla written in the year 1234 (Saka Era corresponding to 1312 AD).

v. Araurakot and other archaeological sites

- ✿ Araurakot is identified as the town where Kanakamuni Buddha lived, grew up, and spent his married life. It is a large rectangular fortified area with the remains of ancient moat and brick fortifications. The joint archaeological team of Nepali-Italian archaeologists (1996-1997) has identified nine archaeological sites including Araurakot in this area. Other important sites include Thumwa, Semari, Thagi Baba Ki Dadi, Derwa, Gobari, Shivapura, Banduli and Niglihawa and its surroundings. Recently, a UNESCO led joint geophysical survey of Lumbini Development Trust (LDT), Department of Archaeology (DoA), and Durham University, the UK under JaFIT project has unveiled many huge structural ruins underneath the citadel.

vi. Sagarhawa

- ✿ Sagarhawa is identified as the place where the Shakyas were massacred by the King Virudhaka, the son of Prasenajita Raja of Kosala out of revenge. Later, hundreds of stupas were built here by their descendants in the memory of the noble Shakyas. The ancient ruins, primarily the stupas and monasteries, are situated on the western and southern banks of the pond. Dr. Fuhrer in 1897 AD, on behalf of the Government of Nepal,

carried out the first excavation in Sagarhawa and uncovered thousands of small relic stupas arranged in long symmetrical rows on the four sides of the largest square stupa.

vii. Sisaniya

- ✿ Sisaniya is identified as an ancient city of Shakyas with an ancient mound. The site is believed to have had an ancient stupa and a Sangharama built by the Shakyas. Prof. Giovanni Verardi, the Director of 1993-94 Nepalese and Italian joint excavation team mentions existence of an important craft center of Kusana period in Sisaniya.

viii. Kapilvastu Museum

- ✿ Having been identified with more than 130 important archaeological sites, Kapilavastu is considered to be an **open museum** and one of the oldest cities in Asia. **The Kapilavastu Museum** exhibits the artefacts recovered from the various excavation works, including coins, pottery and toys (dating back to 7th century BC and 4th century AD) along with a good collection of jewelry and other ornaments. The terracotta figures and plaques recovered at Tilaurakot dates back to the pre–Mauryan, Mauryan, Sunga and the Kushana periods.

iii. **Devadaha**

a. *Pilgrimage, Spiritual and Peace Value*

- ✿ Devadaha, the ancient capital of the Koliya Kingdom, is identified as the maternal hometown of Queen Mayadevi, Prajapati Gautami and Princess Yasodhara; the mother, stepmother and consort of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha respectively. It is believed that Prince Siddhartha had spent few years of his childhood with his stepmother/aunt Prajapati Gautami in Devadaha. Buddhist scriptures suggest that Shakyamuni Buddha visited Devadaha and ordained the followers of Jain Sadhu Nirgrantha Nathputra seven years after attaining the enlightenment.

- ✧ Key sites to pay homage in Devadaha include Devadaha (Lake), Bhawanipur, Kanya Mai Temple, Badi Mai Temple, Kumaravarti Temple etc. Other important sites include Khairdanda (the palace site), MarthaGadhi, Pakadi Tree etc.

b. Archaeological and Historical Value

- ✧ **Devadaha**, the ancient capital of the Koliya Kingdom is also identified as the maternal hometown of Queen Mayadevi, Prajapati Gautami and Princess Yasodhara, the mother, stepmother and consort of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha respectively.
- ✧ **Khairdanda** of Devadaha area has been identified as the possible site of ancient Koliyan capital with the reference to distance and direction from Lumbini, location of Ramagrama Stupa, various early Buddhist scriptures and preliminary archaeological excavations. Nevertheless, it requires a full-fledged archaeological research to trace the exact location of the capital city of the ancient Koliya.
- ✧ Sites of archeological significance in Devadaha area include Bhawanipur, Khairdanda, Devadaha, MarthaGadhi, Kanya Mai, Bairi Mai (Badhi Mai), Kumaravarti etc. S.B. Deo mentioned **Bhawanipur** as Baghortappa in 1962 A.D. Department of Archaeology initiated to excavate this site in 2012 A.D and has found many interesting objects, including small stone pillar, brick structure on the surface, stone sculptures, Shiva Lingas, a well etc.

iv. Ramagrama Relic Stupa

a. Pilgrimage, Spiritual and Peace Value

- ✧ Ramagrama Stupa in the ancient Koliya Kingdom (present day Parasi) is believed to be the **only stupa** to have **contained the sacred relic** (still unexposed) of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. According to Buddhist scriptures, including Mahaparinibbana Sutta, after the mahaparinirvana of Buddha, his relics were

divided into eight portions and Koliya Kingdom also received one of them. They built stupa keeping the relic. Legends has it that Emperor Ashoka opened the other seven stupas but Nagaraja saved the Ramagrama Stupa from being opened by Ashoka, making it the only sacred relic stupa.

- ✧ Other important sites and monuments worth to visit in the periphery of Ramagrama Stupa include sacred Jharahi River and the nearby park with the standing image of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha, built by a Japanese Buddhist Organization, Bishinokai.

b. Archaeological and Historical Value

- ✧ Inscribed as Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage Inscription in 1996, Ramagrama is a site of great archaeological and pilgrimage significance. It is identified as the **only stupa** believed to have contained the sacred relic of Shakyamuni Buddha. Fa-hsian and Huan Sang who had visited this stupa in 5th and 7th cen. AD have mentioned it as **Lanmo**. The 7m high brick mound (stupa) is located on the bank of Jharahi River.
- ✧ The mound structure was first discovered in 1899 AD by Dr. W. Hoey, a historian from the Asiatic Society of Bengal before it was confirmed to be a stupa by S. B. Deo later in 1964. Led by archaeologist Sukra Sagar Shrestha, Department of Archaeology (DoA) of Nepal carried out an excavation from 1999 to 2004 A.D. However, the team did not open the relic or the core of the stupa to respect the sentiment attached to its sanctity. Evidence showed that it is the stupa of Maurya period with six phased construction and renovations within the square base of the stupa structure. Moreover, the team exposed two distinct phases; one on top of other. The first phase was erected with brick soling made below 8 courses of bricks. The description made by Huan Tsang as “Brick Stupa off 100 Chi high” was nicely uncovered by the study of

this team. The archaeological findings reveal that restoration and reconstruction of the Stupa occurred during Mauryan, Sunga, Kusana and Gupta periods. The four distinct phases of construction proves that the stupa is an age-old monument.

- ✧ In recent years, **Panditpur** area of Nawalparasi district (13.5km from Ramagrama and 11.69km from Bhawanipur) has also been supposed to be the ancient capital city of Koliya Kingdom by some archaeologists. DoA has begun excavation work in Panditpur since 2012 AD. Senior archaeologist like Tara Nanda Mishra, Sukra Sagar Shrestha etc. are involved in the excavation of Panditpur. Archaeologist Sukra Sagar has suggested Panditpur to be contemporary to ancient Kapilvastu. Grey ware pottery, beads, terracotta, animal and human figurines, Kusana period terracotta mask, miniature pot and Sunga period ring well have been recorded from the excavation works carried out in 600*600 m mound.

4.2.4. *Other Satellite Tourism Destinations and Product Linkage Opportunities*

- ✧ Other satellite tourism destinations that pilgrims and visitors can enjoy while visiting GLBC include Triveni Dham, Siddha Baba Temple, Dobhan Homestay, Tansen, Ranimahal, Ridi Ruru Chhetra, Resunga, Khanchikot, Narapani, Supadeurali, Baldyanggadhi etc.
- ✧ Key tourist destinations that can be combined with the extended tour package for GLBC include the following:
 - ✧ GLBC combining with Wildlife safari tour package in Chitwan NP.
 - ✧ GLBC combining with Wildlife safari tour package in Bardia NP.
 - ✧ GLBC combining with pilgrimage visit to Sworgadwari (Pyuthan).
 - ✧ GLBC combining with leisure tour package to Pokhara.
 - ✧ GLBC combining with leisure and pilgrimage tour package to Mustang.

- ✿ GLBC combining with pilgrimage visit to the Buddhist Circuit, India (Kushinagar, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Sravasti etc.).

4.2.5. *Potential Markets and Market Segments*

- ✿ GLBC has a potential to attract visitors from domestic markets, Indian market and all other countries as the present visitor flow pattern also shows it. In 2017, about 1,552,604 visitors visited Lumbini from 91 different countries, including Nepal. Key markets for Lumbini and GLBC include the following:
- ✿ Domestic Markets: 1,251,346 domestic visitors visited Lumbini in 2017. Majority of domestic visitors visit Lumbini for leisure, spirituality and peace purpose followed by pure pilgrimage and research/educational purposes. Key source markets include Buddhist communities from Kathmandu Valley; Buddhist community from the Himalayan region; general and leisure visitors from almost all districts and major cities, and researchers from Kathmandu. Only few of them also visit Kapilvastu and very few of them visit Ramagrama and Devadaha.
- ✿ Indian Markets: 155,444 Indian visitors visited Lumbini in 2017. Majority percentage of Indian visitors visit Lumbini on their way to Pokhara and other tourism sites of Nepal for leisure and pilgrimage visit to Hindu religious sites, followed by pure Buddhist pilgrimage who come from Ladhakh and Western India, Sikkim and Eastern India; Maharastra and Southern India. Only few of them (particularly the Buddhist pilgrims) also visit Ancient Kapilavastu.
- ✿ Other Passport Holding International Visitors: 145,814 passport holding international visitors from 89 countries including Iraq (1) and Iran (9) visited Lumbini in 2017. Amongst the international visitors, majority of them were from the Buddhist countries including Sri Lanka (48,528), Thailand (27,603), Myanmar (21,531), China (15,770), South Korea (5,103), Vietnam (5,034) Bhutan (2,278), Taiwan (1,616), Japan (1,413), Cambodia (1,295) and so on. Amongst the non-Buddhist countries, larger number of visitors came from UK (1,677), Germany (1,636), Australia (1,625), Kazakisthan (1,413), France (1,341), Malaysia

(1,271), USA (863) and so on. About 15 to 25% of the international visitors, mostly Buddhist pilgrims also visited Ancient Kapilavastu (mostly Sri Lankan) and Ramagrama/Devadaha (mostly Chinese).

4.2.6. *Approach Routes, Suggested Itineraries and Activities*

a. Approach Routes

- ✿ Most of the international Buddhist pilgrims enter into GLBC via India using Belahiya immigration facility. Other international visitors, including Buddhist pilgrims, come to Nepal via Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) and then fly or drive to Bhairahawa. Lumbini, Kapilvastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama can be reached from the major cities of Nepal using regular public transport facilities or a rental/private vehicle. Upon Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA) coming into operation, GLBC will have direct flight access to major source markets.

b. Suggested tour itinerary and tour packages

- ✿ Various tour packages, ranging from a half day to a multiple days tour packages can be designed for pursuing pilgrimage, spiritual and peace related activities the GLBC. However, a minimum of four days package, as suggested below, is required for the complete package of GLBC.
 - ✿ Day 1: Arrival at Lumbini and paying visit to Mayadevi Temple and Sacred Garden.
 - ✿ Day 2: Visiting Lumbini and travel to Ancient Kapilavastu.
 - ✿ Day 3: Visiting Ancient Kapilavastu and travel to Devadaha.
 - ✿ Day 4: Visiting Devadaha and Ramagrama.

c. Suggested pilgrimage, spiritual and leisure activities for GLBC

- ✿ Key activities that can be performed in the GLBC include worshipping sacred sites, chanting Buddhist teachings, meditation, yoga and retreat, visiting monasteries, participating at various

events and celebrations such as Buddha Purnima/Buddha Jayanti, Tripitaka Chanting, Full-Moon day chanting, and so on.

- ❁ Additional activities include visiting archaeological sites, village tours, visiting Sarus Crane Sanctuary (Lumbini) and other natural wetlands such as Gaidahawa Tal, Gajedi Tal etc.,

❁ Suggested activities at Lumbini

- ❁ Pilgrimage and spiritual visit to the Mayadevi Temple, one of the most sacred Buddhist sites that bears the Marker Stone, a testimony of the birth of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ❁ Visiting the spiritually awakening and intellectually enlightening International Monastic Zone and getting involved in meditation and yoga sessions of short to long duration.
- ❁ Sightseeing tour to experience the exceptional cultural beauties, traditions, architecture, and arts in the surrounding rural villages of Lumbini, including Biraha cultural dance and local craftsmanship as well as learning on how the Hindus and Muslim people are protecting and promoting Buddhist heritage sites.
- ❁ Cycling tour to rural sites, green paddy/wheat/mustard fields and wetland sites.
- ❁ Sightseeing tour to Lumbini Crane Sanctuary and nearby wetland sites to observe the exceptional natural landscape with rich biodiversity including Sacred Crane, the Buddha's most preferred bird, sacred lotus flower, Blue Bull and so on.

❁ Suggested activities for Ancient Kapilavastu

- ❁ Visiting Tilaurakot Palace, Prince Siddhartha's hometown and the ancient capital city of Sakya Kingdom. Walking through the renunciation path of Prince Siddhartha through the Eastern Gate of Tilaurakot Palace. Also homage to the twin stupas (of Buddha's mother Queen Mayadevi and father King Siddhodhana).

- ✧ Visiting Kudan, the ancient Nyigrodharama and paying homage to sacred Stupas.
- ✧ Visiting and paying homage to the birthplaces of two early Buddhas, Krakuchhanda at Gotihawa and Kanakamuni at Niglihawa.
- ✧ Visiting Sagarhawa to pay homage to noble Shakyas who were massacred by King Virudhaka.
- ✧ Visiting other sacred and archaeological sites such as Araurakot, Sisaniya, Bikulikot etc.
- ✧ Indulging in bird watching and ecotourism activities at Jagadispur Tal, the largest man-made reservoir in Nepal, also inscribed in Ramsar list of wetland.
- ✧ Enjoying the indigenous Tharu cultures at Jagadispur Tharu home-stay.
- ✧ Village/cultural tours in the rural villages to experience the exceptional cultural beauty, rural livelihood and traditions.
- ✧ Visiting other pilgrimage and historic sites such as Tauleshwor Nath Temple, Ramghat, Lakhman Ghat, Shivagadhi, Kapiladham, Shringi Ashram, Madhuban Dham etc.

✧ Suggested activities for Devadaha

- ✧ Visiting Devadaha (Lake), Bhawanipur, Kanya Mai and Bairi Mai Temple in Devadaha.
- ✧ Visiting Khayardada (considered to be the capital city of Ancient Koliya Kingdom), Mathagadhi (ancient fort), and ancient Bangala well etc.
- ✧ Taking a holy bath in the sacred Rohini River and Devadaha.
- ✧ Visiting the Pakadi Tree, one of the largest-crowned trees in the region having various legends linked to Koliya era symbolic tree.
- ✧ Observing meditation with the great spiritual vibes at Bhawanipur and Simsar (wetland) site at Ghodaha.

- ✧ Visiting cultural villages such as Sispur Tharu village, Sarantandi Magar village and Khairahani Gurung village.
- ✧ Observing birds and wild animals in the Ghodaha area and Churia forest.

✧ Suggested activities at Ramagrama

- ✧ Visiting Punditpur, another possible site of ancient Koliyan Capital, lies en-route to Ramagrama Stupa.
- ✧ Visiting the sacred Ramagrama Stupa, the only stupa believed to have contained the sacred relic of Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ✧ Visiting the nearby Japanese temple with the standing image of Buddha.
- ✧ Taking a spiritual and religious bath at the holy Jharahi river
- ✧ Participating at meditation sessions with spiritual vibes at Ramagrama Stupa.
- ✧ Visiting other religious, cultural and natural sites such as Triveni Dham, Madarbaba Ashram, Daunne Hill, Gandak Irrigation Canal etc.
- ✧ Visiting the nearby Tharu village and other villages with mixed culture.

4.2.7. *Efforts undertaken for heritage based tourism promotion and conservation*

- ✧ The efforts for excavation, documentation and restoration work in Lumbini area started with the re-discovery of Lumbini by General Khadga Shamsher, the Governor of Tansen and Dr. A. A. Führer in 1896 AD. The excavation work carried out by Purna Chandra Mukherji in 1899 CE, confirmed Tilaurakot to be the site of ancient Kapilavastu. The excavation work carried out during the time of General Keshar Shamsher from 1932 to 1939 AD exposed many stupas and monasteries in Lumbini. The subsequent excavation works carried out by the DoA from 1972 to 1985 AD gave due focus on locating the exact place of

Lumbini village and restoring the existing monuments in the sacred garden areas.

- ✿ However, the planned development and promotion of Lumbini started with the royal visit of late King Mahendra in 1956 AD who proposed steps for Lumbini's development at the Fourth Assembly of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.
- ✿ In 1959 AD, the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold visited Lumbini, making him the first UN Secretary General to visit Lumbini, and made a reference to Lord Shakyamuni Buddha's birthplace in a poem. In 1967 AD, UN Secretary-General U Thant visited Lumbini, and initiated international support to develop Lumbini for pilgrimage and tourism.
- ✿ In 1970 AD: The International Committee for the Development of Lumbini (ICDL) was formed in New York under the chair of Nepal's Permanent Resident Representative to the UN. Following the formation of ICDL, Government of Nepal also formed Lumbini Development Committee (LDC), which later became LDT in 1985.
- ✿ In 1972, the Advisory Panel for the ICDL requested Kenzo Tange to prepare a Master Plan for Lumbini. In 1978 AD, Government of Nepal and UN approved the **Lumbini Development Master Plan-LDMP** (also called Kenzo Tange Master Plan-KTMP).
- ✿ In 1985, Lumbini Development Trust Act 1985 was passed and **Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) was established** accordingly. Implementation of Lumbini Development Project (LDP) was one of the major tasks assigned to LDT.

Box-4: The Lumbini Development Master Plan, 1978 AD

The Lumbini Development Master Plan (LDMP) was approved by Nepal Government in 1978. The Plan, spread in an area of 1×3 square mile is oriented along the north-south axis and encompasses three zones (1) the Sacred Garden, (2) the Monastic Zone, and (3) the New Lumbini



Village, based on the notion of the path to enlightenment. Each of the zone covers an area of a square mile.

The Sacred Garden is the epicenter of the Master Plan and comprises of the sacred birthplace of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. Historical monuments and objects of high archaeological, religious and spiritual value located in this zone include the Mayadevi Temple, the Ashoka Pillar, the Marker Stone, the Nativity Sculpture, Sacred Pond (Puskarini), and many structural ruins including Buddhist Viharas & Stupas. The Sacred Garden landscape is encircled by a Circular Pond and a Circular Levee, which symbolize the purity and simplicity of the mandala, a mystic symbol of the universe.

The Monastic Zone, an area of 1 sq. mile in the middle of the Master Plan has been divided into two zones by a 1.6km long pedestrian walkways and a canal in the middle. The East Monastic Zone represents the Theravada (Hinayana) school of Buddhism where 13 plots are allotted for construction of Viharas. The West Monastic Zone comprises 29 plots of land, each allotted for construction of Mahayana monasteries. Currently there are three meditation centers in operation in this zone. The statue of standing Baby Buddha, Central Canal, the Eternal Peace Flame, the Peace Bell etc. are of great interest of visit for the pilgrims and visitors.

The Cultural Center and New Lumbini Village represents “worldly” activities and provide information, accommodation and utility facilities for pilgrims and the visitors. Lumbini Museum, Lumbini International Research Institute (LIRI), Visitor Information Center (VIC), Administration Complex, Pilgrimage Accommodations etc. are located in this zone. Other important sites of visitors’ interest in New Lumbini Village include the World Peace Pagoda of Japan and the Lumbini Crane Sanctuary. International Peace Auditorium Hall and other facilities are under construction in this zone.



From 1992-1996, DoA, LDT and Japanese Buddhist Federation (JBF) carried out series of excavation work in Lumbini Mayadevi Temple;

in 1995 the team discovered the Marker Stone, that marks the exact birth-spot of the Shakyamuni Buddha. Considering its outstanding universal value (OUV) as one of the most significant places of one of the world's greatest religions, **Lumbini was inscribed in UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in 1997.**

- ❁ In 1996, the archaeological remains of the ancient Shakya Kingdom in Tilaurakot and the relic stupa of the Shakyamuni Buddha in Ramagrama were included in the Tentative World Heritage list.
- ❁ In 1998, the first World Buddhist Summit was held in Lumbini and declared “**Lumbini to be the Fountain of World Peace**”. UNDP in 1999 commissioned a Vision and Scoping Mission led by Prof. Young Hoon Kwaak and Abelardo Brenes to develop the idea of Lumbini as the “Fountain of World Peace”. In 2002, GoN established the Gautam Buddha International Peace Award. The first award was awarded to Tadatoshi Akiba, the Mayor of Hiroshima, and Tomihisa Taue, the Mayor of Nagasaki.
- ❁ On 16 May 2003, the fully restored Mayadevi temple was opened for public.
- ❁ In 2004, the second World Buddhist Summit was held in Lumbini and declared “**Lumbini as a World Peace Village**”.
- ❁ From 2002 to 2007, Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme was implemented in the seven Village Development Committees (VDCs) around Lumbini Mayadevi Temple area in Rupandehi district **successfully piloting the pro-poor rural tourism programme**. TRPAP became a milestone in creating awareness on heritage based tourism; establishing small-scale tourism enterprises such as women made handicrafts; promotion of Lumbini with production of various promotional collaterals and strengthening the capacity of LDT, local government bodies and private sectors, including tour operators and Guides.
- ❁ In 2005, **Last meeting** of the Foreign Ministers of the Member States



of the ICDL was held on the sidelines of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly at the UN Headquarters in New York

- ❁ In 2008: UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon visited Lumbini reiterating the continuous support from UN for the promotion of Lumbini as a world peace city.
- ❁ In 2010, WWF Nepal programme in collaboration with the LDT initiated the Millennia Tree Plantation Programme (MTPP) in Lumbini.
- ❁ In 2010, a three-year UNESCO/Japanese-Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation of the World's Cultural Heritage project entitled **"Strengthening the Conservation and Management of Lumbini, the Birthplace of Lord Buddha"** was launched. Since 2014, the project has been undertaking archaeological investigations and monument conservation works in Tilaurakot, Kudan, Dohani, Ramagrama and numerous other sites in the GLA by mobilizing a team of archaeologists led by Professor Robin Cunningham of Durham University, the UK with members from DoA, LDT and UNESCO.
- ❁ As per the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the GON and KOICA in 2012, the **Master Plan for Lumbini World Peace City** (Lumbini Vishwa Shanti Nagrama) was prepared by KOICA and KWAACK E.S.P.R.I. and submitted to the Government of Nepal in 2014.
- ❁ In 2011, MoCTCA, with financial support from ADB, started South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (SATIDP). Some of the major activities of SATIDP include production of various promotional collaterals, including Greater Lumbini Area Visitor Guide Book and site-based brochures; construction of Visitor Information Center (VIC) at Lumbini, and upgrading of Gautam Buddha Airport as Gautam Buddha International Airport-GBIA (ongoing).
- ❁ Government of Nepal and private sector celebrated Visit Lumbini Year (VLY) 2012 by conducting various promotional efforts in the domestic and international markets.

- ✿ In 2016, Gon/MoCTCA organized **2560th Buddha Jayanti and International Buddhist Conference**, and concluded with promulgation of 10-point declaration, including “Spread globally the fact Lumbini, Nepal: the birthplace of Lord Buddha and Fountain of Buddhism and World Peace that has been attested by Buddhist belief, philosophy, literature and archaeological evidences”.
- ✿ In 2018, Government of Nepal organized **2562nd Buddha Jayanti and International Buddhist Conference** in Lumbini. Among other resolutions unanimously agreed in its 10 point declaration, the following will support the rationale for the designation and promotion of GLBC:
 - ✿ Globally promote awareness of Lumbini, Nepal as the birthplace of Lord Buddha and a fountain of Buddhism and World Peace, as promulgated in the 2016 Lumbini Declaration.
 - ✿ To create an international center for peace and conflict resolution in Lumbini.
 - ✿ To establish Lumbini as a Gateway to the Greater Circuit of Asian Buddhist Pilgrimage by connecting Lumbini (Nepal) with Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kusinagara (India), and other great Buddhist centers and heritage sites in countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, etc.
 - ✿ To develop Lumbini as a global center for Buddhist Studies.
 - ✿ Realizing the great significance of Kapilavastu (the homeland of the Buddha and Shakyas), Devadaha (home to Queen Mayadevi), Ramagram (relic stupa of the Buddha) to all Buddhist and peace-loving people around the world and their potential as pilgrimage destinations within the **Buddhist Circuits of Nepal**, create an integrated Greater Lumbini Area Master Plan.

4.2.8. *Key Issues, Gaps and Threats*

- ✿ As of now, efforts have been focused primarily on the promotion of Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha, with the implementation of Lumbini Development Master Plan 1978 AD. Other

three areas viz., Ancient Kapilavastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama still lacks master plan and planned development and promotion efforts.

- ❁ Even in Lumbini area, efforts are mostly focused on the 1*3 square mile area of master plan and the surrounding local rural communities have long been excluded from the benefits accrued through heritage-based tourism in Lumbini. In long-run, it may create a negative perception towards the preservation of heritage sites, which locals have been doing voluntarily from the very beginning.
- ❁ LDT and monastic communities in Lumbini Master Plan area are blamed for not creating and offering adequate pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural activities. In the absence of diverse pilgrimage and tourism activities, shorter stay period and lower visitor spending are the critical issue for Lumbini, though the number is in increasing trend.
- ❁ Lack of adequate and standard road networks and transport facilities has constrained the mobility of pilgrims and visitors into all potential sites of Ancient Kapilavastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama. Visitors' mobility and stay in Kapilavastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama is also constrained by the lack of adequate and comfortable accommodation facilities. Lack of dedicated electricity facility has been hampering the comfort of pilgrims and visitors.
- ❁ Only very little effort has been undertaken to attract Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist followers in Lumbini, despite the fact that Lumbini, the birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha, is the ultimate pilgrimage site for all followers of all Buddhist schools and traditions.
- ❁ Lack of updated information about tourist attractions, activities and facilities in the major sites of GLA. Lack of information about other Buddhist Circuits of Nepal and other Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal.
- ❁ Increasing threats on heritage sites and monuments due to increased state of air and visual pollution caused by the nearby industries as well as the farm-induced smoking.
- ❁ In the absence of proper heritage preservation measures and tools

used, there are possible threats on heritage sites being impacted by uncontrolled mass tourism.

4.2.9. Key Opportunities

- ✿ GLBC has an opportunity to be developed both as a global tourism hub for Buddhist pilgrimage, spirituality and peace as well as an International Gateway for all Buddhist heritage sites and circuits in the sub-region.
- ✿ Through the promotion of GLBC, global Buddhist pilgrimage markets can be attracted to all potential Buddhist heritage sites in the Greater Lumbini Area, including Lumbini, Ancient Kapilavastu, Devadaha, Ramagrama etc. while increasing the length of stay and visitors spending, and maximizing the economic benefits to the local communities.
- ✿ Moreover, by promoting Lumbini as a global Buddhist epicenter and by tapping the additional advantages of upcoming Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA), the GLBC can be developed and promoted as a vibrant international gateway for the Buddhist pilgrims as well as other market segments.
- ✿ Considering its potential for becoming a global tourism hub as well as a vibrant gateway, the current National Tourism Strategic Plan (2016-2025) has also identified Greater Lumbini Area as the second most competitive Tourism Development Area (TDA) amongst the six selected TDAs for Nepal.
- ✿ GLBC will also provide opportunity for the balanced development and preservation of all Buddhist heritage sites in GLA such as Ancient Kapilavastu, Devadaha, Ramagrama etc. beyond and besides Lumbini.

4.3 **OM MANE PADME HUM CIRCUIT TO MT. KAILASH**

Pilgrimage connecting the two most sacred sites (Lumbini and Kailash Manasarovar) in the region through the ancient Silk Road corridor.

4.3.1. Background

- ❁ **Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit to Mt. Kailash (OMPHCK)** connects the world's two most sacred and widely revered pilgrimage and spiritual power places- **Lumbini** (in Nepal) and **Mount Kailash** (in TAR, China). The circuit has been named after one of the popular Buddhist Chant (mantra) - *Om Mane Padme Hum*, dedicated to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshwara, which appears in most of the pillar inscriptions erected in Lumbini, Kapilavastu (Niglihawa), Dullu, Sinja, and so on.
- ❁ In the present geo-political map of Nepal, the core sites of the OMPHCK are located in Surkhet, Dailekh, Kalikot, Jumla, Mugu and Humla districts of Province No. 5, Nepal.
- ❁ OMPHCK falls almost entirely in the ancient **Khasha (Yatshe) Empire** and overlaps with one of the ancient Silk Road Corridors in Nepal that passes through some of the historically and religiously significant Buddhist Viharas, Chaityas (stupas), Stone Pillars, Devals, Monasteries, caves and Sacred Valleys.
- ❁ The significance of the major sites connected by the OMPHCK stands as given below:
 - ❁ **Kakre Vihara:** Revered by both the Buddhists and Hindus Kakre Vihara is probably the largest and the most beautiful Shikhara Style Khasha Era Vihara fully decorated with artistically carved stones and statues, including that of Buddha in various mudras with Taras and flying celestial nymph.
 - ❁ **Dullu/Dailekh:** The Winter Capital of Khasha Kingdom, Dullu/Dailekh is enshrined with significant Buddhist monuments of 12th to 14th century AD.
 - ❁ **Sinja Valley:** The Summer Capital of Khasha Kingdom, Sinja Valley is full of significant historical monuments including Buddhist caves.
 - ❁ **Raling Tirthasthal:** Lies in the lap of Mount Shelmogang (Mt. Crystal Peak) and revered by Khasha/Hindu and Bon followers, Raling Tirthasthal is the sacred pilgrimage site with the siddhi

cave of Tantric Master Padmasambhava and Yogi Milarepa.

- ✿ **Namkha Khyung Dzong Monastery, Yalbang:** A lineage transmitter of Dudjom Tersar and one of the largest and vibrant Buddhist academic centers across the trans-Himalaya where teachings of Vajrayana Buddhist traditions and philosophy is abundantly found.
- ✿ **Limi Valley with Rincheling Gomba:** Limi Valley is one of the religious and cultural hot-spots that lies on the Extended Kora of Mt. Kailash; a repository and preserver of the ancient Tibetan Buddhist teachings, traditions and culture since the time of the Zhang Zung civilization, most prominently after the 2nd dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet.

4.3.2. *Significance of the Sites Contained in the OMPHCK*

i. **Significance for Pilgrimage, Spirituality and Peace**

- ✿ OMPHCK is considered to be one of the most sacred pilgrimage and spiritual circuit as it connects **globally significant two sacred sites**, Lumbini and Mt. Kailash (in TAR China). Since time immemorial, Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims from the Northern Indian Territory, especially from Nepal and India, have been travelling to Kailash Manasarovar for pilgrimage.
- ✿ OMPHCK is particularly significant due to the presence of many sacred pilgrimage and spiritual sites associated with Shakyamuni Buddha (Lumbini and Kapilavastu), Vajrayana Master Guru Rinpoche (Siddhi Cave in the lap of Mount Shelmogang (the second Kailash), Yogi Milarepa, one of the founders of Kagyu (Raling Gomba), Jowo Je Palden Atisha (Khoser Gomba/Khojarnath, near Taklakot), Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (Rincheling Gomba, Limi) and the present day famous Tulku Pema Rigtsal Rinpoche, head of this monastery at Namkha Khyung Dzong monastery, Yalbang.
- ✿ Similar to Mt. Kailash (which lies in TAR China), at least two sites, including Kakre Vihara and Raling Tirthasthal, are equally



Map-3: Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit to Mt. Kailash



revered by both the Buddhist and Hindus. Moreover, Dullu and Sinja also have many significant sites revered by both the Buddhists and Hindus.

- ✿ Significant pilgrimage and spiritual sites associated with the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet during 8th century AD include the siddhi cave of Padmasambhava in Raling Gomba on the lap of (Mt. Crystal Peak). Likewise, other significant sites associated with the second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet during 11th century AD include the Rincheling Monastery in Halji; rocky caves of Limi Valley and other several monasteries built in Limi Valley and Yalbang area.
- ✿ Moreover, there are many significant Buddhist heritage sites associated with the ancient Khasha Kingdom. Available inscriptions, chronicles, archaeological remains and literary evidences, including Buddhist texts (such as Laghu Ratna Traya and Abhi Samayalankara) suggest that many Khasha kings were the great adorer and devotee of Buddhism and Buddhism was the court religion of the powerful Khasha kingdom (12th to 14th century AD), whose summer and winter capitals were **Sinja** and **Dullu** respectively.
- ✿ At least three kings of the Khasha Kingdom, including Jayatari Malla (Jitari Malla) in 1288 AD, Ripu Malla in (1310 AD), and Aditya Malla in 1338 AD are said to have visited Kathmandu Valley and paid homage to various power places, including Swoyambhu Mahachaitya and Lumbini. **Jitari Malla:** entered Kathmandu Valley in 1287/88 and 1290 AD and paid respects to the Chaitya of Swayambhu; enjoyed darsana of Lokeshvara at Bugama and then visited Goala (Deopatan). **Ripu Malla** who is said to have visited Kathmandu Valley in 1313 AD also carved inscriptions on Ashokan pillars at Lumbini and Niglihawa engraving the mantra-Om Mane Padme Hum. **Aditya Malla** who entered Nuwakot, Pharping, Patan and eventually Kathmandu in 1328 AD is said to have paid a homage to Pulbahi on the outskirts of the city of



Patan. The copper inscription of Dullu describes Aditya Malla as a **Buddhist King**. Ashoka Challa's inscription of Bodhgaya, copper plate inscription of Raling Gomba (Ashoka Challa), Ripu Malla's inscription of Lumbini and Niglihawa and Prthvi Malla's Kirtistamba inscription signify that they were the great admirer and devotee of Buddhism.

ii. Archaeological and Historical Significance

- ❁ OMPHCK is particularly significant due to the presence of many archaeological and historical sites associated with the propagation, and practice of Buddhist dharma in Tibet and Khasha Kingdom. More importantly, these sites are associated with the perfected meditation sites of Guru Rinpoche and Yogi Milarepa; ancient Khasha Kings whose court religion was considered to be the Buddhism, and sites associated with the propagation and expansion of Buddhism in Western Tibet, including Purang, Guge and Ladakh with the 2nd dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet.
- ❁ Significant archaeological and historical sites associated with the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet during 8th century AD include the siddhi cave of Padmasambhava in Raling Gomba along with the copper plate inscription granted by Ashok Challa. Likewise, significant archaeological and historical sites associated with the second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet during the 11th century AD include the Rincheling Monastery in Halji; rocky caves of Limi Valley and other several monasteries built in Limi Valley and Yalbang area.
- ❁ Khasha era also resulted as a boom in Buddhist pilgrimage and architecture witnessing a tremendous prosperity both in cultural and material spheres. The **Khashas**, who are also mentioned in the Sanskrit epic, Mahabharata as **Mlechha tribes** were the rulers of the ancient Khasha Kingdom during 12th to 14th century AD. Dullu pillar inscription of Saka 1279, depicts a chronology of the Kings of Khasa dynasty. For a long time, two dynasties were ruling in this area; one at Purang controlling Jumla and adjoining places down

to Surkhet (with its capital at Taklakot), and another at Guge that ruled over a large chunk of western Tibet beyond the Himalayas (with its capital at Tsaparang). Later, **Punya Malla** became the first king of United Kingdom of Guge and Purang. The united Khasa Kingdom was ruled from **Sinja** (Yatshe in Bhotia dialect). Under the reign of **Prithvi Malla**, the Malla kingdom reached the height of the power over a great kingdom, which included Guge, Purang and the territories on this side of the Himalayas as far as Dullu and to the plains in the Terai of that region. About one third of Khasha era inscriptions, including Dullu inscription are believed to have made during the time of Prithvi Malla. Before the Khasa Kings, Guge used to be ruled by the grandsons of king **Kyi-de Nyi-ma-gon**.

- ✿ Almost all art and architectural works of the Khasha Kingdom were largely influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. The dominant Khasha kings who have claimed themselves as the **Parama Sugata** (devout follower of the Buddha) had built several Buddhist monuments and shrines, including viharas, temples, chaityas, devals, naulis, stone pillars etc. with the images and inscription of Buddha, stupas and Buddhist chants in Dullu, Dailekh, Kalikot, Jumla, Sinja, Jajarkot etc.
- ✿ The Sinja Valley is considered to be the origin of modern Nepal's **Khasha language** and Khasha civilization. Most of the copper plates and all Kanakapatras of the Khasa kingdom used to be written partly in Sanskrit and partly in the Khasha (Sinjali) (Adhikari 1988).
- ✿ The proposed circuit also overlaps with the ancient Silk Route Corridor that used to be passing through the ancient Khasha (Yatshe) Empire traversing across the Himalayas linking the Gangetic plains (India) with Western Tibet.



iii. Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value

- ❁ OMPHCK offers pilgrims and visitors a rare opportunity to observe and experience the still intact and living form of age-old ancient Buddhist traditions and practices which is almost lost from the place of its origin, the Western Tibet, including Purang, Kailash and Guge.
- ❁ The proposed circuit is extended through the vast geographical land which is home to the many ethnic and endemic communities and it lies broadly under Jadan and Khasan. People who originated from the Tibetan Plateau and who are still living in the Trans-Himalayan and Himalayan region such as the upper part of Humla, Mugu, and Jumla are called **Jadan** or **Bhot** people. Most of these people are Buddhist and Bon practitioners. Within Jadan, there are many sub-groups with distinct rituals, costumes and traditions, including Limi (people of Limi), Hultshodun (people of Hilsa), Trugchulung (Lower part of Namkha), Nyinbas (people of Raling and Bargaoon), Mugum Karmarong (of Mugu) Jumli (of Jumla) and so on. Trans-boundary trade with Tibet (including ancient salt trade), nomadic pastoralism, amchi healing practices are common in these people.
- ❁ Likewise, people living in the lower belt of Karnali region, especially the lower part of Humla, Mugu, Jumla; entire district of Kalikot, Dailekh and upper part of Surkhet are broadly called **Khashan** People. Byasi, Thakuri, Chhetri, Magar, Dalit are some of the prominent groups under this and are the practitioner of **Musto cult**. Shamanism and jhankri dance are common traditions among these groups of people. These people now completely follow Hinduism.
- ❁ The Buddhist people celebrate various festivals and events, including Mani Festival (Jan./Feb.), Ngo Yang Festival (May), Raling Festival (June), Shaman Festival (June/July), Kharpunath Mela, Mani (Masked) Dance (public sphere), Religious Masked Dance (Monasteries), Sonam Lhosar, Mani Rimdu (Limi Valley), Ngyungne (Fasting) Festival etc.

iv. Other Added Attractions and Activities

a. Other (Non-Buddhist) cultural attractions

- ✧ Bageshwori temple (Nepalgunj), Surkhet Bulbul Tal, Deutimai Temple, Chandannath (Jumla), Kanaka Sundari temple (Sinja), Chhaya Nath Temple (Mugu), Kharpunath (Humla) are other important worth visiting religious sites in and around the circuit.
- ✧ Like Matsyendranath, the four-nath temples: Chandannath, Chhayanath, Kharpunath and Khorjernath, in TAR-China, are equally revered by Hindu/Khasha and Buddhists.
- ✧ Pancha Koshi Dham Religious and Cultural Heritage Circuit in Dullu and Dailekh are revered both by the Hindus and Buddhists.
- ✧ There are several temples of Malika and Mustos in the circuit where the interesting shaman and jhankri dances are performed.
- ✧ Visitors can also experience and enjoy the culture and traditions of many ethnic communities including the costumes, food, arts and crafts of Tharu, Majhi, Raji, Raute (Nomad Group), Mugali, Byasi and other communities, broadly termed as Khashan.
- ✧ Dashain, Tihar, Holi (Fagu Purnima), Kharpunath Mela, Shrawan Purni (Shaman Dance), Deuta (Musto) Puja, Deuda Nach, Dhami Nach, Nath Mela, Malika Mela, Musto Mela etc.

b. Outstanding natural landscapes and rich biodiversity

- ✧ OMPHCK passes through some of the beautiful landscapes and rich ecological hot-spots, including Karnali River corridor, Surkhet Valley, Rara Lake, Mahabu Lekh, Changkheli Lekh, Trans-himalayan landscape and Shangri-La like hidden valleys such as Limi Valley.
- ✧ Also known to be originating from the Peacock's mouth in



TAR China, **Karnali River** is one of the added attractions for the pilgrims and visitors in OMPHCK. Originated in Tibetan Plateau near Lake Manasarovar, the trans-boundary perennial river is the longest river (507 km) of Nepal that flows freely from north to south through deep gorges creating a unique geographic landscape. Originated from the southern slopes of the Himalayas in Tibet, in the **glaciers of Mapchachungo**, at an altitude of about 3962 m above sea level, Karnali River joins the Sarda River at Brahmaghat in India and forms the **Ghaghra River**, a major tributary of the Ganges. It is considered to be the world's 5th most adventurous rafting river.

- ✿ The circuit traverses almost along the Karnali River and encounters with the outstandingly beautiful natural landscape and geographical formations decorated with various lakes (as such **Rara Lake** - the largest lake of Nepal in Mugu), waterfalls (such as **Pachal Waterfall** - possibly the largest waterfall in Nepal with 481m length in Kalikot) and various **natural hot spring** sites including that of Sarkeghad and Kermi (Humla). Rara National Park (declared in 1976) is the only national park connected by the circuit. Limi Valley in Humla is the home to diverse wild flora and fauna, including famous for big herds of Tibetan wild ass (*Equus kiang*) and Wild Yak.

4.3.3. *Significant Heritage Sites*

- ✿ Significant heritage sites contained in the circuit include the following:
 - a. **Kakre Vihara, Surkhet**
 - ✿ Believed to have constructed in 1268 AD by King Ashoka Challa in 1268 AD, Kakre Vihara is one of the holiest and best decorated religious monuments of the ancient Khasha Kingdom.
 - ✿ Both the name “**Vihara**” itself and the **decoration** of it with full

of artistically carved stone images, including Buddha images in various mudras with Taras, flying celestial nymph, sinous plant stalks, lotus flowers associated with couples of swans and cranes signify that the site was primarily devoted to Lord Buddha, though it was equally revered by both the Buddhists and Hindus.

- ✿ The fact that a manuscript of the Buddhist text *Abhisamayalankara* found in a monastery (Nalankar Monastery?) of Tibet had been copied from Surkhet Kakre Vihara in 1313 AD or 1370 BS (Adhikari 1988) also signifies the significance of Kakre Vihara as a pilgrimage site for Buddhist followers from around the Khasha Kingdom and Tibet as well as the richness of Buddhist scripture in the Kakre Vihara.
- ✿ Also appeared as **Hevajra Sebaka** (related to Vajrayana Buddhism having Nairatmya as his consort) in the pillar inscription of Dullu, Ashoka Challa is considered to be a benevolent supporter of Buddhist dharma. Mentions of King **Ashoka Challa** in various inscriptions, including that of Bodhgaya Inscriptions (of Northern India) also describe the inclination of Ashoka Challa towards Buddhism and the connectedness between Bodhgaya, Kakre Vihara and other places of Khasha kingdom. In the second Bodhgaya inscription, Ashoka Challa has presented himself as abhinava-bodhisattvavantara Paramabhattacharaka Maharadhiraja (recent incarnation of bodhisattva).
- ✿ Kakre Vihara is probably the most beautiful and largest Shikhara Style Vihara of Khasha Kingdom. The Shikhara Style Vihara is fully decorated with artistically carved stones and statues of Buddha in various mudras. Remained neglected for almost 400 years, the spectacular structure which is believed to have destroyed around 16th century AD is now under the phase of restoration. The stone carvings and structures are more similar to that of famous temple of Bodhgaya, Khjuraol and Kumau in India. Similar carved stones are also seen in Sainamaina and Devadaha areas of Greater Lumbini Area.

- ❁ The original temple is estimated to be 19.59m tall. The ruined temple bears at least 2028 marvelously carved stone pieces, 16 stone pillars, four entrance in four direction with no statue/ sculpture at sanctum. About 40 pieces of sculptures and carved stones have been kept in the Regional Museum at Surkhet.
- ❁ The Buddhist charm of the Khasha Kingdom started diminishing with the demise of Khasha dynasty in 14th century AD and with the conversion of Buddhist into Hindu due to many external influences.
- ❁ Only during the late 20th century, the migrant Buddhist practitioners from the Himalayan districts such as Dolpa, Jumla, Mugu and Humla have initiated to revive the Buddhist traditions and practices in the periphery of Kakre Vihara in Surkhet. At least three monasteries and one Bipasyana Meditation Center have been already established in the area. Followers of Buddhist dharma also perform daily, periodic and occasional rituals and events, including Buddha Jayanti, Lhosar celebration and so on.
- ❁ Other important monument sites around Kakre Vihara include Chaughanchaur Pillar with four Buddhist sculpture and Latikoili temple (1639 BS). Recently established Buddhist heritages in and around Kakre Vihara include Surkhet Vippasyana Center, Bodhi Gyan Tapobhumi Buddha Bihara (Barahachour), Choukune Buddha Bihara, Pema Sange Chhoeling Gomba (Birendranagar-9) and so on.

vi. Dullu/Dailekh: Winter Capital of Khasha Kingdom

- ❁ The once winter capital of United Khasha Kingdom, Dullu is one of the prominent sites of pilgrimage for both the Hindus and Buddhists. Various kings of Khasha dynasty had established various temples, viharas, stupas, pillars, devals, naulis etc. with images of Buddhas and the stupas as well as inscriptions such as Om Namo Buddhaya, Om Mane Padme Hum and so on. Major sites with pilgrimage and archaeological significance in Dullu include

Padukasthan, Patharnauli, Kirtikhamba, Bhaleshwor, Bhurtika 22 Devals and so on. Dullu is also known as Pancha Koshi Dham and Birat Pitha.

- ✿ During the Khasha Kingdom, the kings and devotees were engraving the Buddhist chant **Mani Padme Hum** and inscribing the **symbol of the stupa in Chorten** in sacred places. Image of Bodhisatva Padmapani, Vajrayani Siddhas and deities belonging to the Saiva faith were common in many sacred shrines. Conversion of both the kings and citizens of Khasha Kingdom from Buddhism to Hinduism appears to have started from the time of Prithvimalla with the placement of orthodox Hindu Gods, like Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesvara. The Kali and Bhairab Temple, Dhuleshwor Temple and dome-shaped Baleshwor Mahadev Temple comprises the **statue of Buddha**.
- ✿ **Padukasthan** Stone Pillar in Dullu bears the image of Aksobhya Buddha and the inscription depicts- Om Namo Buddhaya, Shree Ashoka Challa signifying the king to be the follower of Mahayana Buddhism. According to Hindu legends, Padukasthan is identified as the site believed to have fallen of Satidevi's foot. The stone pillar also consists of idol of Gorakhanath engraved around 13th century and the Paduka of Bishnu in the shape of foot in stone.
- ✿ **Patharnauli inscription** engraved in the main door-step of Patharnauli in Dullu begins with **Om Mane Padme Hum**, followed by **OM Svasti 6 Sri Saka 1276** Pausa Vadi 2 Sukravasare (Dec. 1354 AD). The water tank was built in a very new style along with a guest house for the relaxation of the tired guests in a surrounding where there were five Chaityas belonging to the Buddhist traditions, though there exists only one stupa now. The builder, as per the inscription, was Devavarma of Chhatyal family, son of Granthavarma by Naballadevi.
- ✿ **Dullu stone pillar inscription** has two pieces (i) One at the front and (b) another at the back. Each starts with **Om Mani Padme Hum**, and **Om Svasti**. Both have 12 verses in Sanskrit in anustup.



The front page gives a chronology of Adipala (of Aditya Vamsa) down to Punya Malla and his son Sri Malla. The twelfth verse brings in Nagraja of another dynasty, who had settled in Semjapuri (Sinja). The back page appears to be continuation of the first one, and proceeds to list names as successors to Nagaraja until Pratap Malla. It also adds that Nagaraja's line being extinguished; Punya Malla of Gela dynasty was brought to Semja and crowned. Prithvi Malla (Sri Malla), the son of Punya Malla, obtains eloquent tributes towards the end of the inscription. Malla is added to the name only from Jitari Malla onwards. The fifth of the seven stone-pillar **inscriptions of Damu Pal** (Saka 903) erected in Dullu is considered to be the first inscription of Khasha Language.

- ✿ According to Hindu legends **Navisthan** is the place where Satidevi's navel is believed to have fallen there. Very important documents of Lalmohar in Sambat 1873 and Chhaperukka in 2004 show the Brahmajwala, Indrajwala, Gadighar, Bhaivav temple and Ganesh temple in Nabhisthan.
- ✿ **Shirsthan** lies on the location of Chhamgad and is believed to have fallen of Satidevi's head according to folklore. The flame has been burning in Shirsthan since very ancient time. Thus, the flame is worshipped as a flame deity. There are statues of Kal Bhairav, Batuk Bhairav and Bal Bhairav. Shiva Linga and idols of elephant are also housed in this temple. Legend has it that if the Akhanda Lamp of Khojarnath (Taklakot, TAR China) is off, then a fresh light should be brought from Navisthan, Dullu to continue.
- ✿ Other major archaeological sites in Dullu and Dailekh include Kot Gadhi (fort) in Dailekh, Bhurti Ka 22 Devals (Dailekh); Dullu Durbar (Dullu), ancient Dullu Palace, Dullu Gadhi (Fort), Kapur Nauli, Dharma Gaddi (Seat), Bilaspur Palace, Dullu Fort, Dailekha Fort etc. Ancient Dullu Palace, the winter palace of Khasha kings, was dismantled during Moaists people's war. Most of the archaeological sites are buried under the forest and soil mass. Dullu Municipality has now initiated efforts to construct a cultural heritage museum in Dullu.

- ✿ The 13 stupas standing together found in Pajaru (in Jajarkot) indicates the possible pilgrimage route of the people from Dolpa region via Pajaru (Jajarkot) and Dailakh to Dullu and Kakre Vihara.
- ✿ Sadly, the Buddhist charms of the ancient capital hill is completely faded both at community level and monument site. Only recently, Dullu Municipality has initiated efforts to promote these sites under the broader frame of **Pancha Koshi Circuit**, connecting Tallo Dungeshwor, Padukasthan, Dhuleshwor, Baleshwor, Shirsthan, Navisthan in Dullu and extending up to Kotila, Kotgadhi, Bhurtika 22 Deval and Bilashpur Bhairav Temple in Dailekh.
- ✿ Other sites include Ramrikanda (Dailekh), Houdeko Lekh (Dailekh), Chilpakha (Kalikot) and so on.

vii. Sinja Valley: Summer Capital of Khasha Kingdom

- ✿ Registered in the Cultural category of the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List in January 2008, Sinja Valley in Jumla District is identified as the summer capital of the ancient United Khasha Kingdom (12th - 14th century AD).
- ✿ Being a capital, Sinja bears many significant sites with pilgrimage, archaeological and historical importance. Key Buddhist sites in Sinja Valley and Jumla include ancient votive Buddhist shrines (chaityas) in the caves of Hima River, Avalokiteswara, Taras and Aksobhya Buddha's Clay Tablets at Lamathada Cave (Sinja), Siridhuska Stupa of Jumla with inscriptions written "Om Mane Padme Hum" in Ranjana character, Stupa of Machagaon (Jumla), and so on. Other important sites include Chandannath temple in Jumla Khalanga; ruins of Birat palace, Kanaka Sundari Temple, Pandav Gufa, Devals etc. Sinja is the place from where the Nepali Khas language is originated.
- ✿ Duddle Chaitya built in Pagoda style in Jumla Khalanga is believed to be the third largest stupa after Bouddha Mahachaitya and Swayambhu Mahachaitya in Kathmandu.



viii. Simkot and Raling Monastery Tirthasthal

- ❁ **Simikot** has been the international gateway to Mt Kailash and Lake Manasarovar (TAR-China). Once known as fort during Khas Kingdom (12th to 14th century), the Khasha settlement is dominant with practice of Shamanism. Kharpunath and Raling Tirthasthal are the key pilgrimage sites for both Buddhist and Hindus in the area.
- ❁ **Raling Gomba Tirthasthal** (Simkot-3): Located in the lap of Mount Shelmogang (Mt. Crystal Peak) **Raling Gomba** is an important pilgrimage and spiritual center for Buddhists, Khasha/Hindus and Bon believers. Mt. Crystal Peak itself is considered as the second Mt. Kailash. It was revered by mystic and Tantric master Padmasambhava in 8th century. Another Tibetan Yogi and Saint Milarepa (1028-1111 AD) was believed to have meditated in this Siddhi cave on his pilgrimage journey to sacred Mt. Kailash. Legend has it that a demon obstructed Milarepa by throwing a pile of boulders over him, and using his magical powers, Milarepa threw off the boulders leaving an imprint of his entire body in one of the boulders that can still be seen today. Many revered prominent figures were believed to have come and meditated here in different time period, including Tsang Myon Heruka in 15th century, Drugtsen Pema Karpo from Bhutan in 16th century, Zhabkar Tshogtug Rangdrol, and Yogi and poet of the Kagyupa tradition from Kham province of Tibet in 19th century.
- ❁ Raling Gomba was founded in the early 20th century during the propagation of Nyingma-pa Tersar (New Treasure) by **Pema Dewe Gyalpo** (Tsultrim Lobsang Jangchup Pelzangpo-1873-1933 AD) who was one of the thirteen principal disciples or lineage holder of Dudjom Tersar and founder of Namkha Khyung Dzong monastery in Western Tibet, and Raling Gomba was supposed to be a branch of this monastery.
- ❁ The monastery has images of tantric guru Padmasambhava and Saint Milarepa. However, the main image in this gomba is of

famous Degyal Rinpoche (Pema Dewe Gyalpo) and there are also images of the Jowo (the triad Bodhisattvas). There are some relics which were brought from Khortshak (Khojarnath) monastery. The monastery also contains **12 volumes of the Yum**, the sacred writings which contains the Abhidharma of Buddhist scriptures, a text presented by Zang Rinpoche, the caretaker of Raling Gompa of that time. Raling Monastery is also believed to have visited by 14th century king **Ashok Challa** of Khasha kingdom and left copper plate inscription (the oldest Tamrapatra) written in Khas language.

✿ A well-known Nyingma-pa master Kushog Lungpo or Zigme Kundrol from central Tibet came to this area in the late 19th century and he meditated at the holy site of Raling. He then established the **Raling Purnima festival** to celebrate Lord Buddha's birthday and enlightenment at the time of Saga Debi Dui Tshen (the full moon day of Vaishaka/Jetha). The festival lasts for 2 days; both Buddhists and Hindus celebrate together with ancient Shon and Duera dances. During the festival at the Gompa, the non-celibate monks and nuns of all Nyinba and other Tibetan-speaking communities gather and perform ceremonies to mark Lord Buddha's birthday.

✿ Traditional Bhotia villages such as Buraunse, Torpa, Bargau, Nyimatang etc. offer the perfect blend of ancient Bon and Buddhist Nyinba culture and typical Buddhist architectural houses; some of them are now offering homestay facilities. **Baraunse** village is gateway to Pancha Mukhi Himal and **Nyimatang** village is gateway to holy Mt. Crystal (Kang Shelmogang) and pilgrimage site Raling Gompa.

ix. Namkha Khyung Dzong and Associated Gombas, Yalbang

✿ Yalbang area, the southern and western belt of Namkha Rural Municipality is very important for Buddhist pilgrimage and spiritual activities. The following historic monasteries in Yalbang are also frequented by the pilgrims.

- ❁ **Namkha Khyung Dzong Gomba and Aani Gomba (nunnery) Yalbang, Namkha-4:** Yabang in the southern part of Namkha Rural Municipality in Humla is one the most significant Buddhist pilgrimage site as well as a most vibrant Buddhist teaching center. Many Nyingma-pa Dzogchen masters, who were the disciples of Dudjom Lingpa, had visited Humla for dharma teachings and retreat, including Degyal Rinpoche (**Pema Dewe Gyalpo**, 1873-1933 AD) who was lineage holder of Dudjom Tersar. Pema Dewe Gyalpo who was the most prominent figure in propagating Vajrayana Buddhism in western Tibet and Trans-Himalaya from Ladakh in the west to Mustang in the east founded **Namkha Khyung Dzong monastery** in Ngari, Western Tibet in 1906 AD, but was destroyed during Cultural Revolution.
- ❁ Nyingma-pa Dzogchen **Golok Serta Rinpoche** came to western Tibet from Kham Golok Serta to join the disciple of Pema Dewe Gyalpo in Namkha Khyung Dzong monastery who was later recognized as an emanation of Yudra Nyingpo and blessed by the great tertön Dudjom Lingpa and devoted all the rest of his life to put his root teacher's instructions into practice through intensive retreats as the renunciation vagabond style in various places of Humla, Mugu, Ladakh and Western Tibet.
- ❁ After the death of Pema Dewe Gyalpo, **Golok Serta Rinpoche** was the true lineage holder of Dudjom Tersar in western trans-Himalaya and meditated rigorously and **re-established** Namkha Khyung Dzong monastery in Yalbang, Humla in 1985 under the guidance of the Second Degyal Rinpoche from the support of his second son named **Tulku Pema Rigtsal Rinpoche** who is a doctrinal master of Nyingma tradition. This new Namkha Khyung Dzong monastery has now become a **center for living Buddhist academy across the trans-Himalaya** with teachings of Buddhist philosophy and daily ritual practices in monastery and more than three hundred monks and one hundred nuns are studying Vajrayana Buddhism in Namkha Khyung Dzong monastery, trained by Tulku Pema Rigtsal Rinpoche who is also the head of this monastery at present.

- ❁ **Hyikim Gompa, Nawalthang, Tauphan and Rani Kharka Siddhi Huts:** These holy places were revered by famous Ningmapa Dzogchen Golok Serta Rinpoche who was later recognized as an emanation of Yudra Nyingpo and blessed by the tertön Dudjom Lingpa.
 - ❁ **Jobo Khasarpani Gompa** (Namkha R.M.-5) This Gompa was venerated by Jobo (Chanresig/Avalokiteshvara) and considered emanated in the place of Khasarpani. The 700 years old Khasarpani Gompa houses very important artifacts of footprint and handprint by Jobo.
 - ❁ **Lhundup Choeling Gompa** (Namkha R.M.-2): Located in Kermi village (Sharak), this Gompa was founded by Second Degyal Rinpoche in the early 20th century. This Gompa is revered by holy relics of Golok Serta Rinpoche, Shiva Lhodro Rinpoche and Gya Tshuldrum Gyatso. **Tukchulung community** performs puja on 10th day of every month to celebrate the birthday of Guru Padmasambhava. In the center of altar, there is a clay statue of Buddha flanked by Padmasambhava and Avalokiteshvara statues. Many artistic Thankas are seen hanging in wooden pillar of the Gompa.
 - ❁ **Tungkar Choeling (Tumkot) Gompa** (Namkha R.M.-5): Founded in 13th century, Tungkar Choeling (Tumkot) is the main Gompa of the Sakya tradition in Humla. This gompa was built in the Tibetan style with rammed earth and raw bricks. This Gompa also bears the Sakya-pa's fierce guardian deity called Shugden.
- x. **Limi Valley and Halji Gomba**
- ❁ Bordering the Tibetan Plateau on the lap of holy Mt. Kailash and Mansarovar, and once dominated by ancient Bon religion under the greater sphere of Zhang Zhung civilization, **Limi** is one of the ancient cultural valleys in the Himalayas and the gateway to Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar. There are three major monasteries located in **Halji**, **Til** and **Zhong** in Limi Valley. **Lapcha pass** and



Tshongsa Valley are other important sites of pilgrimage bearing spiritual significance in Limi Valley.

- ✿ Limi Valley is one of the religious and cultural hot-spots lies on **the Extended Kora of Mt. Kailash** and has played a significant role in the propagation and transmission of Buddhism since the very time of second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet. Since 11th century, Limi Valley has been one of the sacred pilgrimage sites in the Western Tibet. As one of the **repositories of Tibetan Buddhism**, Limi Valley has continuously practised and preserved the traditions of Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet even during the difficult times in Western Tibet when mostly the ancient monasteries were destroyed.
- ✿ Three prominent figures such as Atisha Dipankara, Lha Lama Yeshe O and Rinchen Zangpo has a great **role in reviving Buddhism** in Tibet through 2nd dissemination, and propagation of dharma through strengthening the monastic order/traditions, practicing sutras and generating/translating Buddhist scriptures. In doing so, Halji Gomba in Limi Valley had played a significant role, particularly with the involvement of **Rinchen Zangpo** (958-1055 AD) and his successors.
- ✿ The 11th century Indian Pandit Acharya **Atisha Dipankara Srijnan** (980-1054), also known in Tibet as Jowo Je Palden Atisha, visited western Tibet in 1042 on invitation of monk king **Lha Lama Yeshe O (Od)**, who was the grandson of king **Kyi-de Nyi-ma-gon** to revive Buddhist dharma and to purify monastic traditions and dharma practices.
- ✿ During the 2nd dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, **Tholing Monastery** was founded by Yeshe O (as first monastery in the Western Tibet) under the abbot of Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo. **Rincheling Monastery** in in Halji (Waltse) village, Humla is considered to be the last monastery out of one hundred eight monasteries founded by Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo in Purang, Guge and Ladakh. Besides Tholing and Rincheling, other prominent

monasteries (out of 108) established by Rinchen Zangpo include Khochhar in Tibet; Alchi in Ladhak and Tabo in Lahul in India. Rinchen Zangpo meditated for some years in the various holy caves of Limi Valley known as **Chai Nanga Dzong** (the rocky cliff located near Til village) and **Tshyau Lheding** (located between Halji and Zang village).

- ❁ Once Rincheling Monastery was belonged to Kadampa and **Sakya tradition** but later on, it came under the care of **Drigung Kagyupa tradition** as a result of the influence of Gyang Drag monastery (belonging to Drigung Kagyu tradition) at sacred Mt. Kailash. Rincheling Gomba is one of the oldest monasteries in the Nepal Himalaya and the oldest and biggest one in Humla. Many holy figures or highly prominent religious masters were believed to have come to this area for retreats and propagation of Buddhism, including Tsang Myon Heruka (the Venerable Blood-Drinking Madman of Tsang) in 15th century; Druktsen Pema Karpo from Bhutan in 16th century; a Yogi and poet of Kagyu tradition Zhabkar Tshogtug Rangdol from Kham province of Tibet in 19th century and so on.
- ❁ Lies on the ancient salt and wool trading and pilgrimage route to Western Tibet (Ngari Prefecture), **Lapcha pass (5100 m.)** is the stunningly pristine point from where sacred Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar can be best observed and worshipped. For those who can not make a journey to Kailash Mansarovar, Lapcha pass is an alternate pilgrimage site. Also known as a gateway to Limi valley, **Tshongsa Valley** was once the hub of ancient salt trade mart during the Guge kingdom until the Chinese invasion in Tibet.

Box-5: Mount Kailash and Manasarovar

Kailash, as Mt. Sumeru, is the source of the four holiest rivers of the Indian sub-continent, which have given birth to 4 civilizations. Mount Kailash (Ghangs Rin-po-che in Tibetan Language), is considered sacred in four religions: Bon, Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. Hindus



consider Mt. Kailash to be the abode of Lord Shiva. Vajrayana Buddhists believe that Mount Kailash is the home of the Buddha Chakrasambhara (Demchok). Great Yogi Milarepa, the champion of Vajrayana, is said to have challenged the Bon Guru Naro Bon-chung and got victorious over the Bon guru by reaching the top of Kailash first riding on sunlight. There are numerous meditation caves of Padmasambhava as well. The Bon community, a religion native to Tibet, maintain that the entire mystical region and Kailash, which they called the ‘ nine-story Swostika Mountain, is the axis mundi, Tagzig Olmo Lung Ring. Started at Darchen (4600m), the popular Outer circumambulating path is about 52km long. Fed by the Kailash glacier, the Lake Manasarovar is also considered sacred by all four religions. In Buddhist chronicles, Lake Manasarobar is the place where Queen Mayadevi is believed to have had conceived the Buddha.

Annually, thousands of Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims make an arduous journey to Mount Kailash. Moreover, thousands of Chinese and international visitors also visit the Kailash–Manasarovar.

- ❁ Rincheling monastery was is a three storey structural building in the early 11th century and the oldest monastery of Humla. Rinchen Zhanpo is said to have translated more than 150 Buddhist texts into Tibetan scripts during the second diffusion of Buddhism in western Tibet, and Rincheling monastery is believed to have brought some important ancient texts or holy Buddhist texts from Tholing and Khortshak (Khojarnath) monasteries to protect those from Cultural Revolution in Tibet. Halji Gomba still has best preserved the rich treasurer and traditions of ancient Tibetan Buddhism.
- ❁ The monastery houses the four- fold Vairocana, as the largest statue crafted in Kashmiri style, surrounded on three sides by Bodhisattvas. There are two statues of Rinchen Zangpo in the monastery, claimed to have made during his lifetime. Moreover, Nambar Nangje, the 11th century masterpiece statue placed inside this monastery is believed to have kept relics from famous religious

Gurus. Wall paintings of this monastery are highly influenced by Tibetan arts, though they became faded in later period due to gradual ruin by water leakage. Rinchen Zangpo is also believed to have meditated and erected some small stupas and carved mani paintings at **Chai Nanga Dzong** (near Til village).

- ✿ Atisha Dipankara who reached Guge via Purang is also said to have stayed in **Khoser Gomba** (Khojarnath) in Purang (in TAR China), near Limi Valley. Khojarnath is said to have constructed by the artists from Kathmandu Valley, and thus demonstrates Newari architecture.
- ✿ Limi Valley and Halji Gomba has preserved many ancient culture and architectures that are related to pre-Buddhist Bon religion and Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism. The people living in Limi Valley are collectively called as **Limi** people whereas that of Hilsa are called **Hultshodun**. These people still preserve the ancient Tibetan culture, traditions, rituals, costumes and arts. A strong cross-border trade relationship is still existing between Limi Valley and Pulan county of Tibet, reflecting the intertwined, living tradition of the ancient salt trade route. These people still perform various old folk dances depicting the cultural influence of ancient Zhang Zhung civilization. Key festivals and events celebrated in Limi Valley include Dunjang Chambo, Kurby Tucheng, Kangur, Losar, Rimju and many more.
- ✿ An endangered polyandrous custom is strictly followed in Tibetan speaking community of Limi Valley and those who do not follow this custom are punished. Rincheling monastery also strictly follows the monastic rules. Daily and occasional rituals practices are performed by monks of the monasteries. Traditional attire, culinary, traditional dance, pastoralism, strict, monastic tradition are some of the interesting features of Limi Valley.

4.3.4. *Other Satellite Tourism Destinations and Product Linkage Opportunities*

- ❁ Other satellite tourism destinations around OMPHCK include Banke NP, Bardia NP and Jumla Khalanga.
- ❁ Key tourist destinations that can be combined with the package of OMPHCK include the followings:
 - ❁ OMPHCK combining with GLBC.
 - ❁ OMPHCK combining with Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit.
 - ❁ OMPHCK combining with Badi-Malika and Khaptad in Sudur Pachchim (Far West).
 - ❁ Extended pilgrimage to Bodh-Gaya via Lumbini following the ancient pilgrimage route used by the Khasha Kings, including Ashoka Challa.

4.3.5. *Potential Markets and Market Segments*

- ❁ OMPHCK has the potential to attract visitors from domestic markets, Indian markets and all other international markets. However, not all sites contained in the circuit are visited by the pilgrims and other visitors currently due to many reasons, including poor infrastructure conditions. Humla is the most visited site in the circuit accounting for about 13,398 international visitors and about few hundred domestic visitors in FY 2073/075 BS. Of the total international visitors, about 80% are estimated to be Indian pilgrims visiting Kailash Manasarovar via Humla. Very few domestic visitors also visit Limi Valley and other sites in Humla for research and spirituality purposes.
- ❁ In 2073/074, a total of 201 international visitors also visited Rara NP, mostly on their move to Dolpa via Jumla. The pattern of visiting Surkhet Kakre Vihara, heritage sites in Dullu/Dailekh and Sinja Valley by domestic visitors is in increasing trend in recent years despite having poor infrastructures.

4.3.6. *Approach Routes, Suggested Itineraries and Activities*

a. **Approach Routes and Itineraries**

- ✿ Currently, no pilgrims visit all these sites included in the proposed circuit. Only some trekkers follow most of the sites during their trek, including Rara Lake, Simkot, Limi Valley etc. Most of the Indian pilgrims fly to Simkot from Nepalgunj; then fly through Heli to Hilsa and then catch a Chinese vehicle to Manasarovar from Taklakot.
 - ✿ However, up on the completion of Karnali Highway (Surkhet-Hilsa) pilgrims and visitors can make their journey to OMPHCK through vehicles connecting Surkhet Kakre Vihara, Pancha Koshi Circuit (Dullu), Deval sites at Manma, Sinja Valley, Kharpunath, Raling Gomba, Simkot, Yalbang, Limi Valley, Hilsa and then to Khojarnath and Kailash Manasarovar (in TAR China).
 - ✿ Alternatively, visitors may also be able to fly to Simkot from Nepalgunj, Surkhet, Jumla and Talcha in due course of time. Pilgrims and visitors may also enter into Hilsa from Kailash Manasarovar and then continue their pilgrimage to Limi Valley, Yalbang, Raling, Kharpunath, Rara, Sinja, Dullu, Kakre Vihara and then return to Lumbini, and proceed on up to Bodhgaya (India).
- ##### b. **Suggested pilgrimage, spiritual and leisure activities for OMPHCK**
- ✿ Pilgrimage visit to Kakre Vihara, Pancha Koshi Circuit (Dullu), Votive Stupa Cave in Sinja, Raling Monastery, Yalbang Monastery, Rincheling Monastery -Limi and so on.
 - ✿ Noteworthy are the practices of yoga, meditation, retreat and spiritual activities at Kakre Vihara, Vipasyana Meditation Center (Surkhet), Siddhi Cave at Raling, Chai Nanga Dzong and Tshyau Lheding cave at Limi and Namkha Khyung Dzong Gomba and Aani Gomba (nunnery) at Yalbang.
 - ✿ Longer duration retreat and Buddhist education at Namkha



Khyung Dzong Monastery, Yalbang.

- ✿ Distantly observing and worshipping Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar from Lapcha pass (Limi Valley).
- ✿ Archaeological and cultural visit to archaeological and historical sites such as Kakre Vihara, Pancha Koshi Circuit (Dullu), Devals at Manma (Kalikot), Khasha Civilization sites at Sinja, Raling Monastery (and cave), Halji Monastery and so on.
- ✿ Observing various festivals, events; experiencing rich culture and traditions of Buddhists, Bon, Khasha people, including shaman and jhankri dance.
- ✿ Visiting Nath Temples such as Chandannath, Kharpunath, Khojarnath (TAR China).
- ✿ Visit to outstanding natural heritage sites such as Karnali River (corridor), Rara NP and Rara Lake, Changkheli Lekh, Rani Kharka (Saipal Base camp area), Tshongsa Valley (Namkha R.M.-2), and so on.

4.3.7. *Efforts undertaken for heritage based tourism promotion and conservation*

- ✿ Department of Archaeology (DoA) has been doing few activities, especially on excavation and restoration of archaeological sites and monuments, in Surkhet Kakre Vihara, Dailekh, Dullu, Kalikot, and Sinja Valley.
- ✿ The restoration of Kakre Vihara temple in Surkhet is one of the flagship programs of DoA in OMPHCK. Moreover, DoA has established a regional museum at Surkhet which mostly houses ancient monuments and artifacts related to the Khasha Kingdom (12th to 14th century), including that of Kakre Vihara.
- ✿ Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Gomba Management Committees

have been working to support the monasteries established throughout the country, but very little attention has been given to the monasteries in the OMPHCK.

- ❁ Great Himalaya Trail Development Program (GHTDP) during its various phases also contributed to preserve and promote the significant cultural heritage sites including Halji Gomba in Limi Valley, Raling Gomba in Simkot and others.
- ❁ ICIMOD has been working to preserve natural and cultural heritages of Kailash Sacred Landscape (KSL) and Namkha Rural Municipality of Humla is getting special focus on these efforts, including cultural heritage based eco-tourism promotion.
- ❁ Respective Rural Municipalities, Municipalities and District Coordination Committees (DCCs) are also trying to preserve and promote the heritage sites as tourism products, but they could not realize the huge potentials of the major sites such as Kakre Vihara and sites in Dullu and Sinja areas as heritage based pilgrimage and cultural tourism products.

4.3.8. *Key Issues, Gaps and Threats*

- ❁ As the proposed OMPHCK is extended into a varied geographical and religio-cultural landscapes, the **identity** of the selected sites as Buddhist heritages is poor and fragmented. Only some prominent sites such as Raling Gomba, Yalbang Gomba and Halji Gomba in Humla district have gained a bold identity with its global recognition.
- ❁ The importance of **Khasha Kingdom era heritage sites**, such as Kakre Vihara, heritage sites in Dullu and heritage sites and monuments of Sinja, as significant Buddhist heritage sites or sites revered by both the Buddhist and Hindus is either still unknown to the locals or knowingly marginalized by a group of people; eventually diminishing the potentials of the area for promoting pilgrimage and cultural tourism destinations.

It is worthy to note that popular sites such as Kailash Manasarovar, Muktinath, Haleshi are equally revered by both the Buddhists and Hindus, and are attracting thousands of pilgrims and visitors annually.

- ❁ At present, it is almost impossible for the pilgrims, particularly the Indian pilgrims, to combine all selected sites into a circuit package, primarily due to the **poor access** and **accommodation conditions** of the area. However, the conditions are expected to be improved in due course of time.
- ❁ As most of the heritage sites connected by the circuit are still under the phase of full excavation, restoration and beautification, it may take some time for the relevant government agencies and private sector to effectively package all these sites into a circuit package. By the time all sites are ready for visit, pilgrimage and tour package can be focused on the already ready sites such as Raling Gomba, Limi Valley and so on.
- ❁ Most of the heritage sites are also under the threat of destruction due to unplanned development works such as road constructions, rapid urbanization and encroachment.

4.3.9. *Key Opportunities*

- ❁ Opportunity to develop and promote OMPHCK as a modern form of the ancient silk road connecting Lumbini with Mt. Kailash via Kakre Vihara.
- ❁ Extending the Buddhist pilgrims and visitors from Lumbini to the heritage sites of OMPHCK; promoting Surkhet Kakre Vihara as a regional pilgrimage and spiritual hub and a gateway to Karnali Province.
- ❁ Opportunity for restoration, preservation and promotion of widely neglected heritage sites such as Kakre Vihara, heritage sites of Dullu, heritage sites of Sinja and so on.
- ❁ There is a huge potential for improving the livelihoods of local communities through heritage-based tourism.

4.4. DOLPO BUDDHIST AND BON HERITAGE CIRCUIT

Sacred pilgrimage to the ancient Buddhist and Bon heritage sites in the forgotten kingdom.

4.4.1. Background

- ✿ Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit (DBBHC) connects some of the most sacred sites in the Himalayas where Buddhist and Bon religion have long existed together, and where the age-old practices of Bon and Tibetan Buddhism can still be observed while visiting some of the oldest surviving Buddhist/Bon monasteries. As the residents of this region are the descendants of Ngari in Tibet, Dolpo region is also known as **Ngari Dolpo**. Ngari Dolpa is considered to be the **extended flanks of Mount Kailash** (Mount Tise).
- ✿ In the present geo-political map of Nepal, Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit is located entirely in Dolpa district in Karnali Province connected by various approach trails from Mustang, Myagdi, Baglung, Rukum, Jajarkot, Jumla and Mugu districts.
- ✿ The significance of the major sites connected by the DBBHC stands as given below:
 - ✿ **Kaigaon and Pugmo:** The southern gateway to the Bon Kingdom of Dolpo; The Living Bon Heritage Site. For Bonpos, this valley is also known as Beyul Jadgul.
 - ✿ **Rigmo** (Tso/Phoksundo Lake): One of the oldest flourishing Yungdrung Bon monasteries located at the country's deepest and most beautiful lake (Phoksundo) and associated with the Thazhi lineage that dates back to King Trisong Deutson.
 - ✿ **Shey Gomba and Crystal Mountain:** The Epicentre of Buddhist and Bon Mandala in Dolpo region having Crystal Mountain with a closure resemblance with Mt. Kailash.
 - ✿ **Vijer:** The western gateway to the Bon Kingdom of Dolpa with



Samling Monastery as one of the oldest and legendary centres of teaching of Yungdrung Bon tradition.

- ✿ **Saldang Valley:** The hidden valley with sacred Buddhist and Bon monasteries.
- ✿ **Dho Tarap Valley:** A holy mountain and Valley blessed by Guru Rinpoche and many early Bonpo adepts, such as Tonggyung Thuchen. Ribo Bumpa Gomba in Tarap is the only monastery in the region revered and practiced by both the Buddhist and Bonpos.
- ✿ **Tsarka Bhot:** The Eastern Gateway to the Bon Kingdom Dolpa with one of the largest schools of teaching Yungdrung Bon tradition.

4.4.2. *Significance of the Sites Contained in the DBBHC*

i. **Significance for Pilgrimage, Spirituality and Peace**

- ✿ Dolpo is the perfect pilgrimage site for Buddhist and Bon followers and spiritual seekers. It is the stronghold of Tibet's oldest religions- the Bon and Padmasambhava's Nyingma Buddhism; and some villages have a temple devoted to each (Berry 2008). The 'Hidden Land' Dolpo is well known in the Tibetan Buddhist world for its rich religious traditions and auspicious places suitable for practice of pure religion and perfected meditation. Ancient historical documents make reference to a **prophecy of Lord Buddha** that in Dolpo enlightenment could be achieved through solitary meditation.
- ✿ Over the centuries, the hidden land of Dolpo has been the sacred land for enlightenment through solitary meditation. These sacred places have been home to many monks (lamas) and dzogchen masters as they meditated and strived for enlightenment, and became bodhisattvas. Many scholars, mahasiddhas and tantric masters, including Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche) and Yogi Milarepa had visited this sacred land and perfected their meditation.

Map-4: Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit





- ✿ The oral traditions on the **story of Guru Rinpoche** and his work as availed at the Ribo Bumpa Gomba, Dho Tarap, is that, during the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, the Red Handed Devil was very fierce and powerful in Tibet, working against the spirit of the pure dharma practice in Tibet. Guru Rinpoche used his power to subdue her, but at her death, she gave birth to three new Evil Spirits, who fled to the area of Dolpo. Legends have it that the eldest one fled to the valley of Tarap, second one fled to Shey-Phoksundo and third one to a place called Tidru. Guru Rinpoche caught and subdued all; performed the blessing of the enlightened body, speech and mind, and constructed three vase-shaped stupas (known as the Three Containers), in Dho Tarap, Lawang and Taksi, as a reminder and a protector of the areas.
- ✿ Dolpo is also the home to the famous Buddhist scholar **Dolpo-pa Shenrab Gyaltsen**, a 14th century master who contributed to the **emptiness** through his Shengtong philosophy. Moreover, the **Four Lamas of Dolpo** has a special place for Buddhism in Dolpa. The founding fathers of Dolpo Buddhism include famous religious scholars, such as Kunkhyen Dolpo Sangyes, Ngari Padma Wangyal, Ka Thog Tshewang Norbu, Drubthob Senggi Yeshe, Lama Nagpo Dzume, Tadru Ogye Tendzin, Shampa Rinpoche, Shelri Tshoktrul Rinpoche and five brothers of yoga masters who were believed to have given a company to Melarepa in learning the power of destruction. These masters came from western Tibet over a thousand years ago and passed down the great traditions that nourished the development of a rich culture based on the three Buddhists traditions (the Sakya, Kagyu, and Nyingma orders) and Bon.
- ✿ With all these blessings and historical legacy, Dolpo, today, has become one of the best pilgrimage and learning centers for both the Himalayan Buddhism and Bon

- ✿ Dolpo is one of the few remaining areas where the **Bon traditions**, arguably both the Yungdrung Bon and New Bon, have been practiced uninterruptedly and where one can pay a homage to some of the oldest surviving Bon monasteries, sacred caves and mountains.
- ✿ A book by Nagru Geshe Gelek Jinpa has classified Bon religion into three major types, including (i) **Demi Bon** or Prehistoric Bon: many elements of which are akin to Siberian and Central Asian Shamanism; (ii) **Yungdrung Bon**, which is the original Tibetan culture and religion founded by Sanggye (Buddha) Shenrab Miwo, who lived on earth thousands of years before Buddha Shakyamuni. The Yungdrung Bon is further divided into three major subdivisions: (a) Do: Belonging to the path of Renunciation, (b) Ngag: belonging to the path of Transformation, and (c) Dzogchen: belonging to the path of Liberation. (iii) **New Bon** (or white Bon) created in 8th century AD by great masters Drenpa Namkha, Bairotsana and other Bonpo Yogis revolving around the cult of Guru Rinpoche; after the advent of Buddhism in Tibet during the time of King Trisong Deutsen and with the great support from Padmasambhava and Santaraakshita ((Bon in Nepal, 2013).
- ✿ The transmissions and instructions of Bon teachings have been kept intact from the time of Tenpa Shenrap Miwo up until now and are still practiced by monks, nuns, tantric yogis/yoginis and Dzogchen practitioners in the Tibetan Plateau and beyond, including remote Himalayan regions, such as Dolpo and Mustang districts in Nepal. There are several sacred power places, such as Mt. Kailash, Muktinath etc. commonly revered by both the Buddhist and Bon.
- ✿ **Tenpa Senrab Miwo** is identified as the Guru of Bon. The Bon followers consider Shakyamuni Buddha as one of the later incarnations of their main spiritual deity. Key Bon features include practice of circumambulating the shrines in an anticlockwise direction, spinning the prayer wheel to the left instead of the

right, inscribing the swastika sign to the left instead of the right, and chanting “**Om Ma Tri Mu Ye Sa Le Du**”. There are also differences in details of the interpretations of some of the ancient teachings, style of dancing, costumes and masks used, as well as the style and use of color for statues (Dr. Namgyal Rinpoche, Dolpo, The Hidden Land, 2005).

- ❁ Dolpa can arguably be considered to be the **kingdom of Bon tradition** as it has been able to preserve and promote its traditions and monument sites uninterrupted from the very time of Zhang Zhung civilization. Kaigaon areas, Pugmo village, Rigmo village, Vijer, Tsharkha village etc. are the hot spots with best preserved Bon traditions and related monuments.

ii. Archaeological and Historical Significance

- ❁ The mysterious and beautiful “hidden land of Dolpo was originally a part of Tibet during the reign of Nyima Gon, the elder of two grandsons of Langdarma, reigned in Guge. When he died, his three sons inherited the three regions known as Maryul (Ladakh), Western Guge and Eastern Guge (Purang). Tashi Degon ruled the regions of eastern Guge (Purang and Dolpo). In the 14th century, as Dolpo became more of an entity, it attracted the attention of the neighboring chiefdoms of Mustang and Jumla. The control of Western Tibet over Dolpo declined and for a while it fell under the jurisdiction of the King of Mustang, based in Lo Manthang to the east.
- ❁ Over the period of last 1000 years and more, many Mahasiddhas, Yogis, Dzogchen Masters, and Monks have founded various Buddhist and Bon related monuments, including Gombas, Chortens, Kanis, Maniwalls, Prayer Wheels etc. in Dolpa. There are more than 130 Gombas in Dolpa. Significant Buddhist monasteries include Shey Gompa, Ribo Bhumpo Gompa (Dho Tarap), Jampa Gompa (Dho Tarap) Margom Yetsher Gompa (Saldang), Langgon Nesar Gompa (Bijer), and so on.
- ❁ Likewise, significant Bon monasteries include Thasrung Tsoling



Gomba (Tso, Phoksundo), Seteng Yungdrung Shuktsel Gomba (Barley), Deden Phuntsok Ling Gomba (Tsharkha), Yungdrung Tsomo Gomba (Pugmo), Samling Gomba (Samling, Vijer), Sridgyal Gomba (Tserong), Yungdrung Drodul Ling Gomba (Kag), Potikha Gomba (Potikha); Shugri Nyishar Gomba (Potikha); Sale Wo Gomba (Potikha) etc.

- ❁ Most of the monasteries are more than 1000 years old and have unique features. Whereas the Buddhist Gombas house key icons, including statues of Shakyamuni Buddha, Guru Rinpoche and other Bodhisattvas etc. the Bonpo monasteries house mostly the statue of Tenpa Senrab Miwo, revered Tretons, and Dzogchen masters. Most of the monasteries are made out of dry stone masonry with or without using mud mortar and white or red color paintings. The inner wall of monasteries are decorated with the murals and beautiful paintings with sacred and wrathful images of various deities.
- ❁ Interestingly some monasteries such as Riwo Bumpa Gomba at Dho Tarap **houses the deities of both Buddhist and Bon**, and the wall paintings in the main temple include both Bon and Buddhist divinities.
- ❁ Likewise, some monasteries, such as **Samling Monastery** near Vijer **consists scriptures and manuscripts of both Bon and Buddhism**, offering teachings for both dharma.

iii. Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value

- ❁ As the descendants of the Ngari region of Tibet, the people of Dolpo are of pure Tibetan stock and has many similarities with the Kailash (Zhang Zhung), the ancestral homeland of Bon, in terms of culture, religion and spiritual deities. The rich and still intact “Dolpo Culture” of Tibetan origin can still be observed in four major regions such as Panzang, Nangkhong, Tarap and Tsharkha. Most people wear traditional Tibetan dress and speak Tibetan. Some also wear a tortoise earring in one ear, according to the ancient custom of Zhang Zhung.

- ✿ Nomadic pastoralism, ancient salt trade with Tibet using Yak Caravan, Yarsagumba collection, are other interesting activities for pilgrims and visitors to observe in this circuit. They have been practicing the barter system with Tibet. Dolpo is also considered to be the capital of Amchy Medicine. Many Amchy Rinpoche are expanding the practice of Amchy healing practice in these days.
- ✿ Many Gombas perform special rituals every month, but the 10th and 25th days of the months are considered auspicious. Common festivals and events include Buddha Jayanti, Lhosar etc. celebrated by both the Buddhist and Bon followers. Most Gombas and communities also celebrate other special festivals, including summer pujas and winter pujas. Yungney, Chheye Chu, Tse Tar, Masked Dance are other festivals celebrated in Dolpa. Special festival and events include Shey Festival (Crystal Mountain Festival), Tarap Festival and so on.

iv. Other Added Attractions and Activities

a. Other (Non-Buddhist) cultural attractions

- ✿ Pilgrims and visitors can also experience the rich Khasha culture, traditions and rituals, while visiting DBBHC. Widely represented as musto-cult; shamanic dance and jhankri dances are some of the interesting features of Khasha culture that visitors can enjoy with. Bala Tripurasundari Temple, Chhala Musto Devta and Byas Rishi Tapobhumi (Kaika-6,7) are some of the important Khasha/Hindu pilgrimage sites in the region. Kaika or Tarali language is spoken only in Tarangpurian region of Dolpo.

b. Outstanding natural landscapes and rich biodiversity

- ✿ Dolpo region is also a place worth to visit due to its outstanding natural landscape and rich biodiversity. The entire 3555 sqkm area has been managed as country's largest national park-Shey Phoksundo National Park. The outstanding natural landscape include trans-Himalayan landscape, unique geological formations, valleys, gorges, mountain peaks, high

passes, waterfalls, river system and lakes, including Nepal's deepest lake (Phoksundo).

- ✧ Likewise, the region is the home to many flagship and endangered wild animals and birds including Snow Leopard, Himalayan Tahr, Blue Sheep and so on. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded so far from SPNP.

4.4.3. *Significant Heritage Sites*

i. **Dunai**

- ✧ Dunai, the district headquarters of Dolpa, is the gateway to Lower and Upper Dolpa. A new Nyingma monastery, called **Dunai Monastery**, has been built here by Manlha Phuntsog only very recently. There is a very large prayer wheel at the site and the monastic complex is marked by a number of colorful flags (Lungdar).

ii. **Pugmo and Kaigaon**

- ✧ Kaigaon and Pugmo is considered to be the southern gateways to the Bon Kingdom of Dolpo. Moreover, Pugmo village is also considered to be the pure Bonpo village practicing Bon traditions uninterruptedly since many centuries.
- ✧ Namgyal Lhakang Gomba, Yungdrung Tsokmo Gomba, Pugmo Dechen Ling Gomba, Thegchen Rabgye Ling Gomba, Potika Gomba, Sale Wo Gomba are some of the important gombas in Pugmo and Potika village. Equally significant site in Pugmo village is **Shugri Nyishar Cave** where Treton Nyima Senge is believed to have taken his birth. Inside the Sale Wo Gomba, there are volumes of six wrathful Tantras. Kag Valley is regarded as Beyul Valley of Kag by the Bonpo masters. The 15th century **Namgyal Lhakhang Gomba** was built by Terton Chhewang Tshulthim. The monastery houses statues of Senrab Nampar Gyalba; previous, present and future Buddhas and Machhog Sipe

Gyalmo. At a five hours walking distance (at Kanjiroba Basecamp), there lies four lakes of spiritual and natural significance.

✿ Lies on the trail to Pugmo, Rigmo and Dunai from Jumla, Kaigaon is a very beautiful village. Duli Gomba, lies on the way to Kaigaon is one of the oldest Gombas in the area. Other monasteries en-route to Kai Gaon include Sridgyal Gomba, Monri Zursum Gomba (Khali Mon Village), Yungdrung Drodul Ling Gomba etc.

✿ **Yungdrung Drodul Ling Gomba** was founded by Shelzing Lama Nyima Wozer in 1986 AD. The Gomba also runs a school for orphans and underprivileged children, where classes include English, Tibetan and Nepalese. Nyima Wozer has maintained the traditional Bonpo curriculum, which includes the three year retreat for monks and lay practitioners. It is renowned for Bon Dzogchen Yogis, although Sutra and Tantra are also taught. Inside the Gomba, there is a huge two storey high clay statue of Buddha Tenpa Shenrab's Sambhogakaya form. There are also large clay statues of Takala Mebar and Sridgyal as well as many smaller statues of the Buddhas of the Three Times. The holy scriptures kept here include the Kangyur and many other volumes.

iii. Rigmo (Tso/Phoksundo) and Taphritsa

✿ Ancient Bon monastery locally called Thasrung Tso ling monastery (**Tshowa Bonpo Gompa**) is said to have constructed by Thazhi Lama Dulwa Senge (a disciple of Tertön Tsewang Tsultrim) more than 800 years ago. However, the period of Thazhi Lama dates back at least to the times of Tibetan king Trisong Deutsen (8th century). It sits serenely above the Lake to north of the village, guarded by a picturesque row of ochre and red chortens and mani walls. Located at the southern bank of **Phoksundo Lake** (also regarded as a brilliant turquoise gem), the ancient **Ringmo Village** has around 20 houses of Bonpos built in the traditional Dolpo style with layers of stone and wood, and flat roofs. People in this village still revere the turquoise as protector and guardian of the area. The present Gheshe Samdrub Jyima is credited to have



revived the almost forgotten Bon traditions in this Gomba which was once popularized as a flourished Yungdrung Bon monastery for many centuries. Key icons include very old and powerful statue of Walse Ngampa, image of Gyalwa Dupa and a new clay statue of Tenpa Shenrab in Sambhogakaya form. The monastery houses Bon Kangyur and many other holy scriptures. The monastery also has preserved a sword and a scythe, both associated with the Thazhi Lama Dulwa Senge.

- ❁ **The sacred mountain of Flying Garuda, Khyungphur:** This cave is known as **hermitage of Thazhi Lama** which is an ideal for meditation practice high up, isolated, with an excellent view and access to water. It is located on the far side of the Taphiritsa school at a sacred spot known as Khyungphur, a mountain which was opened as a place of pilgrimage by a Pugmo Yogi, Namgyal Sherab Gyaltzen. It is a popular place for pilgrimage and the villagers of Pugmo and Tso come here on special days to purify their karmic traces through circumambulation. Dulwa Senge stayed here practicing a **Garuda retreat**, at the end of which he transformed into a Wisdom Guruda and flew away. The **imprint of a Garuda** can still be seen on the rocky cave wall here (Geshe Gelek Jinpa, Nagru. Bon in Nepal).

iv. **Shey Gomba and Crystal Mountain**

- ❁ The 11th century Shey Monastery which is sacred for both Bonpos and Buddhists is the epicenter of Shey Phoksundo National Park. There are many sacred monasteries in the region along with the siddhi caves that lie around the Crystal Mountain.
- ❁ Revered by both, the Buddhists and Bonpos, the **Crystal Mountain** in front of Shey Gomba has a close resemblance Mt. Kailash in terms of its sanctity and also regarded as a Brother of Mt. Kailash. Looked like an ominous structure like a great demon above Shey, the Crystal Mountain is the holiest summit across Dolpo. According to the legend of Crystal Mountain, the sage called **Drutob Senge Yeshe** visited Dolpo a thousand years ago. At that time, local people worshipped a wild mountain spirit called

Nurpu Khonday Pungyun. Drutob meditated in a cave nearby and tried to vanquish the wild spirit using a snow lion. However, the wild spirit retaliated by sending hordes of angry snakes. Then, so it is said, the snow lion replicated itself 108 times and banished the wild spirit from Crystal Mountain. Each year in July before the harvest, people come from across the region to do a Kora walk around the peak to be cleansed off their sins. A pass guarded by yak horns is crossed before the celebrations end at **Drutob Senge Yeshe's** cave of enlightenment.

- ✿ At least three monasteries are prominent in Shey area. **Shelri Sumdho Gompa**, established by Tendzin Raspa is the largest and most significant one. Historically the Gompa belongs to the Karma-Kagyü tradition, but these days many of the Nyingma deities are displayed. Inside the main icons are Shakyamuni Buddha, Dorge Chang, Tara, a skeleton Buddha, Milarepa and the Karmapa. The monastery houses many Buddhist manuscripts and a painting of the Crystal Mountain stairway to heaven and Guru Rinpoche. There is one very large reliquary stupa and other small stupas at the site. The Gompa hosts a **summer festival** that attracts the people from all over Dolpo.
- ✿ Lying along the Kora route of Crystal Mountain at the left corner of Shel Gomba, the **Gomoche Gomba** belongs to Kagyü tradition and was constructed by re-incarnate Lama Sengge Yeshe. A stupa of Complete Victory is at the site.
- ✿ Also lies along the red cliffs of Crystal Mountain on the Kora route, **Tsakang Gomba** is a meditative cave.
- ✿ **The Shel Ribo Drugdra (Crystal Dragon Roar)** is observed in the Crystal Mountain (Shey area) where the holy man Dupthop Senge Yeshe meditated and achieved enlightenment. Also known as **Shey Festival**, it is observed once in every 12 years, in the Dragon Year of the 12-Year Tibetan Calendar. The 25th day of the 6th Tibetan month (July/August) and the new moon day of the 7th month are considered especially auspicious dates. The annual

Crystal Mountain Kora takes place in July. During Shey Festival, monks also free animals (Animal Dana); observe horse race, bow competition, offer Wang to laity peoples and worshippers and so on.

v. **Vijer**

✿ Also considered to be the western gateway to the Bon kingdom of Dolpo, Vijer is one of the sacred centers of education for the Yungdrung Bon tradition, though it also consists of many old Buddhist monasteries.

✿ The Bon monastery **Samling Gomba**, constructed near Vijer by Dzogchen Master and Zhang Zhung Nyengyud lineage holder Yangton Gyaltzen Rinchen in 1183 AD (Bon in Nepal) or 13th century is one of the **most noted Bon centers** in Upper Dolpa and the main center of education for the Yungdrung Bon tradition where Sutra, Tantra, Dzogchen and the Five Sciences are applied. It has been one of the unusual places where Dzogchen (Arti system of the Dru Lineage) has always been the principal practice. It was also the residence of the Zhang Zhung Nyengyud single lineage holder for many generations. Many Dzogchen masters were taught here and Dharma teachings flourished across the Dolpa and Mustang districts. Many Buddhist monks, nuns, yoginis and lay practitioners also came here to practice. **Dawa Nyima Gyaltzen** stayed here, teaching Bon in the morning and Buddhism after lunch. It has also played a significant role in preserving and re-establishing Yugdrung Bon in the aftermath of Chinese Revolution. Samling monastery offers a three years retreat course to the monks, nuns and yogis according to The Practice Manual of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of the Yangton Lama System. It comprises important Bon icons, including Tenpa Shenrap Miwoche (the Bon equivalent of the Buddha), Bon expositor Khritstung Gyalba (the Bon equivalent of the Buddhist thousand-armed Chenresig), and Lama lineages. It also houses important text, such as the Three Minds Sutras and Mantras. There are 22 stupas in the area.

✿ **Ngagyur Naser Gomba** is located in Vjer was built under Tsunga Rinchen. This red building Gomba belongs to Nyingmapa tradition and is more than 900 years old. There is a standing Chenresig and an idol called Chentong, a thousand-armed Chenresig and two large prayer wheels and some fearful dakini spirits.

✿ Three monasteries are prominent in **Upper Mugu**, including Bachan Bolne Gomba, Chitai Gomba and Dolphu Gomba.

vi. **Saldang Valley**

✿ Lies in the Nangkong Valley, the entire Saldang valley is an ancient Buddhist Hub and a sacred Buddhist world in Upper Dolpa. There are many gombas of various periods, including Samye Choeling Gomba, Margom Yetsher Gomba, Jova Gomba and so on.

✿ **Yangtsher (Yanger) Gomba** is oldest in Dolpo and it's over 1000 years since its consecration. This Nyingma-pa Gomba, sometimes referred to as **Margon Yangtsher**, was built under Choegyal Palsang. Key icons kept inside the monastery include Guru Rinpoche, Shakyamuni Buddha and Chenresig. In addition there is an image of Dorje Chang, a standing Green Tara, a fearsome Mahakala protector and the Eight Medicine Buddhas. Icons also include Indian master Atisha. Among the texts kept here are the 'Translated Buddha Word' and a collection of teachings by Padma Wanggyal of Ngari from Tibet.

✿ Founded by Lama Sushing Urgen Tengen, **Samye Choeling Gomba** is more than five hundred years old and belongs to the Nyingma tradition. It houses images of the Buddha of the past Dipankar, the present Shakyamuni, and the future Maitreya. It is named after the great Gompa in Tibet founded by Guru Rinpoche, whose image is dominant here.

✿ More than 800 years old **Jovo Gomba** was founded by Sherap Dragpa and it belongs to Nyingma tradition. The Gomba is noted for following the Ngagpa traditions introduced to Dolpo by the Yogi Milarepa. Major images include Guru Rinpoche, Dorje



Drollo, Manjushree, Yamantaka-his wrathful manifestation, and a lesser-known figure Thubwang Guru, known as the king of the sages. Among the notable scriptures kept inside the Gomba is the Treasure Trove of Precious Teaching by Jamgon Lodro Thaye.

- ✿ The legendary hero, **Thinle**, the main figure of Himalayan Yak Caravan film, is from Saldang Valley.

vii. Dho Tarap

- ✿ It is a religiously and culturally significant site with Buddhist and Bon monasteries, Guru Rinpoche's meditation Cave, distinctive set of chortens and sacred mountains. The famous Tibetan speaking settlement of Dho Tarap sits above a wide valley at an elevation of 3944 m. and has been a trading crossroads for centuries. The Dho Tarap Valley, possessing nine doors (avenues of entrances) is considered to be the central gathering place for the Ngari Dolpo. According to ancient legends, the valley of Dho Tarap was once a vast lake inhabited by a wild spirit.
- ✿ **Ribo Bhumpa Gomba** was founded by Jigdre Nyima Gyaltsen and Lama Tenzin Targye more than 1000 years ago as Nyingma monastery. It is one out of its three series of Bumpa (other two located in Lawang and Taksi villages). These three vase-shaped stupas (Bumpas) are linked to the legend of Guru Rinpoche who is believed to have subdued three demonesses here in this valley. It is said that any damage to any of these Bumpas will cause Phoksundo Lake to burst and flood the villages. Major statues housed by the Gomba include the three Buddhas of times past (Dipankar), present (Shakyamuni) and future (Maitreya). Icons of prominence inside are the central three meter high Guru Rinpoche plus eight of his other aspects including Dorje Drollo. Various Yab-Yum, male-female Buddhas are also on show, including the impressive Samantabhadra on the right of the main door.
- ✿ As suggested by Nagru Geshe Gelek Jinpa (Bon in Nepal), **Riwo Bumpa Gomba** is the only Gomba in Dolpa which houses the deities of both Buddhist and Bon, and is shared by both Bonpos

and Buddhists. As per Geshe, the wall paintings in the main temple include both Bon and Buddhist divinities. Bon divinities are depicted on the right, Buddhist divinities on the left. **Dagpo Drenpa Namkha** (a great Bonpo of 8th century) and **Vairochana** (a great Buddhist and Bonpo translator of 8th century) are also amongst the images kept inside. Yogis from both traditions would come to the Gomba to recite the ritual, with the Bonpo practitioners sitting on the right and Buddhists on the left. This is the only Gomba in Dolpo where both Buddhist and Bonpo deities are depicted in the Gomba. Until very recently, both Buddhist and Bonpos of Dho Tarap used to sponsor the yearly ritual of **Shenrab Nampar Gyalwa** here in Riwo Bummpa which is elaborate and includes 100,000 offerings for the accumulation of merits.

- ✿ Built by Choehyal Palsang, **Maggom Yetsher Gomba** is considered to be the oldest monastery in Dolpa built more than 1000 years ago. The Nyingma monastery houses image of Atisha as its main image.
- ✿ Devoted to the Buddha of the Future Maitreya, **Champa (Jampa) Gomba** dates back to more than a thousand years. In the 15th century, the king of Mustang requested Lo Amapal to re-build the monastery. Since then, this Gomba has been a pilgrimage site for the people of Upper Mustang. The main images are high standing Mitreya Buddha, Dipankar, Shakyamuni earthly Buddha, the thousand-armed Chenresig, a large Guru Rinpoche, seven evil looking protectors. Important scriptures, sutras and tantric manuscripts are housed here. A stupa is dedicated to the eight Medicine Buddhas.
- ✿ The Bon monastery **Sipchhog Gomba** is more than 500 years old and is believed that the lineage for the Gomba came originally from a Gomba founded 800 years ago by Treton Chime, in the small valley of Mirbu along the Dho Tarap route. It houses an idol of the Bon founder **Tenpa Shenrap** and images of Namgyal and Jamma, the Affectionate Goddess. Texts include The Great Realm, The Magnificent Pure Teaching, the Text to Fight against



Malevolent Spirits, and other mantras.

- ✿ Also known as Red Cliff Retreat, **Drakmar Dewa Gomba** is a Nyingma monastery built more than 900 years ago under Lama Trashigangba and Bon lineage Dhorogomba. Major images include Lord Buddha, Dorje Phurba and The Three Root Attributes of Guru Rinpoche. A stupa is found here and books include the works of the one hundred translated Buddha Words.
- ✿ **Mekhyim Gomba** built by Urgyen Tenzin and Tsering Tashi is over 700 years old. It has a Tathagata Stupa on the site.
- ✿ **Karkar Labrang Gomba** is known locally as the White Crevasse Temple that dates back to 900 years. It belongs to the old tradition of the Nyingma monastery and was constructed by Urgen Tendzin with funding from the king of Mustang. The Gomba is located in the village of Karkar and inside are the eight major aspects of Guru Rinpoche in his various guises and moods. The sky-blue Dorje Chang (the Vajra holder) is an important deity across Dolpo. Milarepa and various lama reincarnates are also on view.
- ✿ **Deden Phuntsok Ling Gomba** traces its origins back to Merbu Samten Ling. In ancient times, many Bonpo Dzogchen yogis spent their whole lifetime here in Tarap and finally achieved Rainbow Body. This is very clearly recorded in the Bon historical texts that narrate the lives of the masters. There are some clay statues of Songchok Gyalpo, Sherab Jamma, Buddha Tenpa Shenrab Miwo, and Nampar Gyalwa including a wonderful statue of Lachen Drenpa Namkha. The Gomba also houses many relics of Bonpo masters such as Yangton Sonam Lodro, Treton Namkha Gyaltzen's skull, Yangton Tsultrim Namgyal's skull, Yangton Yungdrung Gyaltzen's bone and Kuntu Zangpo from his skull etc. The Gomba also houses old Bon manuscripts.
- ✿ The famous **Yungdrung Wobar Chorten** in Dho Tarap is as high as a five-storey house and has four levels. It has mandalas on the ceiling of the inner passage.

- ✿ In Tarap valley, the **Buddha Ribo celebrations** take place every 12 years, in the year of the Rabbit, to commemorate the visit of Guru Rinpoche. The Buddha Mountain near Dho Tarap was blessed by the Guru Renpoche when he meditated there. The 25th day and new moon day of the 6th Tibetan month (July/August) are the most auspicious days.
- ✿ Likewise, **Pawo Drungnga**, the holy mountain, has long been revered by the Bonpos of Tarap who set it as a support for the purification of obscurations. It is considered to be a very hallowed spot as it was blessed by the masters of the Mind Lineage of the Siddhas. It is a place of prostration and pilgrimage, especially since Sherab Gyaltzen of Pugmpo. In ancient times, a great Zhang Zhung Yogi, Tonggyung Thuchen, Debon Gyimtsa Machung and many other early Bonpo adepts came to this place and blessed the mountain. It is said that the self-arising Five Heroic Syllables of Buddha's body, speech, mind, knowledge and activities (A OM HUNG RAM DZA) can still be seen on the rocks along the circumambulation path. There is a cave hermitage in the mountainside called **Yungdrung Tagtsan** where Tonggyung Thuchen is said to have practiced, and indeed, his footprint can still be seen on the rock there.

viii. Tsharkha Bhot

- ✿ Tsharkha is also considered to be the eastern gateway to the Bon Kingdom of Dolpo. Major Bon monasteries in Tsharkha include Yanggon Thongdrol Phuntsok Ling Gomba, Sachen Gomba, Tsharkha Golang Yungdrung Nyishar Gomba, Tadzong Phuntsok Ling Gomba etc.
- ✿ **Yanggon Thongdrol Phuntsok Ling:** The original Phuntsok Ling was situated on the far side of the river making it rather inaccessible. In 1993, Yangton Lama Tashi Gyaltzen moved the Gomba to the side of the river, closer to the village. The Sekhang houses many holy objects from the previous Gomba. This is the third seat of the Yangton lineage in Tsharkha. Inside the Sekhang



(Gomba) there are many old statues, both large and small, which vibrate with blessings. There are also many old texts as well as a new set of the Kangyur and a Yungdrung Korleg Chorten and also statues of Phurba and Jamma which are kept hidden for security reasons.

- ✿ **Sachen Gomba** is located in Tsharkha village and belongs to Nyingma tradition. The 700 years old monastery was built by Sagar Rabjam. It also consists of a walk-through portal stupa.
- ✿ **Tadzong Phuntsok Ling Gomba** is situated in the holy place on the far side of the river from Tsharkha village where many Yangton lamas practice Dzogpa Chenpo.

ix. **Tiserong**

- ✿ Tiserong Mountain is considered to be the unbroken flank of Mt. Kailash (Gang Tise) in its eastern direction.
- ✿ **Drigung Gomba** is located in Tiserong known as a Kagyu Nyingma Gomba. There is a one-storey high image of The Accomplished Buddha inside the temple and a large number of stupas on the site.
- ✿ **Surboche Gomba**: Surboche is a Nyingma monastery founded by Drogon Tsangpa Gyare more than 700 years ago. An amazing Great Teacher's Vase Stupa is on the site of the monastery.
- ✿ **Sadu Gomba** is also a Nyingma monastery founded by Lama Dharma Sengge more than 800 years ago with the sponsorship from the King of Jumla.
- ✿ The Tiserong (Sadu) commemorates the holy man Dhar Senge, who conquered the demons that dwelt in Tiserong Mountain. The 25th day of the first Tibetan month (Feb./March) and the 25th day of the 7th month (Aug/Sept.) are considered particularly auspicious for pilgrimage.

- ✿ In Sahatara, there is a monastery belonging to the **Magar community**.

4.4.4. *Other Satellite Tourism Destinations and Product Linkage Opportunities*

- ✿ Other satellite tourism destinations around and en-route the circuit include Rara Lake, Jumla, Guerrilla Trail (Rukum), Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve (DHR), and Mustang.
- ✿ Linkage opportunity for DBBHC include the following:
 - ✿ DBBHC combining with Lower and Upper Mustang via Tsharkha Pass.
 - ✿ DBBHC combining with Lumbini via Dhorpatan HR.
 - ✿ DBBHC combining with Rara and Humla trail via Jumla Khalanga or Vijer/Tiyar Gomba.

4.4.5. *Potential Markets and Market Segments*

- ✿ Considering the current pace of the construction of road to Dunai (and Marim La in the near future), there is a huge potential for attracting domestic, Indian and international pilgrims and visitors to this circuit.
- ✿ Currently, only few hundreds of domestic visitors (confined to Phoksundo Lake and Rigmo Bon Monastery) and few thousands of international visitors are visiting Lower and Upper Dolpa, primarily for adventure trekking. In the very near future, Tripurasundari Temple together with the Phoksundo Lake and trans-Himalayan landscape, can be a very attractive pilgrimage site for the Indian market.
- ✿ In FY 2073/074 BS, about 1,349 international visitors, including 924 visitors in Lower Dolpa and 425 visitors in Upper Dolpa visited Dolpo region. Buddhist and Bon heritage sites is one of the most attractive tourism products for the international visitors.



4.4.6. Approach Routes, Suggested Itineraries and Activities

a. Approach Routes

- ✿ Currently, following approach routes have been used by the pilgrims and visitors to visit DBBHC:
 - ✿ Kathmandu-Nepalgunj (by flight or vehicle)-Jufal (flight)
 - ✿ Nepalgunj-Jumla (flight)-Guthichour- Kaigaon-Kagmara Phedi-Pungmo-Ringmo (Shey Phoksundo)
 - ✿ Nepalgunj -Chhinchhu (Surkhet, by vehicle)-Salli Bazaar-Radi Jyula-Dunai (by vehicle and on foot).
 - ✿ Kagbeni (Mustang)-Chharka pass-Chharka Bhot-Dho Tarap.
 - ✿ Pokhara-Beni/Baglung-Dhorpatan-Dunai/Sahatara (Dolpa).
- ✿ In the very near future, one can easily reach Dunai (the gateway to DBBHC) using vehicle along the Bheri Corridor road (Nepalgunj-Jajarkot-Dunai-Marim La is about 420km). Alternatively, visitors also can reach Dunai via Chourjahari at the Mid-Hill Highway (Lokmarga) that passes through Dhorpatan-Rukumkot-Musikot.
- ✿ Pilgrims and visitors can also continue their journey towards Upper Mugu and Humla from Vijer via Tiya Monastery (in Mugu).

b. Suggested tour itinerary and tour packages

- ✿ Following various options can be chosen by the pilgrims and visitors to visit DBBHC:
 - ✿ **Route-1: Lower Dolpo Circuit:** Juphal- Dunai - Rupgad-Byasghad- Tarakot- Laisicap- Laina Odar -Chhyugar-Toltol-Ghamghar- Langa- Dho Tarap - Tokyu- Thaksi- Numa La Base Camp- Danigar - Baga La- High Camp- Temche- Yak Kharka- Ringmo- Dunai/Juphal
 - ✿ **Route-2: Upper Dolpo Circuit:** Jufal- Pugmo-Rigmo/Phoksundo Lake- Phoksundo Khola- Kang La Lower Camp- Shey Gomba- Namgung- Sela La- Saldang- Namdo-

Chagaon- Side Trip - Jyanta La Base Camp- Tokyu - Kakar Gomba - Dho Tarap- Ghyamghar- Tarakot- Dunai-Juphal. Alternative to Saldang via Vije: Shey Gomba-Den Khola-Tora - Samling -Vije- Neng La High Camp-Saldang.

- ✧ **Route-3: Panzang Valley Circuit to Mustang:** Dunai/Jufal-Rigmo/Phoksundo Lake- Phoksundo Khola- Kang La Lower Camp- Shey Gomba- Den Khola-Tora - Samling -Vije- Neng La High Camp-Saldang- Shimen via Yangtsher- Musi La-Shimen via Khoma- Tinje- Camp 2 - Mo La- Chharka Bhot Chharka Bhot- Kagbeni (Mustang).

c. *Suggested pilgrimage, spiritual and leisure activities for DBBHC*

- ✧ Visiting and paying homage to sacred Buddhist and Bon monasteries.
- ✧ Sitting on meditation, yoga and retreat at various monasteries and perfected meditative caves and sacred mountains.
- ✧ Attending and/or observing various festival and events such as Shey Festival, Tarap Festival.
- ✧ Studying Buddhism and Bon (up to three years) at some of the ancient teaching centers such as Samteling Gomba, Vije.
- ✧ Visiting various rich cultural villages of Buddhist and Bonpos such as Pugmo, Rigmo, Vije, Saldang, Dho Tarap, Chharka Bhot (the highest settlement) and so on.
- ✧ Experiencing extreme leisure and adventure walking through the deepest lakes, waterfalls, high passes, meadows and forest.
- ✧ Engaging in amchy healing practices.

4.4.7. *Efforts undertaken for heritage based tourism promotion and conservation*

- ✧ Only very little and fragmented efforts have been undertaken so far for the preservation and promotion of Buddhism and Bon heritage sites in Dolpo region. The efforts of MoCTCA are primarily focused on the development of large-scale infrastructures such as airports (in



Jufal and Masinachour), trekking trails, bridges etc. DoA has not yet been able to carry out significant work in Dolpa regarding the adequate documentation and preservation of archaeological sites, though it prepared and submitted a UNESCO-World Heritage nomination document on Dolpo under a mixed natural and cultural property in 1999.

- ❁ The programme and activities carried out by DNPWC and Shey Phoksundo National Park (declared in 1984 AD) have also focused more on conservation of natural heritages than cultural heritages, though very limited supports have been provided to the communities for the maintenance of monasteries.
- ❁ Northern Mountain Conservation Programme (NMCP) started in 1996 by WWF- Nepal together with DNPWC initiated efforts for promoting heritage-based eco-tourism in Dolpa. Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation (TRPAP)- implemented by UNDP (2002-2006) and Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme (GHTDP)- implemented by SNV (2006-2013) also tried to develop and promote heritage-based tourism products in Dolpa.
- ❁ As of now, the efforts of local governments such as Rural Municipalities (including previous Village Development Committees) are limited to the maintenance of heritage sites. However, in the changed context, local governments are now trying to re-orient their focus for the integrated conservation and promotion of these heritage sites.
- ❁ Respective Gomba Management Committees and locals have been playing a very significant role in preserving the Buddhist and Bon heritage sites such as monasteries, chhortens, kagnis etc. and promotion of Buddhist and Bon culture and traditions by performing daily, periodic and occasional rituals and events including festivals. Shey Festival is one of the most visible example of this.

4.4.8. *Key Issues, Gaps and Threats*

- ❁ Remoteness and difficult access (incomplete road network, expensive and limited air flights, poor trekking trail networks).
- ❁ Poor accommodation facilities (lack of teahouses, lodges and homestays, The pilgrims and visitors have to rely on camping based accommodation, high cost of goods and services).
- ❁ Monasteries and stupas are being dilapidated, particularly in Taksi areas of Dho Tarap, due to poor maintenance and unplanned development initiatives. Many cultural heritages in Dolpa are being encroached and dismantled due to the construction of new buildings and roads.
- ❁ Important artifacts and statues are being stolen and robbed due to the lack of adequate security, particularly in Saldang Valley and Vijer areas.
- ❁ Poor awareness amongst the locals and government agencies about the significant Buddhist and Bon heritage sites of Dolpa.
- ❁ Poor or no promotion of these significant heritages as pilgrimage and cultural and spiritual tourism products.
- ❁ Provision of controlled area trekking permit for Lower and Upper Dolpa has made the pilgrimage and trekking package to Dolpa more expensive with lengthy administrative process.

4.4.9. *Key Opportunities*

- ❁ Preservation and promotion of Buddhism and Bon heritage sites and traditions that have already started declining in other mountain areas.
- ❁ Opportunity for promotion of area as a center of Buddhism and Bon teaching and retreat center.
- ❁ Opportunity for blending Buddhism and Bon with the outstanding natural landscape and rich biodiversity.
- ❁ Promotion of historical festivals and events such as Shey Festival and



Tarap festival to promote culture and spiritual tourism.

- ❁ Promotion of Buddhist tradition based Himalayan Amchy Healing and Medication, together with spiritual retreat facilities.
- ❁ Upon completion of Dunai-Marim La road construction, Surkhet Kakre Vihara-Tripurasundari-Marim La-Kailsah Manasarovar-Hilsa-Simkot-Kahre Vihara circuit can be promoted; focusing Tripurasundari Temple for Indian pilgrims and Buddhist/Bon and natural heritage for other third country visitors.
- ❁ Opportunity for linking Mustang, Lumbini and Humla.
- ❁ Huge potential for combining rich culture and heritage sites with adventure tourism.

4.5. **LUMBINI-LO KINGDOM (MUSTANG) BUDDHIST CIRCUIT**

Journey to the Land of Sacred Caves and Monasteries through the Ancient Silk Road Corridor

4.5.1. *Background*

- ❁ Lumbini -Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit (LLKBC) connects one of the oldest and established Buddhist centers and famous tourism destination, the **Lo kingdom**, in the Trans-Himalayan region with Lumbini, the birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha, following the most sacred river corridor, the Kali Gandaki.
- ❁ The proposed circuit completely overlaps with one of the prominent ancient Silk Road Corridors that used to link Western Tibet with Bodhgaya (India) and South Asia via Lumbini and Mustang. The key heritage sites connected by the circuit are the perfected meditation and blessed sites of great Buddhist Mahasiddhas and masters, including Padmasambhava, Yogi Milarepa, Jowo Je Palden Atisha (abbot of Vikramasila), Lotsaba Rinchen Zangpo, Terton Lama Sange, Sakya

Guru Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo Tulku Lato Marpo, Sakyasribhadra (a Kashmiri pundit), Jen Buddhist Master Ekai Kawaguchi and so on.

- ❁ In the present geo-political map of Nepal, the core area of Lumbini -Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit is located in Mustang, Myagdi and Kaski district of Gandaki Province. Other districts lie in the approach route to the Lo Kingdom include Palpa, Syangja, Gulmi, Parbat and Baglung.
- ❁ The significance of the major sites connected by the LLKBC stands as given below:

- ❁ **Thini and Marpha:** The Southernmost sanctuary of Padmasambhava; the sacred site with “Five Treasures of Bodily Representation”.
- ❁ **Muktinath and Kagbeni:** The sacred sanctuaries of Buddhists, Bonpos and Hindus.
- ❁ **Samar and Chyungsi Cave:** The perfected meditation cave site of Padmasambhava.
- ❁ **Tsarang and Lo Ghekar:** The sanctuary blessed by Padmasambhava, Terton Lama Sange and Sakya Guru Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo (Anandabhadra).
- ❁ **Luri and Tangge Area:** The Sanctuary of Group of Kabum Chortens (Caves with White Chortens)
- ❁ **Walled City of Lo Mangthang:** One of the Ancient Buddhist Centres and Cultural Capitals of the Trans-Himalayas.
- ❁ **Chhoser:** The Sanctuary of Cave Monasteries.

4.5.2. *Significance of the Sites Contained in the LLKBC*

- i. **Significance for Pilgrimage, Spirituality and Peace**
 - ❁ **Lo Kingdom** is one of the oldest and still vibrant Buddhist centers in the Trans-Himalayan region. Lo Kingdom used to be the strong-hold site of Buddhist and Bon traditions. Sites in the



kingdom of Lo are significant particularly due to its association with pre-Buddhist (and New Bon) traditions, Guru Rinpoche, Milarepa and Sakya masters.

- ✿ During the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, Lo Kingdom, particularly Lo Ghekar area played a crucial role as legend says that Padmasambhava became able to complete the construction of Samye Monastery in Tibet only after subduing the demons and establishing a monastery (called Lo Gekar) in Lo Gekar. Since then Lo Kingdom has remained one of the sacred places for Buddhist pilgrimage, meditation and teachings. **Lama Sangye** of Tibet is acknowledged to have revealed the textual treasure (Terma) near the **Lo Gekar** monastery in Lo/Mustang, also becoming the first Terton in the Nyingma tradition.
- ✿ Lo/Mustang also participated in the activities of revitalization of Buddhists in western Tibet under the reign of prominent king **Tsenpo Khore**, also known as Lha-lama Yeshe O (Od) and Rinchen Zangpo. **Atisha Dipamkara Srijnana** (982-1054) who contributed a lot in the second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet is supposed to have entered into Western Tibet via Palpa, Mustang and Gungthang. A black colored stone relief erected inside the Rangchhyung Cave also indicate that Atisha Dipankara had visited Lo Kingdom. Other prominent Indian Buddhist scholar and the great Tibetan Lamas, including Lama Sangye (first Terton), Tulku Lato Marpo (a contemporary of Marpa), Rinchen Zangpo, Yogi Milarepa etc. were also invited to Lo Kingdom during the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. **Yogi Milarepa** also visited the kingdom of Lo, spent one year and sermonized the people of Lo/Mustang on his pilgrimage to Kailash Manasarovar.
- ✿ Lo Kingdom had already established a religious connection with the gurus and followers of Sakya tradition in Tibet by the second half of 13th century. A renowned Buddhist scholar **Mahapandita Sakyasribhadra** of Kashmir also visited Lo/Mustang in 1212 AD on his journey to Kashmir from Tibet through Gung-thang;

Map-5: Lumbini- Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit





conducted several religious services in Lo, and instructed his main disciple, Thophu Lotsaba, to confer upon the local monastic institutions most of the gold he had collected as donations in Tibet.

- ✿ Sites used for perfected meditation and also blessed by **Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche)** include Thini, Muktinath, Rangchyang Cave Chhorten (Chyungsi Cave), Lo Ghekar etc. Likewise, sites blessed by **Sakya masters** including Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo include Kagbeni, Tsarang, Lo Mangthang, Chhoser etc. One of the founders of Kagyu tradition, Yogi **Milarepa** is believed to have spent his time in Upper Lo, especially Lo Mangthang area. Likewise, **Atisha** is connected with the cave in Chyungsi (near Syanboche). Luri and Tangge area are considered to be more sacred sites due to the presence of three separate **Group of Kabum Chorten**. The entire Kali Gandaki River corridor is considered to be sacred due to the presence of sacred **Shaligrama** (fossilized shell and iconic symbol of Lord Vishnu). **Muktinath**, **Kagbeni** and **Lubrag** area are considered to be sacred sites for Buddhists, Bonpos and Hindus, equally.
- ✿ In the 11th century, the lower Lo region became an important center of Ya-ngal (Yan-ngal) Bon, though it was already well rooted in the upper Lo region even before the advent of Buddhism in that area. Areas such as Lubrag (seat of Lama Nyelton Thulme), Donkya, Jyibakhar (Jhoong), Tinyug (Tiri), used to be one of the main **Bon pilgrimage centers**, and many Bon monasteries and Bon practitioners do still exist in Jaragang, and Lubrag area.
- ✿ Prior to the 7th century, Lo Kingdom, especially the Upper Lo and Tshero (present-day Chaire village in Thak) were the important centers of Bon tradition. Once well-flourished **Pre-Buddhist traditions**, full of Shamanistic and animistic features of Zhang Zhung started declining in Lo Kingdom after the advent of Buddhism in Tibet and the emergence of **Nyingma tradition** in Tibet which is considered to have accommodated many positive aspects of Bon tradition.

- ✿ However, the resurgence of Bon culture appeared in Tibet during the 10th and 13th centuries after the disintegration of the Tibetan empire. Accordingly, many Bon scholars were invited by rulers of Purang, Zhang and lower Lo (Se-rib), including the **first Bon master Sangye** (Sangs-rgyas or Klu-skar-rgyal), to reinvigorate the Bon religion in their respective domains.
- ✿ In the second half of the 12th century, Ludhak (Klu-brag or Lubrak) became one of the main Bon pilgrimage centers. **Yangston Shes-rab rgyal-mtshang** (1077-1141) is believed to be one of the founders of the Bon tradition in the kingdom of Lo. **Rongom Thogme Zigpo** (lived in Dolpo) was one of the most prominent Bon figures to work extensively in the Upper Lo region.

ii. Archaeological and Historical Significance

- ✿ Lo Kingdom, the ultimate destination for pilgrimage in LLKBC, arguably, has some of the **oldest human settlements** as it bears **human caves** of about 3,000 years old believed to have resided by ancient troglodytes. Some of these caves were later used by monks and hermits as monastery and meditation seats. A scientific exploration team led by Anthony Bond (2013) has estimated more than 10,000 mysterious human-built caves in Lo Kingdom. A series of sand-Castle like cave structures were explored by the team including ones with the 12th century village caves (mystery of the ancient kingdom discovered... 2013).
- ✿ If the Buddhist scriptures and legends are to be believed, **Lo Ghekar Monastery** built during 8th century in Lo Kingdom should be considered to be the **oldest monastery** (even older than Samye) in the Nepalese Himalayas and Tibet.
- ✿ Buddhism in the Lo Kingdom was expanded gradually with the influence of rulers of Khasha, Guge/Purang and Gungthang Mangyul. With the prosecution of King Ralpachen by Langdarma and of Langdarma by a Buddhist monk during 9th/10th century, the Tibetan empire started disintegrating gradually and several



small kingdoms emerged in Tibet, including **Ngari Korshum** - the first kingdom of western Tibet founded by Kyide Nyima Gon. **Ma-thang ring-mo**, a region between the present villages of Ghami and Dhakmar is considered to have been the capital during the time of jo-jo rGod-lde who has been identified as sKyid-lde **Nyi-ma-mgon** (Dhungel 2002).

- ❁ **Gungthang Mangyul** was the transit point/en-route point from central Tibet into Nepal and India and vice versa. Many Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan Buddhist masters and mahasiddhas, including Guru Rinpoche, Milarepa, Atisha etc. crossed Gungthang to Tibet during the first and second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet. Gungthang was also the staging ground for sending Tibetan monks and masters to Nepal and India. Sakyasribhadra, a Kashmiri Pundita, also travelled through Gungthang.
- ❁ Lying along the ancient Silk Road Corridor, Lo Kingdom, as a part of ancient Gungthang Mangyul is considered to be one of the **strategic trans-Himalayan way-stations** for many traders and pilgrims travelling from Tibet in the north to India and South Asia via Lumbini.
- ❁ After the first war (1235 AD and 1239 AD) the alliance of the Khasha (kingdom of Yatshe or King of Jumla), with Guge and Purang defeated upcoming kingdom of Gungthang Mangyul, and overtook the power in Lo. Gung-thang again retained the control of Lo and Se-rib (Lower Kingdom of Lo) in 1252 with the support from **Sakya rulers** and **their Mongolian protectors** of the Chinese Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368). The gradual increase of the influence of Sakya tradition in Lo resulted the establishment of many Buddhist sanctuaries in Tsarang, Lo Mangthang, Luri, Chhusang, Kagbeni and so on.
- ❁ Though Lo again fell under the control of Khasha Kingdom during early 14th century, it became an independent kingdom during the second half of 14th century with the decline of Khasha Kingdom. **Amepal** became the first king of independent Lo during the 15th

century and reigned officially until 1427 AD (or 1436 AD), the year when he met Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo. The close association of Dharma king Amepal and the Sakya Lama Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (Anandabhadra) **founded formal monastic tradition** in Lo Kingdom. Since then, the kings, monks and people of Lo Kingdom built several monasteries, stupas, chortens, gate-chortens (Kagnis), ihatos, maniwalls, Kabum chorten, palaces, Lakhang, Tsuglag Khang etc.

- ❁ Seven meter high walled city “**Lo Mangthang**” can be considered to be one of the best preserved masterpiece of high Himalayan archaeology that adopted old architectural style of building with mud rammed wall (gyang technology in Tibetan), flat roof and so on during 15th century.
- ❁ The monasteries, chortens, stupas, Ihatos, palaces in the kingdom of Lo consists of significant wall paintings and murals. A single Jhampa Monastery in Lo Mangthang only consists at least 80 mandalas. The paintings and art works on monastery, stupa, chortens and Ihatos in the Lo Kingdom are claimed to be one of the most artistic and picturesque in the Himalayas. These art works are the good representation with the perfect blending of Newari, Tibetan and Kashmiri artworks. Whereas the stone carvings on the walls of chorten, kagnis, maniwall and ihotos contain various manifestations of Buddha, Tathagathas, Bodhisattvas and spiritual protecting deities; ceilings are mostly dominated by chakrasamvara mandalas.
- ❁ The kingdom of Lo also comprises of four prominent sites of Group Chortens, called **Kabum Chorten**. Legends has it that there were 9 or 25 such Kabum Chorten groups in the kingdom of Lo. The 300m long maniwall lies in between Ghemi and Dhakmar and Tsarang, which is arguably the **longest maniwall in the Himalayas**.
- ❁ Lo Kingdom also witnessed the longest surviving Buddhist kingdom (and Kings), which formally started during first half of

15th century and existed until 2006.

iii. **Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value**

- ✿ A pilgrimage and spiritual visit to the Lo Kingdom is also worth to observe and/or experience the age-old culture, rituals, costumes, food, festival of **Loba and Thakali people**. The still preserved Loba costume, food, festivals and lifestyles have the close resemblance with the ancient culture and traditions of Tibet, and can be the interesting features for visitors to learn and experience.
- ✿ Himalayan Amchy practices, polyandry system, practice of sky-burials are other interesting features for visitors to experience in the Kingdom of Lo. **Tiji** and **Yartung** are two signature festivals celebrated in the kingdom of Lo.

iv. **Other Added Attractions and Activities**

a. Other (Non-Buddhist) cultural attractions

- ✿ Lumbini Lo Kingdom Buddhist Circuits that traverse across the sacred Kali Gandaki River offers visitors an opportunity to visit many sacred Hindu pilgrimage sites, including Triveni Dham, Devghat, Ridi/Ruru Chhetra, Shaligram Sthal, Kalika Temple (Baglung), Panchakoti Dham (Baglung), Galeshwor Dham (Beni), Muktinath (revered by both Hindus and Buddhists), and Damodarkund.
- ✿ Visitor and pilgrims may also observe various festivals and events, such as Maghe Sakranti Mela (especially at Ridi), Chaite Dashain (especially at Baglung) etc. and other periodic events and rituals of Hindu followers.

b. Outstanding natural landscapes and rich biodiversity

- ✿ Kali Gandaki River Corridor that falls under the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri region, including Trans-Himalayan landscape of Lo are the scenic landscapes in Nepal with their vivid natural features, including deepest Kali Gandaki Gorge (between Annapurna and Dhaulagiri peak), beautiful

waterfalls (including Rupse Waterfall), unique geographical formations (including scenic plateau of Upper Mustang), beautiful mountain peaks such as Annapurna I and II, Nilgiri, Dhaulagiri etc., high passes (such as Thorong La pass, Tsharka pass), natural hot springs, natural lakes (such as Tilicho Lake, the highest lake of Nepal) beautiful Kaligndaki River and Valleys etc.

- ✧ Visiting LLKBC also offers visitors a rare opportunity to observe the rich flora and fauna, including hot spot of Rhododendron Forest (Ghorepani area), beautiful flowers, scenic mountain vegetation, various species of birds, wildlife, butterflies, and so on. Lucky visitors may also have a chance to encounter with the king of mountain- Snow Leopard.
- ✧ Crossing into Manang via Throng La and into Upper Dolpa via Tsharka pass are other value added destinations for extreme adventure loving visitors.

4.5.3. *Significant Heritage Sites*

i. **Thini, Syang and Marpha Area**

- ✧ Thini and Jomsom are the stronghold site of Thakali people. The ancient **Panch Gaon** (The Five Villages), comprises of **Thini, Marpha and Syang** villages in the southern zone of Buddhist and Bon influenced kingdom of Lo. Thini area is believed to have **received blessings by Padmasambhava**, who is believed to have visited this site twice. **Hutsaptemga Gompa**, also known as the Gomba of the 5 treasures of bodily representation is the key Buddhist site to visit.
- ✧ **Hutsaptemga Gompa**: Located on the top of a cliff, the Gompa of the “five treasures of bodily representation” was built by a tertön (gTer-gton) Urgyan dPal-bZang, who discovered the five treasures, at the end of the 17th century. Legend suggests that the monastery was in fact founded by Padmasambhava himself during his visit to this site. The Nyingma Gomba houses the images of



Vaishravana, Shantarakshita, Padmasambhava, Samantabhadra, Avalokiteshvara, Amitayus etc. The gomba also houses attractive bronze statue of Maitreya Buddha of the future, statue of Buddha Amitabha (center), statue of Padmasambhava flanked by his two consorts Yeshe Tsogyal and Mandarava and statue of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig).

❁ In **Syang**, there is a monastery called **Dechenling Gomba**. In **Marpha** there is a Gomba **Tashi Lakhang** (Samling Gomba). There is a Kawaguchi House in Marpha dedicated to the Japanese Zen monk Ekai Kawaguchi who used to live here for several months on his way to Kailash in 1899.

❁ The district headquarters **Jomsom** is a new town, also known as eDzong gsar-ma (new Fortress) in Tibetan language. A **Bon Gomba** (Yungdrung Kundrag Ling Gompa) is located in the nearby area of Jomsom. Recently built a cultural museum that displays the ancient art, artifacts, costumes etc. related to Thakali and Lo-ba people of Mustang. This is another added attraction for visitors.

ii. **Lubrak, Kagbeni, Jharkot and Muktinath, Kagbeni Area**

❁ Collectively known as ancient **Baragaon Village** (The Twelve Village), this area used to be the **Sanctuaries of Bon** in the Lower Kingdom of Lo during 11th to 13th century. Still today, this area is known to be the most revered site by Buddhists, Hindus and Bonpos.

❁ In the second half of the 12th century, **Ludhak** (Klu-brag or Lubrak) became one of the main Bon pilgrimage centers. Located in Lubrak, the Puntsoling Gompa was a large and well-managed Bon monastery founded in 1160 AD by **kLu-brag-pa bKra-shis rgyal-mtshan** (1131-1215), younger son of Yang-ston and rebuilt during the second half of the 19th century by Karu Druwang Tendzin Rinchen from Tibet. The Gomba contains some interesting wall paintings and statues. Elephants under the

throne of the white colored main deity signifies the Bon deity Shenla Okar (the god of white light). Other paintings include the Buddhist expression of **Bon deity** in the Buddha Amitabha and the white colored Bon deity Kunzang Gyalwa Dupa (the first emanation of Buddha Samantabhadra), and the fearsome & dark colored Bon deity Trowo Tsochog Khagying in yab-yum with his red colored female counterpart. An impressively painted wooden mandala decorates the ceiling of the entrance.

- ✿ Lies en-route to Muktinath, the ancient Bon Village **Jharkot** (Dzarkot) have some sacred monasteries and chortens. The ancient **Sakya Gompa** of Jharkot located on a cliff in the area of Muktinath houses a remarkable Clay image Statue of **Buddha Shakyamuni** probably dated back to 15th century AD. Another interesting feature include an old door-chorten which contains some old murals, showing Padmasambhava, Maitreya and probably Manjushree. In the ancient fortress **Dzong**, in the north of Jharkot and west of Muktinath, lies an old Gomba.
- ✿ **Muktinath Temple** (Chu-mig Ghyatsa in Tibetan): Surrounded by the well-known fountain of 108 springs, the holy ground of Muktinath Temple is one of the most important pilgrimage centers for Hindu, Buddhists and Bon communities. One of the main deities of the temple include Chengrisi (Avalokiteshvara). Muktinath is also considered to be the younger brother of Mt. Kailash. There is one Temple and three monasteries. The **Menbal- Gomba** (The temple of the fire) is the oldest one and belongs to Nyingma tradition. Under the sanctum, there occurs blue flames of natural gas coming out of the earth. The Gomba hosts beautiful statues of Padmasambhava, Manjushree, Shadakshari Avalokiteshvara and Padmapani. Other two Gombas are the **Gompa Sarwa** (New Gomba) and the **Marme Lhakhang** (the temple of lights).
- ✿ **Kagbeni** is another holy site for Buddhists, Bonpos and Hindus. It marks the end of Lo Kingdom and Thakali culture and the beginning of Upper Lo as well as the Tibetan culture. The



significance of Kagbeni lies on the presence of oldest monasteries, Beni (the holy confluence of Dzong and Kali Gandaki River), ancient culture, traditions and architecture. Two sacred rivers, **Dzong River** (originating from Muktinath) and **Kali Gandaki River** (originating from Damodar Kund) meets at Kagbeni. Kagbeni is also the gateway to Manang (via Thorong La), to Dolpo (via Tsharka pass) and to Upper Mustang via Tangbe and Chhusang.

❁ The gate Chorten, private **Red House** with the most impressive image of Buddha Maitreya topped by Garuda, traditional houses with beautiful windows and the **Iwi Meme** are other key features reflecting the rich Buddhist and Bon traditions and architecture of Kagbeni village. The artistic representation of two images “iwi meme” the **mythic grandmother** (mom) and **grandfather** (Khe) symbolize the fertility and the shamanistic and animistic representation of village protectors.

❁ Near the holy confluence of Kali Gandaki and Dzong Rivers, lies the red colored **Kag Choede Thupten Samphel Ling Monastery**. This gomba belongs to Sakya tradition and believed to have founded by Sakya Lama Tempe Ghyaltsen in 1429 AD. At the center of its santrum, the gomba has a bronze image of Shakyamuni Buddha flanked by his disciples Sariputra and Maudgalyanaya. Recently, a new monastery has been established adjoining to the old one. Locals believe that Lama Ngawang Thongme carried a black rock substance from Swayambhunath and kept in this place and built a Gomba.

❁ **Tiri Village** is an ancient Bon Village located within the domain of Bahragaon. There is a small gomba and a chorten. **Tiri Monastery** belongs to Nyingma tradition and has many stone carvings, including that of Avalokiteshvara. The village is also the home to many **Amchy Lamas**.

iii. Tangbe and Chhusang

❁ **Tangbe** is considered to be the gateway and door-step to the Upper

Lo Kingdom. The village is marked by the picturesque **Chorten** (previously there used to be a group of chorten) surrounded by several **Ihatos**. Moreover, there are red, white and grey colored three **Ihatos**, also known as rigs-gsum mgon-po representing three Bodhisattvas-Avalokiteshvara, Manjushree and Vajrapani. There is a small monastery in Tangbe.

❁ **Chhusang Village** marks the upper boundary of Bahragaon. **Chhusang** village has two prominent old monasteries, Kunza Choling Gomba, Mentsi Lhakhang. The **Kunza Choling Gomba** which is located at the western bank of Kali Gandaki River is also known as “the Island of the Dharma”. The Gomba houses a wonderful collection of old statues, including two-storey Maiteya Buddha, Vajrapani and several images of Padmasambhava, with a path to circumambulate around the central image. The monastery also houses many old murals and paintings, though are in ruined state.

❁ One the way to **Tetang** (on the eastern bank of Kali Gandaki) from Chhusang, there lies another important monastery, **Mentsi Lhakhang**. This monastery is significant for its oldest murals, some of which depicts the life of Shakyamuni Buddha, possibly dating back to 12th century; sculpture of the mystical birds, and various images (statues) of Buddha Shakyamuni, Tara, Vairocana, Avalokiteshvara, Amitabha, Ratnasambhava, and protecting deities (Yidam Hayagriva and Vajrasadhu). This monastery is considered to be much more older than the famous Gompas in Tsarang and Lo Manthang or the cave temples of Luri and Tashi Kabum. Built directly into the rocks, Mentsi Lhakhang “the temple of the holy medicine” is supposed to have been built by Lama **Kunzang Logyel**, in 1003 AD. The clay statues of sanctum are supposed to be of 11th century. The spiritual creation symbolizes the **six virtues of the Mahayana** (Beck 2014). From left to right, it comprises the yellow colored Tathagata **Ratnasambhava**, a four-armed manifestation of **Prajnaparamita** (or **Avalokiteshvara**) and the green colored Tathagata **Amoghasiddhi**, Tathagata **Vairocana** (dominating

one), the red colored Tathagata **Amitabha**, Buddha **Shakyamuni** and yellow faced Tathagata **Aksobhya**. The Newari styled relief of Tara and Vajrasadhu are also seen standing on the two sides of Vairocana. Other sites en-route to Samar from Chhusang include **Tetang** and **Chele**. In **Tetang**, there is a small monastery.

iv. Samar and Syangboche and Ghiling

- ❁ Rongchyung Cave is the holiest site to pay homage in this area. Tashi Choling Gomba and several stupas and Ihatos are also worth visiting along the trail.
- ❁ In between Samar and Syangboche lies the lost sacred cave, **Rangchyung Cave Chorten** Also known as **Chyungsi Rhangchung** Chorten (the chorten which was naturally founded by itself), this cave is identified with the perfected meditation cave of Padmasambhava. Legend has it that **Padmasambhava** meditated in this cave during his way back to Kathmandu from Western Tibet during 8th century. The center of the cave is dominated by an impressive rock with four big images of Buddha **Shakyamuni**, **Padmasambhava**, **Buddha Amitabha** and **Avalokiteshvara** (from left to right), painted onto the front side of Ihatos-like structures. Small Ihatos can be seen dominating the right corner of the cave. Close to these Ihatos lies a **black relief**, possibly the statues of Acharya Atisha Dipamkara Srijnana (982-1054) who is also supposed to have passed by this cave on his way to Western Tibet. The rock wall also consists of 184 images of Padmasambhava. A very rough circumambulation path has been created in the later period.
- ❁ **Ghiling** village which is considered to be one of the largest villages under the domain of Tsho Bar in Upper Lo region. It is dominated by monastic building, and attractive (and colorful) chortens, Ihatos and maniwalls, though many structures have already disappeared due to gradual erosion. Ghiling is considered to be one of the sacred sanctuaries Ngor-pa family of Sakya tradition. One of the prominent monasteries of Ghiling, **Tashi**

Choling Gompa was founded by the **Sakya Lama Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo** (1382-1456) The monastery houses **images** of Mahakala, Avalokiteshvara, Vaishnavana, Cakrasamvara, Hevajra, Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo, Shakyamuni (at the center of sanctum) and of the five Tathagatas. The monastery walls and chorten walls pose attractive paintings, including images of various spiritual protecting deities and chakrasamvara mandala.

v. **Ghemi, Tsarang and Lo Gekar**

✿ Ghemi, Tsarang and Lo Gekar are considered to be the **most significant site** for pilgrimage as these sites are commonly believed by locals as the places blessed by Tantric Master Padmasambhava, Terton Lama Sange and many Sakya Pundits of Tibet. There are many prominent and picturesque monasteries, door chortens, chortens, kagnis, stupas and ihatos associated with various legends and histories some of which date back to the 8th century AD.

✿ There are some **small monasteries and chortens** with impressive stone carvings in Ghemi en-route to Dhakmar and Tsarang. In between Ghemi and Dhakmar/Tsarang, there is about 300 m long mani wall, possibly the **longest maniwall in the Himalayas**, with artistically carved stones attached to the main body of maniwall. There is an interesting legend about the distribution of these monastic structures. Legend has it that during the construction of Samye in Tibet, Padmasambhava killed a demon and upon throwing the demon onto the mountain, various structures emerged out of various parts of demon. The legend suggests that the Group of Chortens in between Ghemi and Dhakmar are the manifestation of the organs of demon; the longest maniwall (mathang) near Dhakmar is the manifestation of demon's gut; the red cliffs are the manifestation of the demon's lungs and Lo Gekar Monastery is the manifestation of the demon's heart.

✿ In **Dhakmar**, there is a small old monastery and a gate-chorten surrounded by the majestic red cliff landscape with countless

caves. The monastery houses impressive carved wooden head of Mahakala, bronze statue of Vajradhara and two images of Lokapala Vaishravana (Kuvera).

❁ **Lo Gekar** area is known for the famous Lo Gekar Monastery (or Ghar Gomba). **Lo Gekar Monastery** (Monastery of Pure Virtue) is believed to have founded in 8th century during the time of founding of the first monastery (**Samye**) in Tibet by the **Great Buddhist Tantric Master Padmasambhava**. Legend has it that Padmasambhava pacified the powerful demoness here in Lo Gekar and founded this monastery. Hence, Lo Gekar monastery is considered to be the **oldest in Lo Kingdom** and in the entire Tibetan plateau (even older than Samye). The monastery is surrounded by many ancient chorten, lhatos, mani-stones, and prayer wheels. The monastery **houses 414 Stone plates** engraved with carvings in color of different deities. The center of the sanctum consists of the **statue of Padmasambhava** flanked by his two consorts- Yeshe Tsogyal and Mandarava. The monastery also bears the sculpture of five deities, including Konchog Yidam/ Ratna Samuccaya- as tutelary deity, Khadoma Dakini, Lion and so on. The presence of the life sized sculpture of two protecting deities namely white faced- horse riding deity “ama legs-ldan” and blue faced- ochs-riding deity **“legs-ldan drag-mo”** in the monastery and Ngakpas as being the worshippers of the deities signify the existence of the reminiscence of pre-Buddhist influence in the area during the time when Padmasambhava founded the monastery. Lo Ghekar is also known as the First Terma Center also called **‘Terne Ghangpo’** as the **first Terma** (the treasures written and concealed by Padmasambhava) was revealed here in 11th century by a tertön (treasure discoverer) **Lama Sange** (Sangs-rgyasbla-ma, 990-1070 AD).

❁ The original monastery (Lo Gekar) is supposed to have gone through series of restoration and reconstruction by many kings, monks and devotees during the course of last 1200 years. The current (old) monastery is said to have re-built by **Dhendup Dorje**

about 300 to 400 years ago. The new monastery complex is less than 100 years old.

- ✿ **Tsarang** is one of the historical and religious sites in Upper Lo Kingdom. **Thubten Shedrup Dhargyeling Monastery** (also known as **Ngor - Shakya Gomba**), was built in Tsarang by the 1st Lo ba King Amepal Sangpo together with the Sakya Guru Ngorchhen Kunga Zangpo (Anandabhadra) in 1427 AD. The fact that Ngor- Sakya Gompa was the first monastery in Upper Lo, built by king Amepal and Sakya Guru, signifies that Tsarang was one of the important centers for Buddhist pilgrimage and spirituality during 15th century.
- ✿ Before the construction of Thubten Shedrup Dhargyeling Monastery with generous support from Sakya Guru from Tibet, there was an old Gomba belonging to Nyingma and Kagyu traditions. With the construction of new monastery, the influence of Sakya tradition also increased in the area.
- ✿ In the sanctum, the main image of the Buddha Maitreya is flanked by Buddha Sakyamuni and Vajradhara. A beautifully carved metal chorten has been placed to the left of Maitreya Buddha. The 16th century wall paintings of the assembly hall include “thousand Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa” and the Tathagatas Vairocana, Amitabha, Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi. The monastery also bears many metallic sculpture and images including Swoyambhu Chaitya and Tara. It has also preserved 100s of Thankas dating back to 11th to 12th century AD, preserved from the older monastery.
- ✿ In a separate chamber called **Golden Temple**, impressive statues and books of the Kanjur and the Tenjur have been decorated. Major objects kept in the monastery include a wooden image of Phag-pa Lokeshvara (the **tutelary deity** of the Tibetan king Srong-tsen Gampo), a chorten, bronze images of Maitreya Buddha and Tara and images of Sakya Lama Ngorchhen Kunga Zangpo, King Agon Zangpo and the minister Zewang Zangpo. There is



the old king's palace called **Samdrub Gedphel Gyalkhang**, the wish fulfilling palace founded by king Amepal just opposite of the Gumpa. Tsarang also consists of many impressive stupas and chortens, including one big gate-chorten.

vi. Luri Gomba and Ghara: The Sanctuary of Sacred Kabum Chortens

- ❁ Lies to the east from Lo Mangthang and Tsarang (in the eastern belt of Kali Gandaki), Yara, Ghara, Luri, Tangge areas are yet another sacred Buddhist site and house three out of four **Kabum Chorten** groups of Lo.

Box-6: The Kabum Chorten of Lo Kingdom

There are four prominent sites of group chorten called Kabum Chorten (cave with a white chorten), in Lo. Altogether 25 such group of chorten are believed to have constructed during the time of Lo King Amepal (Vitali 2012) and before. In fact, the group chorten of Luri and Tashi Cabum chorten are believed to have founded in 13th or 14th century, older than the reign of Amepal (Beck 2014).

- (i) Group Chorten of Luri.
- (ii) Tashi Kabum Chorten (or Tashi Geling Chorten) between Luri and TYara.
- (iii) Kabum Chorten of Tangge.
- (iv) Kabum Chorten of Lo Mangthang.

- ❁ **Luri Gomba and Group Chorten of Luri:** Luri Gomba is the combination of natural cave and the built structure. The white chorten located on the Naga Hill has an open courtyard. The Lhakhang hosts some ancient images of Padmasambhava. The main sanctum contains the **big chorten** and some impressive murals dating back to the 11th - 12th century AD. Murals on the western wall shows **Buddha Shakyamuni** with his disciples, the blue Vajradhara, the white Vajradhara and a blue protecting deity called Achala. Impressive murals show the eight Mahasiddhas

(belongs to a spiritual context used by the Kagy-pa): Indrabhuti, Dhomi Heruka, Nagarjuna, Ghantapa, Kukkuripa, Padmavajra, Luyipa, and Shavaripa. The chorten also shows interesting paintings on the bumba. The mantra “**Om mani padme Hum**” is placed around the walls under the dome. The **Group Chorten of Luri** are believed to have been established during 13th or 14th century. At the bottom of Luri Gomba, there is a Luri Nunnery.

❁ **Tashi Kabum Cave Chorten:** The 13th or 14th century Tashi Kabum Cave Chorten (also called Tashi Gelang Chorten), the **Island of Auspicious Happiness and Virtue**, is located in between Luri and Yara. The left mouth of the cave consists **hundreds of Tsas** covering the **chorten with the broken bumba** (filled with Tsas). **Murals** of four armed and white faced Avalokiteshvara, the image of an unidentified monk can be seen on the opposite of the entrance. The inscription of three different mantras, (i) **Om mani padme Hum** (the mantra of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara), (ii) **Om badra pani** (the mantra dedicated to Vajrapani, and (iii) **Om bhagishvari** (the mantra dedicated to a manifestation of Manjushree, called Vagisvara) can be seen on the walls beside the murals surrounding the chorten. The impressive blue, white and red colored domes show an arrangement of the **eight well-known symbols** of the Tibetan Buddhism, “**the eight-fold auspicious symbols**”. The Cave chortens have some of the finest art works.

❁ **Kabum Chorten of Tangge:** Tangge has the most impressive and the biggest group of Chorten, containing 17 chorten or lhato, and countless mani-stones. The northern **Group of Eight Chortens** represents the eight most important events (or stations) in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha. It is believed that more merit can be accumulated by paying homage to these chortens (stupas). The southern group of chortens is dominated by three figures “**rigs-gsum mgon-po**”, representing the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (white), the Manjushree (red) and Vajrapani (grey). The old murals on door-chorten contains images of Green Tara, Manjushree, Amoghasiddhi, Amitabha and Ushnishavijaya, dating back to the 15th or 16th century.



vii. Lo Manthang: The Walled City

- ❁ Lo Mangthang, the capital city of Lo Kingdom is full of outstanding cultural as well as spiritual heritages and scenic natural landscape. It was founded in 1441 by Agon Zangpo (1420-1482), the son of king Amepal (1388-1447). The city of Lo Manthang (gLos Mos-thang) is one of the best masterpieces of the ancient Tibetan culture, artworks and archaeology. It became a sacred pilgrimage hub for many Buddhist masters and monks, including the Lamas of Dolpo and Sakya pundits of Tibet since 14th century. Many Buddhist masters, such as Dolpo Pa studied here and in Sakya Monastery in Tibet. Yogi Milarepa, the founder of Kagyu tradition is believed to have stayed for one year in Lo. The presence of the largest Tsuglag Khang, Lhakhangs and Dukhangs signify that Lo Mangthang used to be an important Buddhist teaching and practice center in the trans-Himalayan region, attracting many Buddhist masters and monks/nuns and practitioners from around Sakya (Tibet), Gungthang, Purang/Kailash, Guge, Ladhakh, Dolpa, Jumla, Tsum and so on.
- ❁ Besides the rich and still alive Buddhist traditions of Loba people, worth visiting heritage sites of pilgrimage bearing spiritual and archaeological significance in Lo Mangthang include three signature monasteries (Jhampa Lhakhang monastery, Thubchhen Lhakhang Monastery and Shakya Chyodi Gomba), two big chorten groups (1 inside and 1 outside the palace), two other small groups of chorten, three prayer wheels and so on. Moreover, there are several monasteries, stupas and ruined Dzong (castle), Kabum Chorten etc. around the walled city Lo Mangthang. Whereas one big chorten group built in 1474 is located south of Thubchen Monastery (inside the palace), another group is located in the northeast direction of the palace (outside palace).
- ❁ With lavished monasteries and Tsuglag Khangs, Lomangthang in Mustang became a regional Buddhist pilgrimage and study center for the followers of Buddhism from Eastern and Western Tibet, Ladhakh, Kashmir, Jumla, Dolpa, Tsum Valley and so on.

✿ **Jhampa Lhakhang Monastery** (**Byams-pa Lhakhang**), the temple of the Maitreya Buddha and the famous mandala monastery, was built in Lo Mangthang by the second Loba King Agon Zangpo in 1447 AD with blessings from Sakya Ngorchhen Kunga Zangpo. The ground floor of the **three-storey monastery** (arguably the Tsuglag Khang) is dominated by the sanctum consists of the images of main deities including Maitreya Buddha at the center. The ground floor, middle floor and top floor are allocated for teachings of the sutra and lower tantras, the Yoga tantras and the Anuttarayoga tantra respectively. The impressive clay **image of Maitreya Buddha** is flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas. Around the sanctum of the ground floor lies the circumambulation path. Four wrathful deities with a Buddha in the center surrounded by the five Tathagatas (the transcendent Buddhas) can be seen in entrance wall of ambulatory. The inner eastern wall hosts four **Buddha images**, but two of them have lost their face. Moreover, five huge deities are seen surrounded by hundreds of images, showing the Buddha Amitayus, on the inner southern, northern and western wall.

✿ **Thubchen Lhakhang** (or Thubchen Gyalwa Phodrang): The temple of Shakyamuni Buddha, was founded in Lo Mangthang by the third Loba king Tashi Gon in 1468 AD and completed in 1472 AD. It is the biggest assembly hall all over Mustang and is one of the most impressive Tsuglag Khang of the Tibetan culture. The monastery has an Entrance Hall (sGokhang) flanked by the big impressive statues of four Lokpalas (protecting deities). The Assembly Hall (Lakhang) is dominated by five rows of seven artistically painted pillars. The inner face of the entrance wall is full of murals depicting six Bodhisattvas and a Vairocana (above the entrance door). The left wall of the assembly hall is also full of murals dating back to 15th century, depicting five Tathagatas, a Bodhisattva and Shakyamuni (in the left corner of the altar). The back wall is dominated by four gigantic statues, showing from left to right, the Bodhisattva Avalokishvara Chenrezig, Buddha Shakyamuni, Buddha Manjushree and Padmasambhava. In the left



corner of the altar lies a Namgyal Chorten. Thubchen Lakhang is also a good repository of old paintings/murals, trans-Himalayan architectural style, fine arts, wood carvings and so on.

❁ **Sakya Chyodi Gomba** (Chode Lakhang): Sakya Chyodi Gomba was constructed in 1710 by unifying two Gombas, called Choprang Gomba and Dhakar-Thungling Chhode Gomba. It has two Dukhangs, monastic school, museum, monk residence with kitchen and other facilities to cater a big number of monks, pilgrims and students. Silver Tara and a Silver Chorten are of interesting features housed in the assembly hall. A big chorten lies just in front of the assembly hall. Chyodi Monastery has two gigantic thankas: Mahakal Gonpo Thanka (about 20 ft tall) and Padmasambhava Thanka (about 25 ft tall). These painted and silk embroidered thankas are displayed in the courtyard during the famous Tiji festival.

❁ Other sites worth visiting in and around Lo Mangthang include Lo Kunphen herbal museum and traditional amchi clinic housed by **Lo Kunphen Mentsi Khang** outside the city hall in the western part. In the northern direction of the existing palace lies two ruins of ancient palace (Dzong) namely **Khartsun Dzong** and **Khacho Dzong**. These former palaces were built by the first Lo King Amepal. On the way to Lomangthang from Lo Gekar, near Morang La, there is a ruins site of once popular **Samduling Gomba** (the island of the fulfilment of aspirations) built in 12th century by a Lama called Ronggon of Kagyu tradition. In the nearby area of Samduling Gomba, there is a group of 15 chortens called **Chaksa Gang. Namgyal Chhyode Thubten Dhargyeling Gomba**, which is known to be “the place where the dharma of the Buddha is growing” lies in the northwest of Lo Mangthang and is considered to have been founded in 1465 AD. Due to its strategic location, the monastery is believed to have gone through destruction by military operation several times. **Kabum Chorten of Lo Mangthang** lies in the very difficult mountain cliff northeast of Lo Mangthang palace.

viii. Chhoser (Tsoshar): The Sanctuary of Sacred Cave Monasteries

✿ In between Lo Mangthang and the border of TAR China lies the sanctuary of sacred cave monasteries and some other monasteries including Nyingma Monastery of Garphu. Major Cave monasteries include the following:

- (i) **Konchokling Cave Temple** (The Island of the Most Precious Ones): The open type of cave has some murals of Shadakshari Lokeshvaras, Vajradhara, Green Tara, mahasiddhas animals (including snow leopards) in the ruined state.
- (ii) **Nyiphu: The Ngor Sakya Sanctury of Nyiphu** (The cave of the sun or Cave of the Union of Sun and Moon): The spectacular red colored and picturesque Ngor Sakya Sanctury of Nyiphu is the half cave and half-constructed monastery located onto the rocks. The cave consists of badly damaged 16th century wall paintings.
- (iii) **Jhong Cave Complex**: The Jhong Cave Complex represents a typical historical cave city, and is considered to be about 3000 years old. However, no substantial evidences have been found yet to justify these caves to be a typical historical cave.
- (iv) **Nupchokling Cave Temple** (Western Side Island): 13th century impressive mandalas have been recorded on the ceiling of Nupchokling Cave Temple (Opposite of Jhong Cave),.
- (v) **Rindzingling Cave Temple** (Island of the Possessors of Knowledge or Vidyadhara Island): Rindzigling Cave Temple lies in the remote rocky mountain to the east of Nyiphu Cave.

✿ Interestingly, Chhoser area is considered to be the **Sanctuary of Bon** by the Bonpos. The Lower part of Chhoser areas is recognized Mardzong Cave whereas the upper (western) is recognized as Bonkhor Ruins by the Bonpos. The great Bonpo Yogi **Ronggom Togme Zhigpo** one of the lineage holders of the Zhang Zhung



Nyenggyud Dzogchen, is said to have spent many years in meditation in the cave near Bonkhor.

ix. **Damodar Kund**

- ❁ Located at an elevation of 4,890m on the lap of Damodar Himal (6,706m), **Damodar Kunda** is one of the most holy places of both Buddhists and Hindus. It is believed that taking a deep-bath in the Kunda will purge all sins. Within the sacred landscape of Damodar Kunda there are three sacred lakes namely Brahma Kunda, Rurda Kunda and Ananda Kunda.
- ❁ Legend has it that Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati have blessed the lake by leaving some parts of garments in Damodar Kunda. Thus, it is believed that taking a deep bath in Damodar Kunda wash any sins committed by any pilgrims in present and previous life.
- ❁ Legend has it that any person who pays visit to this sacred kund and take a deep holy bath will be freed from all the sins. It is also mentioned that two sons of Kubers were suffering from their wrong-doing & sin in their previous life took a holy bath in this sacred kund, as advised by Lord Krishna, and were immediately relieved from all their sin.
- ❁ Damodar Kunda is the source of Kali Gandaki River and the sacred place to explore Shaligram, a fossilized shell and iconic symbol of Lord Vishnu. It is the best place for meditation and spiritual retreats. A big festival is celebrated here in Damadar Kunda during the Full Moon of August (Janai Purnima).
- ❁ Visit to Damodar Kund also offers a rare opportunity to observe the 360 degree view of the outstanding landscape characterized by the scenic Tibetan Plateau and majestic snow-capped mountain peaks. Famous Luri Gomba and other heritage sites lie en-route to Damodar Kund.

4.5.4. *Other Satellite Tourism Destinations and Product Linkage Opportunities*

- ❁ Other satellite tourism destinations around and en-route to LLKBC include Tansen, Ridi/Ruru Chhetra, Pokhara, Beni/Galeshwor Dham, Pun Hill and so on. Buddhist heritage sites in Pokhara include World Peace Stupa near Phewa Lake, Matepani Gompa, Hemja Monastery, Chhorepatan Tibetan Village Gompa etc.
- ❁ Key tourist destinations that can be combined with the LLKBC include the following:
 - ❁ Linking with Kailash Manasarovar (in TAR China) via Kora La pass.
 - ❁ Linking with Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit via Tsharkha Pass.
 - ❁ Linking to Manang, Nubri Valley and Tsum Valley via Thorang La pass and Larke pass.

4.5.5. *Potential Markets and Market Segments*

- ❁ In FY 2073/074, a total of 144,409 international visitors, including Indian, visited Annapurna Conservation Area (NTS, MoCTCA, 2018). Jomsom-Muktinath section is one of the highest visitor receiving routes within ACA where thousands of Indian pilgrims come to visit Muktinath.
- ❁ Likewise, about a total of 4,240 international visitors also visited Upper Mustang in 2017 by obtaining controlled area trekking permit from Department of Immigration (NTS 2018).
- ❁ Until the date, Mustang has not been promoted as a destination for Buddhist pilgrimage, though thousands of Indian pilgrims visit Muktinath and few hundred domestic visitors visit Muktinath (revered by both Buddhist and Hindus), and some monasteries in Lower and Upper Mustang.

- ❁ In the very near future; with the full upgrading of Kali Gandaki Road Corridor and the operation of proposed Kora La immigration office (at border with TAR China), millions of pilgrims (Buddhists and Hindus) as well as general visitors can be expected to visit LLKBC and continue their journey to Kailash Manasarovar in TAR China.

4.5.6. *Approach Routes, Suggested Itineraries and Activities*

a. **Approach Routes**

- ❁ Following approach routes can be used to visit the key sites of LLKBC:
 - ❁ Lumbini-Tansen-Ridi//Pokhara -Baglung -Beni-Galeshwor-Jomsom (by vehicle).
 - ❁ Pokhara-Jomsom (by Air)
 - ❁ Dumre-Besisahar-Manang-Thorong La pass-Muktinath (by vehicle and trekking).
 - ❁ Dolpa-Tsharkha pass-Kagbeni
- ❁ Upon the opening of Kora La immigration point (bordering with TAR China), one can easily drive through Lumbini to Kora La (435km) and to Kailash Manasarovar in TAR China via Dongbasen.

b. **Suggested tour itinerary**

- ❁ Following two routes are available for the pilgrims and visitors to visit LLKBC:
 - ❁ **Route-1:** Lumbini-Tansen (Visiting 5 Viharas and Shakya community) -Ridi-Largest Shaligram point at Kali Gandaki-Kusma-Baglung (along Kali Gandaki Corridor; about 430km))-Beni (visiting nearby Beni Buddhist Stupa and Vihara)-Galeshwor Dham - Rupse Waterfall-Thini- Marpha- Jomsom- Kagbeni-Muktinath- Chhusang- Samar- Tsarang- Lo Ghekar- Lo Mangthang- Chhoser- Kora la- Lo Mangthang -Tsarang (side trip to Luri Gomba and Damodar Kunda)- Kagbeni. From Kagbeni there are three options

- ✿ Kagbeni-Mukthinath-Thorong La pass-Manang-Nyishang (Milarepa Cave)
- ✿ Kagbeni-Tsharka pass-Upper Dolpo
- ✿ Kagbeni-Jomsom-Beni-Pokhara

✿ **Route-2:** Lumbini/Sunouli-Tansen (Visiting 5 Viharas and Shakya community) -Pokhara-Kusma-Baglung- Beni-Jomsom-Lo Mangthang-Kora La and returning Lumbini via Kali Gandaki corridor (Baglung-Kusma-Shaligram Sthal-Ridi-Tansen-Lumbini).

c. Suggested pilgrimage, spiritual and leisure activities for LLKBC

- ✿ Visiting and paying homage to sacred Buddhist (and Bon) monasteries, temples and caves.
- ✿ Entering into short and longer days meditation at various sacred caves, monasteries and mountains.
- ✿ Observing traditional festivals and fares such as Tiji and Yartung Festival.
- ✿ Visiting archaeological sites including human caves, cave monasteries, palaces (lakhangs), monasteries, chortens, longest maniwall, kagnis, stupas etc.
- ✿ Visiting cultural museums (at Jomsom, Lo Mangthang), other ethnic museums.
- ✿ Visiting Hindu pilgrimage sites such as Ridi and Ruru Chhetra in Palpa/Gulmi, Galeshwor Dham in Myagdi.
- ✿ Enjoying the scenic landscape, waterfalls, unique geological formations (including trans-Himalayan landscape and caves), mountain peaks, beautiful flora and fauna.

4.5.7. Efforts undertaken for heritage based tourism promotion and conservation

- ✿ Various efforts have been undertaken by many stakeholders, including



Government of Nepal, Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), Department of Archaeology (DoA), universities, researchers, local governments, UNESCO, private sectors and religious organizations such as Gomba Committees, initiating conservation and promotion of heritage based tourism.

- ❁ Major sites covered by the circuit has been managed under Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) since 1989 AD. Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) has also been undertaking heritage conservation and ecotourism related various activities, including restoration of Buddhist heritage sites and establishment of cultural museum (including one in Jomsom).
- ❁ DoA has undertaken some study works together with UNESCO to enlist Lo Manthang as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Efforts have also been made by DoA and UNESCO to nominate Lumbini Mustang Corridor under the South Asian Silk Roads World Heritage Nominations from Nepal.
- ❁ International organizations such as Himal Asia Foundation has been working in the region for the preservation of heritage sites.

4.5.8. *Key Issues, Gaps and Threats*

- ❁ The rich Buddhist history, sacred sites and archaeological sites have long been ignored in Lo Kingdom. Government of Nepal and ACAP have given high priority on nature and adventure based tourism.
- ❁ The rich heritage sites are under the threats due to (i) unplanned construction of infrastructures, primarily the road networks, and (ii) the increasing threats due to changing climate. The impacts of climate change are particularly severe as the structures (palaces, monasteries, chortens, Kagnis, maniwalls etc.) are mostly built up of earthen and rampant earth mass. Heavy precipitation has affected the mud structures (roof and wall structures). Likewise, increased state of snow melting and loss of vegetal cover has resulted an unprecedented scale of soil erosion

(including gully formation) severely affecting several monasteries, chortens, stupas, ithotas and maniwalls. Monastic structures in Kagbeni, Tsarang, Luri Marang La, Upper Lo Mangthang, Chhoser are under the severe threat of collapse. Several such monuments have already disappeared.

- ❁ The unplanned mass tourism combined with the rapid urbanization may pose negative impacts on age-old Buddhist culture, traditions, costumes and rituals, resulting a cultural change. In recent decades, some international supporting agencies have also degraded the art and artifacts of Lo Kingdom, knowingly or unknowingly, in the name of re-painting and restoring the structures with new styles (such as using pagoda styled galvanized roof) and re-painting the walls and ceiling, destroying some of the oldest murals (good example is monastery in Kagbeni).

4.5.9. *Key Opportunities*

- ❁ Opportunity for preserving and promoting Buddhist heritage sites and Buddhist dharma.
- ❁ Lo kingdom has a potential to be connected with Lumbini. With the completion of Kali Gandaki Road Corridor, huge numbers of pilgrims and visitors who visit Lumbini can also be diverted to Lo Kingdom.
- ❁ Revival of ancient silk route and pilgrimage route: With the full operation of Kali Gandaki Road corridor and Kora La (border with TAR China), Lumbini-Lo Kingdom Buddhist Circuits can be one of the shortest, most sacred and life-time experience journey to Kailash Manasarovar from Lumbini via Mustang.
- ❁ There is a huge opportunity to combine some of the outstanding natural landscape and rich biodiversity of the Annapurna region with pilgrimage and spiritual activities.



4.6. TSUM -NUBRI VALLEY SACRED KYIMOLUNG CIRCUIT

A Pilgrimage to the Sacred Beyul and the Land of Non-Violence.

4.6.1. Background

❁ Tsum - Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit (TNVSKC) connects the Buddhist heritage sites associated with the sacred **beyul Kyimolung** concealed and blessed by the Great Tantric Master Padmasambhava; **perfected meditation caves** of Yogi Milarepa and the unique Shyagya Tradition that has been practising the core rules of **Non-Violence**, as a basic foundation of Buddha's Five Precepts, since almost last 100 years.

❁ In the present geo-political map of Nepal, the sites connected by Tsum -Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit are located in Gorkha district of Gandaki Province. The core areas of TNVSKC are located in the three sacred valleys in the Manaslu region, including Tsum Valley on the east, Nubri Valley on the west and Kutang Valley at the center.

❁ The significance of the major sites connected by the TNVSKC stands as given below:

❁ **Mu Gomba and Surroundings:** The oldest monastery of Tsum Valley with solitary meditation environment; the eastern gateway to beyul Kyimolung.

❁ **Phurgon Phug and Rachhen Gomba:** The perfected meditation seat of Yogi Milarepa along with the first nunnery of the valley.

❁ **Shringi Gomba and Surroundings:** The epicentre of beyul Kyimolung. The perfect meditation and retreat center.

❁ **Naljor Phug and Surroundings:** The perfected meditation seat of Milarepa; the western gateway to beyul Kyimolung.

4.6.2. Significance of the Sites Contained in the TNVSKC

i. Significance for Pilgrimage, Spirituality and Peace

❁ A visit to Tsum and Nubri Valley in the Manaslu region of Upper

Map-6: Tsum- Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit





CHINA



Tsum Valley



Lho

Serang Gumba

Bhi Gumba

Rupina La Pass

Kutang Valley

Philim

To Arughat, Gorkha,
Lumbini, Kathmandu

Chumchet

Sauli Bhatti

To Thap La Pass

Milarepa Cave

Mu Gumba

Nile Chhule

Rachhen Gumba



Gorkha is perfectly worthy in terms of pilgrimage, spirituality and peace for the following three major reasons:

- (i) Meditation and worshipping at the sites in the hidden valley blessed and concealed by Padmasambhava as Beyul Kyimolung,
- (ii) Meditation and worshipping at the perfected meditation caves of Yogi Milarepa, and
- (iii) Purification of body, speech and mind by observing and practising the rules of non-violence under Shyagya tradition.

a. Meditation and worshipping at the sites associated with Beyul Kyimolung

- ✧ Kyimolung is one of the sacred and secret Buddhist pilgrimage circuit, revealed by the Terton **Go-demchen** in the mountains around Shringi Himal and Chhekampar area in a 30km radius of the Nepal-China border. Literally, the word Chhekam is considered to have evolved from the Tibetan word Chho-Khang which means “The House of Religious Text”. Beyul Kyimolung takes its name from Kyim, meaning ‘Happiness’ and Lung meaning ‘Stream’. That is why the area is called Kyimolung, or the “stream of happiness” or “Happy Valley”. Tsum-Nubri Valley is also regarded as the western bank of the beyul.
- ✧ Beyul Kyimolung is expanded over Tsum, Kutang and Nubri Valley in the Upper region of Gorkha between Ganesh Himal and Manaslu Himal. Beyul Kyimolung is bounded by Lajyang Bhanjyang in the west and Thapla (border with TAR China) in the east, and goes through places such as Mu Gomba, Chhekam, Philim, Sirdibas, Dyang, Bihi, Namrung, Prok, Lho, Samagaon, and Samdo in Nepal, and Rui Gaon, Ning, Sala Himal and Nyang in TAR China. During early sixties, pilgrims from Kyirong (TAR China) used to make a circumambulation (Kora) around beyul Kyimolung (Snellgrove 1961 as reported in IUCN 1995).

- ✧ The sacred valley was also filled with sacred caves, forest, river, mountains and waterfalls. The beyul valley was also visited by Yogi Milarepa who perfected his meditation at Phurgon Phug at Chhekam and Naljor Phug at Samagaon. The circumambulation path has been filled with many monasteries, chortens and mani-walls.
 - ✧ There are four main approach routes to reach Shringi Gomba, the epicentre of the beyul Kyimolung, including Tsum Valley from east, Nubri valley from west, Bihi from south and Tibetan territory from north. The north route was opened by Terton **Garwang Choki Wangchuk** (1640-1685), also known as Ngari Terton.
 - ✧ Today, Serang Gomba has become one of the very sacred pilgrimage hub and solitary meditation site for many monks (more than 50 monks) and pilgrims. Monks and pilgrims frequently get encountered with Deer, Himalayan Tahr and Blue Sheep due the practice of non-violence by the people of area. Some legends have also linked Shringi Mountain with the saint Rishi. A statue of Shringi Rishi can be seen in the area.
 - ✧ Doing a circumambulation (Kora) around the beyul valley will give pilgrims a rare chance to pay the highest tribute to Guru Padmasambhava and obtain bliss and complete salvation.
- b. Meditation and worshipping at the perfected meditation caves of Yogi Milarepa***
- ✧ The **meditation** caves and fortress of **Milarepa** are considered to be sacred with great pilgrimage and spiritual value particularly by the followers of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. There are at least two such caves (Phurgon Phug and Naljor Phug) associated with and blessed by Yogi Milarepa, including one listed in the “20 sacred caves of Jetsun Milarepa”.

- ✧ Yogi Milarepa, who was **born** in Tsa village in **Gunthang Mangyul** region of TAR China, has made a significant contribution to the expansion and propagation of Buddhism in Tibet and Nepal Himalayas, including Mustang, Manang, Nubri Valley, Tsum Valley, Kerung/Rasuwa, Yolmo (Helambu), Lapchi Rolwaling etc. Being in an adjoining region, Tsum and Nubri Valley also had a very **close cultural and religious links** with the **Gunthang Mangyul** and one of the most preferred hermitage sites of Milarepa, “**Dragkar Taso** (Brag dkar rta so)”. Various legends, Tibetan scriptures and books have it that Yogi Milarepa made hermitage to the these caves in Tsum Valley and Nubri Valley several times; entered into the solitary meditation; attained great perfection, and eventually blessed these sites.

- ✧ **Phurgon Phug**: Lies on the lap of mountain in Chhekampar at the northern bank of Shiar Khola near Bhurji Village, **Phurgon Phug (Pigeon Cave)** is one of the most sacred caves of Milarepa. The cave is also listed in the most sacred **Four Larger Unknown Caves** of Milarepa. Yogi Milarepa is said to have chanted the hymn to the pigeons at Phurgon Phug. The cave area is now protected and worshipped by locals and pilgrims as a holy place. Some structures such as Dukhang, monastery, stupas and meditation chambers have now been constructed by locals at Phurgon Phug. At the top of the cave lies a dukhang that houses the meditation seat of Yogi Milarepa. A beautiful statue of Milarepa has been placed at the dukhang. Below the Milarepa’s seat lies a second cave with a small monastery. A remarkable Foot-Print of Milarepa can be seen in between Milarepa’s seat and monastery. The monastery houses images of Avolokiteshvara (on the far left), Shakyamuni Buddha, Padmasambhava (at center) and Maitreya Buddha. The statue of Padmasambhava at center also signifies the existence of beyul. The first cave, at the bottom of the mountain houses a meditation chamber with colourful flags. On the top of meditation chamber lies 8



stupas. Painting image of Gampopa and Rechungpa can be seen on the two sides of the cave.

- ❖ **Naljor Phug:** Located on the beautiful forest on the northern lap of Mt. Manaslu in between Samagaon and Samdogaon, Naljor Phug is another significant cave believed to have meditated at by Yogi Milarepa. Legend has it that Milarepa carried the rock boulder here to make this cave and it bears the imprint of the Yogi's back.
- ❖ Lies at a two hour walking distance from Samagaon (on western direction, towards Samdo), Naljor Phug also marks the western ring of beyul Kyimolung in Nubri Valley. Adjoining to the cave built at the lap of a big stone boulder, there is a small Lakhang or Ritho styled monastery. The monastery houses beautiful images of Padmasambhava (with his two consorts), Milarepa and possibly his two gurus Gampopa (or Marpha ?) and Rechunga. Overlooking the scenic landscape of Nubri Valley with Birendra Tal, Samagaon and Manaslu Himal, the stone cave is facing towards Shringi Himal (and Gompa) and it also provides shelter to many wild animals such as Musk Deer, Himalayan Tahr, Blue Sheep etc. The cave also lies en-route to Nishang Cave (of Milarepa) in Manang.
- ❖ The circuit comprises probably the longest series of stone maniwall cum Chhorten passing through the series of Milarepa's Caves in Nubri, Kutang and Tsum Valley in Nepal and Mangyul Gungthang in Tibet, probably manifesting the ancient pilgrimage route around beyul Kyimolung followed by the disciples and followers of Padmasambhava and Yogi Milarepa.
- c. ***Purification of body, speech and mind by observing and practicing the non-violence***
- ❖ The proposed circuit also offers the opportunity to pilgrims and visitors to purify their body, speech and mind by observing

and practicing the dharma rules of non-violence as a strong foundations of the Buddha's Five Precepts (Panchasheel). Living like the people of Tsum Valley (following the six basic dharma rules) and getting blessings from the monks and nuns at the monasteries, offering dana to the monks/nuns at the monasteries and offering foods to the wild animals (deer, monkeys, birds) give visitors a rare chance to purify their mind and accumulate the higher merit through compassion.

✧ The people of Tsum Valley have been adopting the practice of **Non Violence** since 1920 (1977 BS, almost one hundred years), strictly following the following six basic Shyagya dharma rules of non-violence:

- i. Complete ban on killing of animals and birds.
- ii. Complete ban on hunting and setting traps.
- iii. Restriction on harvesting Honey.
- iv. Complete ban on forest fire.
- v. Restriction on import and export of animals and birds for the purpose of meat.
- vi. Ban on any form of violence against calves of Himalayan Cows and other aquatic and terrestrial species.

✧ The incarnate **Lama Dukpa Lama Serab Dorje** patronized the declaration of 11 settlements of Upper Tsum Valley as Non-Violence Zone in 1920 AD (1977 BS) whereas the 22 settlements of Lower Tsum was declared so during Shyagya Festival in 2012 (2069 BS).

✧ Various sessions on teachings of Buddhist dharma and philosophy were organized by the Lamas of Chhekampar to inform locals about the declaration and importance of non-violence for the benefit of locals as well as other sentient beings. Since 2008 (2065 BS), a complete ban on killing of animals and birds has been applied even for the visitors and their supporting team. In 2020 (2077 BS), Tsum Valley is

going to observe a **Centennial Celebration** of Shyagya Festival or “Declaration of Tsum Valley as a Non-Violence Zone”.

- ✧ Moreover, the monks, nuns and every householders of Tsum Valley also observe a three day long fasting and praying, called **Nyungne**, during Dashain Festival to help the salvation of animals sacrificed by other religious groups, especially Hindus.
- ✧ Though the practice of Non-Violence is seen adopted only by the people of Tsum Valley, historical documents found in the monasteries of Prok area, including an edict from Jung Bahadur Rana dated 1955 AD, signifies the ban on traditional hunting and fishing in the area of Ro (Samagaon) and protecting the temples from the troops mobilized by the Government of Nepal.

d. *Pilgrimage to the ancient Monasteries*

- ✧ Pilgrimage and spiritual visit to Tsum and Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit is also worth to pay homage to many sacred and historical monasteries including Serang Gomba, Mu Gomba, Rachhen Gomba and so on. Rachhen Gomba in Tsum Valley and Lho Gomba in Nubri Valley are considered to be the centre of Buddhist teaching and spiritual retreat nowadays.
- ✧ Major monastery in Upper Tsum Valley include Raijam Mani Ghyungur (Raijam), Ghaldang (Chhekam), Paro Lhagang (Chhekam), Mane Ghyungur (Chhekam), Nuru Lhagang (Chhekam), Drong Gompa (Drong Par), Choura Gompa (Ngakyu), Ngakyu Mani Ghyungur (Ngakyu), Luru Lhagang Gompa (Leru), Nga Gompa (Lamagaon), Perunphu Gompa (Lamagaon and Bhurji), Chipu Gompa (Lamagaon and Bhurji), Rachhen Gompa (Rachhen Gomba), Phurpe Lhagang (Phurpe), Gompa Gong (Chhule), Gampa Wa (Chhule), Mu Gompa (Mu Gomba), Nyile Lhagang (Nyile), Nyile Mani

Ghyungur (Nyile), Rikang Gomba (Nyile), Dheron Gomba (Nyile) etc.

- ✧ Likewise, major monasteries in Nubri Valley include Samdo Himalaya Gomba (Samdo), Trong Gomba, Namru Gomba, Hungsam Phug Gomba, Ung Gomba, Piri Gomba, Rangdo Gomba, Mehrak Gomba, Sho Gomba, Pema Choeling Gomba, Naktsa Gomba (Lo), Kakjyue Choling Gomba (Samdo), Tshak Gomba, Chokang Gomba, Kokpa Gomba (Krok), Bilu Gomba, Bihi Gomba etc. Serang Gomba lies in between Tsum and Nubri Valley.
- ✧ **Mu Gomba:** Mu Gomba, was built in 1895 by a Bhutanese Lama Serab Dorje Drukpa Rinpoche (alias Ngawang Palsang). Located at an altitude of 3510m, this monastery marks the eastern border of pilgrimage around beyul Kyimolung. Major images placed inside the monastery include Avaloketeshwara, Guru Padmasambhava, Tara and many Stupas. It houses religious books, including Kangyur. This is the oldest and most sacred monastery in Tsum Valley. The monastery provides basic facilities for meditation and retreat by monks and nuns. Around the Mu Gomba lies the Rikang Gomba, Dheron Gomba and Chhosyang Lake. Phrang, Mijam (confluence of Thapla and Shiar Khola), Kalung, Chhanchhu, Bhanjyo are other beautiful areas that lie en-route to TAR China and many wild animals, including Blue Sheep and Himalayan Tahr can be seen grazing in these areas.
- ✧ **Serab Dorje Drukpa Rinpoche** who built Mu Gomba was born in Norbukhang, Bhutan. He had significantly contributed to the restoration and expansion of Buddhism in Nepalese Himalayas. He received religious instruction in Punakha; went to Lhasha and returned to Bhutan, and finally came of Nepal. He restored Swoyambhu Maha Chaitya, then went to Kyirong, built nunnery at Pangshing in 1922 and remained there for 10 years. In 1924, he built Mu Gomba



where both monks and nuns used to reside. In 1936, he built Rachhen Gomba, the first nunnery in Tsum Valley. He also built nunnery at Bigu (Dolakha) in 1934.

- ✧ **Rachhen Gomba:** Rachhen Gomba was built by Serab Dorje Drukpa Rinpoche in 1905 AD in a very close distance to Phurgon Phug cave of Milarepa. The monastery houses life size statues of Avaloketeshwara, Guru Padmasambhava, Tara, Buddha Amitabha and many stupas. There are 1000 clay moulded statues of Avalokiteshvara. The monastery houses a large prayer wheel. Monasteries also contain important religious books, including complete set of Kangyur block prints from Tibet. About 150 nuns are pursuing monastic education in Rachhen Gomba. This monastery belongs to the Nyingma tradition. Now a new monastery has been constructed within the premises of old gomba. Rachhen Gomba offers facilities for retreat, meditation and teachings of longer duration.
- ✧ **Serang Gomba** (Shringi Gomba) is the epicentre of beyul Kyimolung. The original monastery which was destroyed by fire some generations ago was founded by bstan- dzin prhin-las. Serang monastery follows the architecture similar to that of monastery in Kyirong which obtained one (out of four) sandalwood images (Jobo Wati Zangpo) of Shakyamuni Buddha from Kathmandu Valley during the reign of Tsrong Tsang-Gampo. Here at Serang Gomba, Deer are given Abhayedana. By doing circumambulation around Serang Gomba, pilgrims can accumulate higher merit.
- ✧ **Pungyen Gomba**, which lies in between Lo and Samagaon on the lap of Mt. Manaslu, used to belong to the people of Ru village in Tibet in the past. The old monastery was destroyed by avalanche in 1953 AD and new one has been established by locals.
- ✧ **Samdo Himalaya Gomba** is one of the oldest and important monasteries in Nubri Valley. **Manigang Gomba** is believed

to have a pair-hood relation with **Pha Tega Rangjoen** at Ru Village, Tibet.

- ✧ The **Naktsa Gomba** located in Lho village has a strong religious and spiritual significance. It was built by **Chodrag Gyamtsho**, who is said to have credited with having caused a sacred text to fall from the sky through the force of his prayers. There is a strong belief about **Naktsa Gomba** in Lo. It is believed that anyone who does not perform the traditional customary of Donggojar in Naktsa Gomba can't achieve salvation from the cycle of death and rebirth as it is believed that the monastery holds onto the disembodied consciousness and prevent it from moving on.

ii. Archaeological and Historical Significance

- ✧ TNVSKC consists of many Gompas (Monasteries), Mani Walls, Chortens, Mani-cum Chortens, and Kanis (Gateway Chortens) of significant archaeological and historical value. Based on the consultation with the monks of Nubri and Tsum Valley, about 400 individual Buddhist monuments (community and private) are estimated to have existed at present in the circuit. In between Railam Gho and Bhanjyo of Upper Tsum Valley, a total of 20 community, 23 stone Maniwalls (engraved with mantras), 72 stone (and few stone and mud) chortens, 50 Mani cum chortens and 8 Kanis (Gateway Chortens) have been recorded. The maniwalls of Nyile and Dzong are considered to be the longest ones, each with more than 200m in length. Whereas Mu Gompa is the oldest monastery, Rachen Gompa is the first Nunnery in Tsum Valley. Nyile and Chhekam village in Tsum Valley have the largest number of monasteries (IUCN 1995).
- ✧ Though the exact dates of these chortens, stupas and maniwalls are yet to be identified, the sacred caves are associated with 12th century great Yogi Milarepa. Likewise, the older version of Serang Gomba was considered to be of 17th century. Both the monastic architecture and traditions of Tsum Valley and Serang area were



seen to have greatly influenced by the monasteries of Kyrong. Likewise, the architectural style and traditions of monasteries in Nubri Valley were equally influenced by the Tega, Chagrom and Tala monasteries of Ru areas in Tibet.

- ✿ The Gomba in Ro Village (Samagaon) also consists of a 17th century document issued by the 5th Dalai Lama regarding the systematization of monastic administration in Tibet and its borderlands (Aris 1975 as mentioned in IUCN 1995). Many treasures brought to Samdo and Ro in Nubri Valley from Tega, Chagrom and Tala monasteries of Ru village in Tibet during Chinese cultural revolution are believed to have already been sent to Dharmashala (in India) though.
- ✿ Samagaon village in Nubri Valley offers pilgrims and visitors a rare opportunity to observe the contrasting features of the ancient architecture and traditional lifestyle as well as the modern tourist class tea house lodges within the single settlement.

iii. **Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value**

- ✿ Whereas the people of Tsum and Nubri valley are devout followers of Buddhism, most of the people of Kutang valley, particularly the Gurung communities of Sirdibas, Philim etc. are the followers of Bon tradition.
- ✿ Chumchet, Chhekam and Par, Dzong, Ngakyu, Laru, Lamagaon, Bhurji, Khangsar, Lar, Phurpe, Pangdon, Chhule and Nyile are the key settlements in the Upper Tsum valley with rich Buddhist culture and traditions. Major Buddhist settlements in Lower Tsum Valley include Ripchet, Tsumling, Thanjung, Yarchog, Khar, Khangring, Tragar, Shingpoche and so on. Likewise, Samdo, Samagaon (Ro), Lho, Chho, Lidanda, Barcham, Prok are the key settlement in Nubri Valley with rich Buddhist culture and traditions. In Kutang Valley, major settlements include Chhang, Krok, Bihi, and Deng. However, people also claim that Tsum used to be called Kutang in the past.

- ✿ There are many social, cultural and religious links between Tsum, Kutang and Nupri. The people of Tsum are called **Tsumba**. Likewise, the people of Samdo are called **Ruepa** people. There are many communities with various lineage and clans. The **Ruepa people** who are said to have migrated from the Ru village of Tibet (15 km from Nepal border) had permanently settled in Samdo after 1960s. Ruepa were the salt traders between Tibet and Nepal, and with the help of Bonpa Nomad in Tibet, they brought salt to Nupri and Bimtho (Manang) from the **salt lake of Trabye Tsakha** in Tsangpo Valley, Tibet using the Yak Caravan via Gyala Pass. Still today, the locals of Samdo and Sama Gaon accept Chodag Trashi Oebar, the famous Lama of Ru in Tibet, as the Dharmapala.
- ✿ Key festivals observed by the Tsumba and Nubri people include **Lhosar** (Tibetan New Year) and **Nyungne** (celebrating Buddha's birthday). A five-yearly performance of the week-long **Ache Lhamo** Tibetan dance drama shows the link of the people of Ro with Ngadak lineage of people in Tradum in Tibet (Aris 1975 as mentioned in IUCN 1995). **Shyagya Festival** is one of the signature events in Tsum Valley. They offer nature-worshipping puja (Rilung Thrisole) for the benefits of wildlife, plants, sun and the rain; Chhewang puja for good health and involve in many cultural activities, including installation of sacred flags, religious procession for world peace etc.

iv. Other Added Attractions and Activities

a. *Other (Non-Buddhist) cultural attractions*

- ✿ While visiting TNVSKC, pilgrims and visitors may also visit other famous religious, cultural and historical sites such as Manakamana Temple, Gorakhkali Temple and historical Gorkha Durbar (Palace), Gorkha Museum, Barpak Ghale and Gurung Village (the epicenter of 2015 Earthquake) etc.
- ✿ It is worth to mention that in Upper Kot area of Gorkha Durbar, there lies a shrine of **Vajra Bhairav (Yamantaka)**, a violent aspect of Bodhisattva Manjushree. Legend has it that

the birth of king Prithvi Narayan Shah became only possible after getting the blessings from a Tibetan Lama.

b. Outstanding natural landscapes and rich biodiversity

- ✧ TNVSKC is particularly famous for nature and wilderness based trekking. The still virgin trekking lies in the Manaslu region. The declaration of the area as Manaslu Conservation Area (MCA) in 1998 signifies the richness of natural landscape and biodiversity of this area.
- ✧ The sacred Shiar Khola (from Tsum valley) and Budi Gangaki River (from Nubri Valley) meet at Ekle Bhati and becomes Budhi Gandaki River. MCA bears the characteristics of both Trans-Himalayan and Main Himalayan geography and thus witnesses the rich bio-diversity and unique geographical formations. MCA is the home to at least 33 species of mammals, 110 species of birds, 11 species of butterflies and so on.
- ✧ Mt. Manaslu (8163m), Mt. Ganesh Himal, Mt. Buddha Himal, Himchuli, Shringi Himal are the key mountain peaks. Key lakes include Kaltal, Birendra Tal and Chhosyang Lake (above Mu Gomba). Larke pass is the popular pass. There are many waterfalls and natural hot springs en-route.

4.6.3. Other Satellite Tourism Destinations and Product Linkage Opportunities

- ✧ Other satellite tourist destinations include Trishuli and Narayani River (for rafting), Manakamana, Bandipur, Gorkha Bazaar, Barapak and Bhachek, Nyisang Cave (Milarepa Cave) in Manang and so on.
- ✧ TNVSKC has the following linkage potentials:
 - ✧ TNVSKC linking with Ruby Valley in Dhading.
 - ✧ TNVSKC linking with Manang and Thorong La pass (to Mustang).
 - ✧ TNVSKC linking with Chitwan National Park.

- ✿ In long run, this circuit can be linked with the key Buddhist sites in TAR China, such as Dragkar Taso, once the Ngula Pass (in Tsum) and Gyala Pass (in Nubri) are formally opened.

4.6.4. *Potential Markets and Market Segments*

- ✿ TNVSKC is primarily suitable for Buddhist pilgrims and western visitors who seek to combine nature based adventure experience with Buddhist culture, traditional architecture and peace. In fact, TNVSKC can be an open school for learning and experiencing Non-violence, the basic thrust of Buddha's Five Precepts.
- ✿ Due to its odd location, no Indian visitor can be expected in this circuit, at least for pilgrimage and spirituality. Non-pilgrimage segment of Indian market and domestic market may be interested in this circuit for leisure and trekking purpose, and Buddhist heritage sites could be an added value for them.
- ✿ As of now both Tsum Valley and Nubri Valley fall under the controlled trekking area. In 2017, a total of 1,681 international visitors visited Tsum Valley, whereas Nubri valley welcomed 6,632 international visitors. About 500 to 1000 domestic trekkers are estimated to be visiting Manaslu circuit annually.

4.6.5. *Approach Routes, Suggested Itineraries and Activities*

a. **Approach Routes**

- ✿ Kathmandu-Arughat-Tsum/Nubri valley
- ✿ Besisahar/Manang-Larke Pass-Nubri/Tsum.
- ✿ Rubi Valley-Chalis Gaon- Philim-Tsum/Nubri Valley
- ✿ Gorkha Bazaar-Bhachek/Barpak-Rupina La pass-Tsum/Nubri Valley

b. **Suggested tour itinerary**

- ✿ Following tour itinerary can be made for visiting TNVSKC:

- ✧ Option 1- From Kathmandu: Kathmandu-Gorkha Bazaar/ Arughat-Machhekhola (Vehicle up to this point) -Philim-Chumchet-Chhekam-Nile/Chule-Mu Gomba-Chhekam-Chumchet-Dyang- Bihi-Shringi Gomba (side trip)-Lho-Samagaon-Nalzor Phug (side trip)-Samdo- Larke Pass-Bhimthang-Dharapani (vehicles available from this point)-Besisahar
- ✧ Option 2- From Lumbini: Lumbini-Gorkha Bazaar-Arughat-Machhekhola and Kathmandu-Gorkha Bazaar-Arughat-Machhekhola and follow as Option 1.

c. Suggested pilgrimage, spiritual and leisure activities for TNVSKC

- ✧ Visiting monasteries in Tsum, Kutang and Nubri Valley.
- ✧ Meditation in the sacred Milarepa caves at Phurgon Phug and Nalzor Phug in Samagaon.
- ✧ Deep meditation and spiritual retreat at Shringi Gomba/Shringi Himal.
- ✧ Visiting Birendra Tal, Kal Tal and other lake areas.
- ✧ Doing complete (inner) or partial (outer) circumambulation around beyul Kyimolung.
- ✧ Trekking through the scenic landscape and Valleys overlooking beautiful mountain peaks such as Manaslu, Ganesh Himal, Buddha Himal, Shringi Himal etc.
- ✧ Observing and practicing the rules of non-violence.

4.6.6. *Efforts undertaken for heritage based tourism promotion and conservation*

- ✧ Locals, including Gomba management and traditional customary organizations have been preserving the rich Buddhist heritages in Tsum

and Nubri Valley. Practice of non-violence is one of the best practices adopted by the locals in Tsum Valley.

- ❁ Tsum Welfare Society and Nubri Youth and Culture Society are actively engaged in the conservation of heritages and promotion of eco-tourism.
- ❁ Since 1998, Tsum Valley and Nubri Valley have been managed under Manaslu Conservation Area (MCA), and the management responsibility has been given to National Trust for nature Conservation (NTNC). Various activities have been undertaken by NTNC/MCAP including conservation of heritage sites and promotion of eco-tourism.
- ❁ Local Government bodies have been supportive for the restoration of cultural heritage sites.

4.6.7. *Key Issues, Gaps and Threats*

- ❁ Lack of adequate exploration and documentation of Buddhist heritage sites.
- ❁ The practice of Non-Violence in Tsum Valley has still remained un-noticed by most of the government authorities and Buddhist organizations.
- ❁ Sringi Gomba, the epicenter of the beyul Kyimolung lacks comfortable walking trail and accommodation facilities.
- ❁ The established trekking trails (to Tsum Valley and Nubri Valley) are being disturbed and damaged by the construction of road.
- ❁ The bad alignment of road has already destroyed some historically important chortens and mani-walls in Tsum Valley.
- ❁ Rich cultural heritage site and monuments, including old artifacts, manuscripts, statues etc. have not yet been adequately conserved. It lacks adequate documentation and preservation. Many of those artifacts are already sold, stolen or lost.

- ✿ Travel to Tsum and Nubri Valley by international visitors is so costly particularly due to the provision of controlled area trekking fee (separate permits for both sites) and protected area entry fee for MCA and ACA for those who cross Larke Pass.

4.6.8. Key Opportunities

- ✿ Promotion of area as a learning center for international peace and non-violence.
- ✿ Combining Buddhist pilgrimage and spiritual activities with nature based adventure and leisure tourism.
- ✿ Connecting with Lumbini with particular focus on Five Precepts of Buddha.
- ✿ Conservation of cultural heritage and architectures, especially the series of chortens, mani-walls, monasteries and stupas.
- ✿ Promotion of trans-boundary pilgrimage by connecting Naljor Phug, Phurgon Phug with Dakar Taso in Kyirong as Milarepa Caves Chorten Trail along the series of mani-walls and Chortens.
- ✿ Based on the principle of non-violence, the area can be promoted as an open zoological garden.
- ✿ Promotion of Mu Gomba, Shringi Gomba, Kal Tal area as a hub for solitary meditation and retreat.
- ✿ Maintaining co-existence and harmony between nature, culture and development through promotion of heritage based eco- tourism.
- ✿ Developing alternative trail connecting Raijam Dobhan-Chumchet-Dorjung Kharka-Rana-Bihi-Serang.

4.7. **NEPAL MANDALA BUDDHIST CIRCUIT-KATHMANDU VALLEY**

A Spiritual journey through the sacred Buddhist power places representing almost all schools/traditions and periods with unbroken Buddhist traditions and rituals.

4.7.1. *Background*

- ✿ Unlike other Buddhist circuits, Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit (NMBC) comprises (i) core (inner) circuit as well as (ii) extended (outer) circuits.
- ✿ Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit-Kathmandu Valley, as a core (inner) circuit connects significant Buddhist heritage sites contained under the spiritual and geo-physical domain of ancient Nepal Mandala, predominantly demarcated by the four sacred mountains that are Siphucho (Shivapuri), Jatamatra (Jamacho/Nagarjuna), Dhilachva (Champadevi/Chandragiri), and Phucho (Phulchowki).
- ✿ Both the Buddhists and Hindus regard Kathmandu Valley as a mandala of great spiritual and religious significance. For the Buddhists, the representation of the five celestial Buddhas (Pancha Buddha or Dhyani Buddha) has made Nepal Mandala spiritually and religiously equivalent to diagrammatic version of the Samvara Mandala ‘the wheel of great bliss’. Likewise, both the Newari and Tibetan Buddhist communities believe that Kathmandu Valley is in the form of Chakrasamvara, accompanied by the sites of eight Bodhisattvas.
- ✿ Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit is the only circuit in Nepal that represents Buddhist heritages of almost all periods and revered by the followers of almost all major Buddhist canons and traditions, such as Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana and Bon Buddhism.
- ✿ The significance of the major sites connected by the core (inner) circuit of NMBC stands as given below:

- ❁ **Swoyambhu Mahachaitya (Phagpa Shingkun)** is identified with the Self-Emerged Chaitya from a Lotus seed sown by Dhyani Buddha 'Vipasvi' with the landing of primordial 5 Buddhas as emanated in the colors of rainbow.
- ❁ **Namo Buddha (Tagmo Luijin) and Manichud:** Namu Buddha and Manichud, as per Jataka story are identified as the previous birthplaces of Shakyamuni Buddha where he, as a bodhisattva had accomplished the 'perfection of generosity' by donating his body parts.
- ❁ **Sankhu Vajrayogini and Guh Vihara** is identified with the eldest of the 4 sister Yoginis and arguably the first Buddhist vihara (Guh Vihara) of Nepal Mandala. It is also the blessed site of Bodhisattva Manjushree and Great Master Padmasambhava.
- ❁ **Bouddha Mahachaitya (Jyarung Khasyor)** is the largest stupa of Nepal Mandala (and Nepal) and one of the largest and second tallest stupas in the world. One of the most revered Buddhist heritage sites for the followers of Himalayan Buddhists, Tibetans and the western world. Evolving as a representative Tibetan Buddhist Cultural world.
- ❁ **Asura Cave Pharping (Yanglesho, Phamthing):** Is the perfected meditation cave of Padmasambhava where he acquired the Mahamudra of Divinity.
- ❁ **Viharas of Kathmandu:** With more than 106 Viharas, 16 prominent bahas and 16 prominent bahis, Kathmandu is arguably the epicentre of the Buddhist (and Hindu) power places in Nepal Mandala. Whereas Jana Baha was considered to be the religious epicentre, Tham Bahi was considered to be the epicentre for studying Buddhist philosophy and Sanskrit language.
- ❁ **Viharas of Patan:** With more than 185 Viharas, 18 prominent bahas, 15 prominent bahis and 4 Ashokan Stupas, Patan is arguably the first Buddhist city in Nepal Mandala with the longest surviving Buddhist traditions and rituals. Hirandyavarna Mahaviraha is considered to be the focal point for preserving and

practicing Buddhist tradition and rituals in Patan.

- ✿ **Viharas of Bhaktapur:** With more than 21 viharas, Bhaktapur is a Tantric and Cultural City.
- ✿ **Bungamati (Bungyadhya)** is the home to Red Matsyendranath (Karunamaya Lokeshvara), one of four Karunamaya Lokeshvaras.
- ✿ **Lashapa Ko/Milarepa Cave/Manjushree Cave (Sudal)** is the perfected meditation cave of Yogi Milarepa and the blessed site of bodhisattva Manjushree.
- ✿ **Triten Norbuche Gomba, Nagarjuna** is the first Bon Buddhist Monastery in Nepal Mandala founded in 1987 AD.
- ✿ **New Dharma Studies and Retreat Centers:** Pharping, Ramkot-Nagarjuna Hill, Nagi Gomba, Kapan, Bouddha-Arubari-Gokarna, Sudal, Namobuddha etc. are the modern day Buddhist dharma studies, meditation and spiritual retreat centers of Nepal Mandala.

✿ The extended circuits lying around the inner circuit of Nepal Mandala include the following:

- ✿ ***Swoyambhu-Chang La-Nuwakot Mahamandala-Sing La-Beyul Namgo dagam (Langtang) Sub-circuit:*** Lying along the historical and spiritual route to Tibet from Nepal Mandala via Kerung and Mangyul Gunthang, this sub-circuit connects the significant Buddhist heritage sites blessed by Padmasambhava and Milarepa. Key sites include Swoyambhu, Chang La, Nuwakot Mahamandal, Sing La, Gatlang-Goljung-Chilime-Thuman-Timure (and on to Kerung Tibet) -Briddim-Langtang -Kyanjin Gomba.
- ✿ ***Sankhu Vajrayogini-Beyul Hyolmo Sub-circuit:*** Lying along the ancient and spiritual route to Tibet from Nepal Mandala via Kuti/Nyalam, this sub-circuit connects the significant Buddhist heritage sites blessed by bodhisattva MahaManjushree, Padmasambhava and Milarepa. Key sites include Sankhu Vajrayogini, Melamchi Ghang, Tarkeghang, Shermathang, Ama Angri, Padmasambhava's Cave, Milarepa's Cave, Dragan Cave etc.

❁ ***Pharping -Chitlang-Daman Rekheswor Sub-circuit:*** Lying along the ancient and spiritual route to Buddhist heritage sites on India via Chitlang, Daman and Parsa, this sub-circuit connects the significant Buddhist heritage sites blessed by Emperor Ashoka and Guru Rinpoche. Key sites include Pharping, Chitlang, Rikheswor (Daman), Buddhist Vihara (Parsa).

4.7.2. Significance of the Sites Contained in NMBC

i. Significance for Pilgrimage, Spirituality and Peace

a. *Nepal Mandala: The Blessed Land of Celestial Buddhas/Adi-Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.*

- ❁ Predominately demarcated by the four sacred mountains and adorned with the four major sacred rivers, Nepal Mandala pertains to the sacred geo-cultural and spiritual realm. The Buddhist text Manjushrimula Kalpa, chronicles such as Swoyambhu Purana, and several inscriptions and manuscripts, including 8th century Gyaneswar inscription belonging to the reign of King Jayadeva Malla, have mentioned the term Nepal Mandala. Legend has it that Kirat kings had offered the throne of the Mandala to the Shakyas of Nepal Mandala, the descendants of Shakyas from Kapilavastu.
- ❁ The four sacred mountains which are considered to be the blessed sites of Adhi Buddhas and Bodhisattvas include Shivapuri (Sankha/Sipuchva), Jamacho/Nagarjun (Jatamatra), Champadevi/Chandagiri (Dhyana/Dhilachva) and Phulchowki (Phula/Puchva). Likewise, the four sacred rivers include Bagmati, Kasavati (Vishnumati), Manirohini (Manohara) and Prabhavati, and adorned with the 12 holy bathing places (tirthas).
- ❁ Mythological legends suggest that many Adhi Buddhas and Bodhisattvas had visited and blessed these mountains. Vipasvi Buddha and Sikhi Buddha are believed to have

Map-7: Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit- Kathmandu Valley





Manichud

To Helambu



Sankhu

Nagarkot

Telkot



Maha Manjuhree Cave

Karuna Temple, Nala



Banepa

Dhulikhel

Panauti



Nepalthok

To Halesi

Namobuddha



visited and blessed Jamacho and Chandragiri mountains respectively in Satya Yuga. Similarly, Visvabhu Buddha and Krakuchhanda Buddha are believed to have visited and blessed Phulchowki and Shivapuri mountains Treta Yuga. Bodhisattva Manjushree is believed to have made a pilgrimage to Swoyambhu and founded Manjupattana by draining water from Chovar in the same aeon. Moreover, Kanakamuni Buddha and Kassapa Buddha are also believed to have visited Swoyambhu Chaitya in Nepal Mandala during Dvapara Yuga. In Kaliyuga, Shakyamuni Buddha is said to have made a pilgrimage to Abibuddha Swayambhu and Manjusri. Here in Nepal mandala, Shakyamuni Buddha is believed to have preached to the future Buddha Maitreya and Brahma (Regmi 2007).

- ✧ Some historians have defined the boundary of Nepal Mandala as marked by four pilgrimage spots, i.e Nilkantha (Goshaikunda) to the north, Nateswar to the south, Kaleswar to the west and Bhimeswar to the east. In fact, Trishuli River and Tamakoshi River delineate the western and eastern boundary of greater Nepal Mandala. Nepal Mandala was roughly situated between the ancient Khasha Kingdom to the west and Simraungarh to the south and east.
- ✧ For Buddhist communities, Kathmandu Valley is the Mandala of Chakrasamvara, the principal deity of Vajrayana Buddhism. The Vajrayanists started equating the five Adi Buhhas with the five elements, representing the cosmic expansion (Johan Elverskog, 2010). Today, the Pancha Buddha (the Five conceptual Buddhas) are central to Buddhist Shrines and Stupas, and worshipped widely.
- ✧ Nepalese chronicles and manuscripts suggest that Buddhism in Nepal Mandala prevailed even before the advent of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni. The Swayambhu Purana relates the establishment of Swayambhu Chaitya in Nepala



Mandala with the visits of various primordial Buddhas (Adi Buddhas), including Vipasvi Buddha. The legend of Nepal Mandala also began with the sacred appearance of a lotus enfolding a flame representing the Adi Buddha Swoyambhu.

b. Nepal Mandala (Namo Buddha and Manichud): The Previous Birthplaces of Shakyamuni Buddha, as Bodhisattva.

- ✧ Two sacred sites of Nepal Mandala namely, Namo Buddha and Manichud are believed to be the previous birthplaces of Shakyamuni Buddha, where he, as a bodhisattva had accomplished the 'perfection of generosity' by donating his body parts.
 - ✧ As per Jataka Story, Namo Buddha in Kavre is believed to be the previous birth site of Shakyamuni Buddha where he, as a **Bodhisattva Prince Mahasattva** donated his body flesh to the hungry tigress, out of the spirit of great love and compassion.
 - ✧ Likewise, Manichud Hill is identified with the previous birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha, where, he as bodhisattva **Prince Manichud of Saket** donated jewel of his forehead to accomplish his Dana Parmita for eradicating drought and illness from the kingdom.
- c. Nepal Mandala: Pilgrimage to the Three Most Revered Stupas (Tin Tirtha) - Swoyambhu Mahachaitya, Bouddha Mahachaitya and Namo Buddha Stupa:***
- ✧ Swoyambhu Mahachaitya (Phagpa Shingkun), Bouddha Mahachaitya (Jyarung Khasyor) and Namo Buddha (Tagmo Luijin in Tibetan) are considered as 'Three Most Revered Pilgrimage Sites (Tin Tirtha)' in Nepal Mandala for the followers of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism from Nepal Mandala, Nepal Himalayan and around the world.
 - ✧ The self-emerged Swoyambhu Chaitya represents Adhi Buddha. Bouddha Mahachaitya which is believed to have

contained the sacred relics of Kassapa Buddha in its naval also has a widely believed legend that is related with the involvement of Padmasambhava and Tibetan dharma king Trison Detson for the construction of this stupa in their previous life.

- ✧ Namo Buddha Stupa as per Jataka story is the previous birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha where he, as a bodhisattva prince donated his body flesh to the hungry tigress. Buddha Shakyamuni is said to have visited the stupa site during his pilgrimage to Swoyambhu Chaitya in his lifetime.
- ✧ In recent decades, these three sacred hubs are becoming the great center for dharma study, spiritual retreat and Himalayan Buddhist craft.

d. Nepal Mandala: The Perfected Meditation Seat of Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) and Guru Gorakhanath

- ✧ Lotus Born Great Indian Tantric Master Padmasambhava who is credited to have established Tantric Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet in the 8th century AD is said to have accomplished his great enlightenment at the Asura Cave in Pharping. For his contribution, he is regarded as a Second Buddha in Tibet. In this sacred and fertile mandala, Padmasambhava, together with his Nepalese consort Sakyadevi accomplished the Mahamudra of Divinity.
- ✧ Padmasambhava is said to have entered into Nepal Mandala after receiving tantric empowerments and teachings from a great yogi named Sri Simha in Cima Valley. Before his move to Tibet, he is said to have acquired 8 sadhana practices, pertaining to the Mahayoga Tantra. According to Padma Kathang and other Buddhist scriptures, Padmasambhava is believed to have spent several months and years perfecting his meditation in various places of Nepal Mandala, including Yempi Vihar, Asura Cave, Rikheshwor (Daman), Itum Bahal, Sankhu Vajrayogini, Nuwakot, Helambu, Thimi-Digu Baha



(Gunakirti Mahavihara), Timal, Sailung, Thimi etc., and diffused Tantric Buddhist teachings.

- ✧ After Asura Cave, Padmasambhava, together with his Indian consort Mandarava performed the sadhana of Amitayus, the Bodhisattva of Vitality and Longevity at Maratika Cave, Halesi. Through Vajrakilaya, Padmasambhava and Mandarava realized great enlightenment.
- ✧ The Guru Gorakhanath (in 850 AD) is also believed to have perfected his Hathayoga sadhana and practiced immortality here in Asura Cave, Pharping and founding the Nathapantha Cult in Nepal Mandala.

e. Nepal Mandala: The Sacred Mandala Protected by Four Karunamaya Lokeshvaras.

- ✧ Nepal Mandala is said to have received blessings and protection from four major Karunamaya Lokeshvaras (as protecting deity), namely Red- Matsyendranath of Bungadya (Red Faced), Anandadi Lokeshvara of Chovar (Red Faced), White Matsyendranath of Jana Bahal (White Faced, Jamardeo) and Nala Karunamaya Lokeshvara (White faced).
- ✧ Lokeshvara, also regarded as Matsyendranath is one of the most commonly revered deities of the Nepal Mandala, ranking as high as Pashupatinath. Hindus regard Matsyendranath as Guru of Guru Gorakhnath and God of Rain, whereas in Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhism, Lokeshvara is said to have emanated from Amitabha (4th of five Buddhas). In India, Matsyendranath is known as Arya Bu-kham. Lokeshvara is considered to be the presiding Bodhisattva of the era for the Buddhist communities. Kathmandu Newars regard Red Matsyendranath as an incarnation of Lokeshvara, who possesses as Padmapani Bodhisattva.
- ✧ The earliest reference to Lokeshvara is in the inscription of Jayadeva II of Samvat 727 AD. Nathapantha Cult, also

regarded as Matsyendranath Cult was started in Nepal with the arrival of Guru Gorakhanatha (in 850 AD) and arrival of Matsyendranath, the preceptor of Gorakhanatha, during the reign of Lichchavi King Narendradeva. However, Matsyendranath as one of the important Lokeshvaras was popularized only after the 14th century. Gorakhanath, one of the Mahasiddhas who meditated in Pharping is credited to have founded the Nathapantha cult that mixed Hathayoga and Buddhist tantricism.

- ✧ Red Matsyendranath image of Bungamati (Bunga Dyah Buddhist pantheon Avalokiteshvara), is the most powerful image out of its three images. Karunamaya Chariot Festival is celebrated in three districts of Nepal Mandala viz, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur (and Nala). Red Matsyendranath Chariot Festival (started by King Narendradeva) starts during October/November from Bungamati (with small chariot) and ends during March (Chaitra Shukla) at Jawalakhel (Pulchowk) with giant and tall chariot. White Matsyendranath Chariot Festival in Kathmandu was introduced by Gunakamadeva I to imitate the practice of Patan.

f. Nepal Mandala: The Sacred Land adorned with Four Powerful Yoginis

- ✧ Yoginis are considered to be the yidam consort for practitioners of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. Nepal Mandala is blessed by the presence of four major Yoginis, though there is a concept of 64 yoginis in Shakta Cult. Buddhists regard Vhajrayogini as Mahachin Tara whereas Hindus regard it as Ugratara. Also also presided by many yoginis as female bodhisattvas (consorts), Nepal Mandala is considered to be very fertile ground for practicing Vajrayana and Tantric/esoteric practices, considering the basic Tantric premise that the union of male and female principles is the source of cosmic manifestation.



- ✧ The four major Yoginis of Nepal Mandala include Khadgayogini/Vajrayogini of Sankha (also called Mani Yogini), Guheshwori of Pashupatinath (also called Nairatma Yogini), Vajrayogini of Pharping (also called Phamthing Yogini) and Bijeshwori of Tokha. Some also count Akash Yogini of Pulchowk (Patan) as one of the fifth major yoginis of Nepal Mandala.
- ✧ Vajrayogini is also considered to be a Tantric Buddhist female Buddha and a dakini whose pure realm is Kechara Paradise. In Buddhist traditions, these yoginis are considered to be the consort of Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, Heruka samvaras. In Vajrayana Buddhism, there are three major lineages of Vajrayogini. Each tradition descends from one of three Mahasiddhas, namely Indrabodhi, Maitripa and Naropa.
- ✧ In Newar Buddhist tradition, the red faced yogini is identified as Khadgayogini or Bajrayogini. Sankhu Vajra Yogini is the eldest of the Four Sister Yoginis of Nepal Mandala.
- ✧ Nairatma Yogini (Guhyeswori) appeared for Bodhisattva Manjushree. At Guhjeswori, Buddhists worship the 'Lotus' as a symbol of Vajra Varahi. It is regarded as root of the mythical lotus upon which Swoyambhu Mahachaitya rests. At Arya Ghat, Bodhisattva Manjushree is said to have cut a gorge. There are two famous sacred meditation caves viz, Tilopa Cave and Naropa cave. Naropa is said to have engaged in Vajrayogini retreat in this cave. Famous Nepalese monk Surata Vajra aka Garab Dorje (16th century) who is said to have transferred to rainbow body also practiced Hevajra Nairatma at Guhyeshwori.
- ✧ Pharping Vajrayogini is associated with the tantric practice of Guru Gorakhanath and Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava).
- g. ***Nepal Mandala: Ancient Pilgrimage Hub and Buddhist Study/ Practice Center***

- ✧ Nepal Mandala is not only a place with rich intangible Buddhist heritages but also rich with Buddhist dharma and philosophy. It has remained a sacred pilgrimage site, meditation seat and study center for many Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Mahasiddhas, monks, vikchhus, translators, since the very time of Adi Buddhas.
- ✧ During Sattya Yuga, when Vipasvi Buddha was doing meditation in the Gopucha Parvat, Swoyambhu Dharmadhatu (Light) was emerging with the appearance of Five Buddhas: Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi. Other Adhi Buddhas such as Sikhi Buddha, Visbhavu Buddha, Krakuchhanda Buddha etc. and Bodhisattvas such as Manjushree also made pilgrimage to Swoyambhu Chaitya and other sacred mountains in various aeons.
- ✧ Nepal Mandala was the hermitage of contemplative bodhisattvas, mahasiddhas and ascetics; Buddha Shakyamuni taught here, Padmasambhava achieved his enlightenment, and the mahasiddha Gorakhanath meditated here for 12 years in Samadhi.
- ✧ Buddha's one of the close disciples, Ananda is also said to have made a pilgrimage to Nepal Mandala during the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha.
- ✧ Emperor Ashoka is believed to have visited Nepal Mandala in the 3rd century BCE and founded the Ashokan Pattana (Lalitapatana) along with the founding of Four Ashokan Stupas.
- ✧ Many kings of Khasha Kingdoms, including Jitari Malla (1288 AD), Ripu Malla (1312 AD), Aditya Malla (1338 AD) etc. had made several pilgrimage visits to Nepal Mandala and had visited many power places, including Swoyambhu Chaitya and Bungamati.



- ✧ Nepal Mandala remained a **very important place for learning and meditation** for the masters, mahasiddhas, monks and practitioners of various Buddhist traditions from India and Tibet. Swoyambhu Chaitya, Vikramasheela Mahavihara, Itum Bahal, Pharping Asura Cave, Hirandyavarna Mahavihara etc. used to be the major learning and practice center during Lichchavi and Malla period. During the late Lichchavi period to early Malla period, Patan city remained as a university for Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.
- ✧ There was a huge exchange on Buddhist teachings and studies between Viharas in Kathmandu and celebrated Buddhist universities in India such as Nalanda, Odantapuri, Vikramasila etc. and many Buddhist manuscripts were produced in Sanskrit by Nepalese and Indian masters.
- ✧ Key **Indian** Buddhist mahasiddhas, masters, monks who visited Nepal Mandala and contributed to the study and practice of Buddhism include Acharya Nagarjuna (c 150-250 AD) the founder of Madhyamika doctrine had stayed in Nagarjuna Hill and Shantipur Cave in Swoyambhu; Vasubandhu (400-480 AD) is believed to have met Sanghabhadra. Among others Santarakshita (8th century) the abbot of Nalanda; Acharya Ratnaraksita of Vikramasila; Tilopa (988-1069 AD) and Naropa (956-1040) who practiced their meditation at Guheswori; master Vajrapani (Phyag-na) a tantric practitioner (12th century) who taught the precepts of Vajravarahi cycle to Tibetan together with Nepalese Ha-mu in Kathmandu; Indian Monk Sakyasri who wrote a commentary on Samvarodaya for the benefit of the people of Nepal; Vajradeva who wrote Lokeshvarasataka in Kathmandu; Atisha Dipankara (11th century) who became an abbot of Vikramashila Mahavihara in Thamel and so on. Rahul Sanskritayan is possibly the latest version of the prominent Indian scholar who came to Nepal (in 1929 AD) and spent many years with Buddhists merchants such as Dasaratan

Sahu and Dukpa Lama in Patan, studied about Tibet and finally entered into Tibet using the Newar's connection with Lhasa.

- ✧ Nepal Mandala also contributed in the establishment and expansion of Buddhism in India by jointly working with the Indian Buddhist scholars and by providing shelter to the scholars from Vikramasila and Nalanda during the time of the invasion and vandalism of Buddhist heritages of India by Muslims. Nepalese scholars also kept many Indian manuscripts and icons protected brought by Indian scholars with them.
- ✧ Nepal also remained a fertile learning hub for many Tibetan masters and monks until 14th century. In fact, Nepal Mandala contributed a lot for the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet right from the time of Amsuvarma who sent his beloved daughter prince Bhrikuti to Tibet in marriage with Tsong Tsong Gampo. Nepal Mandala also became a transit and acclimatization (by climate, culture and language) hub for Tibetan scholars on their way to India and for Indian masters on their way to Tibet.
- ✧ Many Tibetan Buddhist masters and monks visited Nepal Mandala and spent their significant time in Kathmandu studying Sanskrit, Buddhist philosophies and Buddhist arts and Vajrayana tantric practices. Key Tibetan masters and monks include Marpa, Marpha, Milarepa, Ras Chung Pa, Dharmasvami Mahapandita Brog mi Lo-tsa-va and so on.
- ✧ Milarepa is said to have meditated in Manjushri Cave (Sudal), and Itum Bahal. Dharmaswami stayed in Nepal for 8 years. He has mentioned about Tham Bahi, Red Matsyendranath and many other places. Tibetan Monk and Mahapandita Brog mi Lo-tsa-va spent a year in Nepal under the famous Guru Santibhadra and received many teachings. Marpa, a disciple of Naropa and the 11th century great translator of Tibet is



said to have spent three years in Kathmandu and learned Sanskrit from Paindapa, and oral transmission of Chatupitha Tantra and Phowa from Chitherpa at Ratnakara Mahavihara (Ha Baha) of Patan.

- ❖ Many **Nepalese masters and scholars** had played significant role in enriching Buddhist philosophies and tradition in Nepal Mandala and also played scholarly role in making Nepal Mandala a Buddhist study and practice center for the contemporary Indian and Tibetan scholars and practitioners. Key Nepalese scholars, siddhas and monks include Vagishwara Kriti (Phamthimpa), Chitherpa (sPhyi-ther-pa), Paindapa, sPhyitherpa, Sri Santibhadra, Buddhasri, Mahakaruna, Lila Vajra (Lilapa), Surata Vajra (Garab Dorje), Manju Vajra (Jampai Dorje or Jamana), Bagishwara kriti (Phamthimpa), Vak Vajra (Ngak Dorje), Shantibhadra and so on.
- ❖ Vagishwara Kriti (Phamthimpa) disciple of Naropa was a scholar of Guhyayana Tantra. Vagishwara Kirti learnt from Ye-ran-ba ‘the doctrine of Maitri-pa’ and Vagisyarkirti taught Ye-ran-ba ‘precepts of Yogaratnamala Hevajra-panjika’.
- ❖ Chitherpa and Paindapa (one out of 54 yogis of Naropa) were two Phamthimpa brothers of the 11th century); the direct disciples of Naropa and gurus of Marpha. Paindapa taught Marpha Sanskrit and Chitherpa taught Marpha the oral transmission of Chatupitha Tantra and Phowa. Buddhasri, a Nepalese monk was a Sthavira of Vikramasila and Sthavira of Mahasanghika in Nalanda. Lila Vajra (Lilapa, 713 to 733 AD was from Sankhu), he was one of 84 Mahasiddhas, also became an abbot of Vikramshila Mahavihara in India; could perform different tantric manifestations, and was famous for charya dance.
- ❖ Surata Vajra aka Garab Dorje (16th century was from Tachhe Baha in Asan), practiced Hevajra Nairatma in the Guhyeshwori temple, later invited by Dalai Lama from Potala Palace,

transferred into rainbow body. Manju Vajra (Jampai Dorje or Jamana) was the great performer of esoteric activities in 17th century; also remembered as a never eating Gubhaju.

- ✧ **Mahayana Buddhist Monasteries** have been emerging as a new Dharma Study and Spiritual Retreat Centers. More than 50 monasteries in Bouddha area, more than 20 monasteries in Pharping, several monasteries built around Swoyambhu area, Jamacho/Ranikot area, Sankhu-Manichud area, Gokarneshwor, Arubari, Kapan, Pani Muhan, Nagi Gomba, Godavari, Namobuddha, Sudal area are offering study and retreat courses of various duration, including PhD.
- ✧ Founded in 1987 AD, by Guru Yongdrup Rinpoche in Tinghare, Ichangunarayan, Nagarjun **Triten Norbuche Gomba, Nagarjuna** is the first Bon Buddhist Monastery of Nepal Mandala. It has been a profound Bon Buddhist monastery in practicing Bon Buddhist tradition and offering courses on Bon meditation practice, Amchy medicine, Bon Buddhist philosophy, including 4 years course and PhD course producing Geshe for last 25 years.

ii. Archaeological and Historical Significance

Nepal Mandala: One of the Oldest, Longest Venerated and Richest Buddhist Architectures in the Himalayas.

- ✧ Nepal Mandala is like an open museum and great repository of outstanding Buddhist art, architect and manuscripts where stone, metal, wood, terra-cotta or cloth made icons and images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, protecting deities, tutelary/guardian deities, esoteric deities, mandalas, Buddhist Tri-Rantas etc. could be seen in Buddhist viharas, monasteries, chaityas, stupas, old palaces, private courtyards, water spouts, etc.
- ✧ The arts and architecture of Nepal Mandala is the result of the perfect combination of indigenous Kathmandu's Newari

architecture, Indian Buddhist architecture and Tibetan/ Chinese architecture.

- ✧ The Buddhist heritages of Nepal Mandala, especially the ancient viharas, stupas and monasteries are arguably the longest venerated Buddhist heritages of the world without any interruptions. Where as the Buddhist heritage sites in Lumbini (Nepal), India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar remained without being venerated for many hundred years due to many reasons, quite a good numbers of Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal Mandala, such as Swoyambhu Mahachaitya remained being worshipped without any break for last 1500 to 2000 years. The stupas, viharas, sculpture and the Nepalese Buddhists themselves provide an unbroken link with the Buddhist past (Slusser, Nepal Mandala).
- ✧ If legends are to be believed, Lalitapatana (present day Patan), which is believed to have been founded by the Mauryan King Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE is arguably considered to be the first and oldest Buddhist city of Nepal Mandala and the entire Himalayas.
- ✧ The Four Ashokan Stupas established in the four cardinal directions (north, east, south and west) of Ashokapatana at Pulchowk, Shankhamul, Gwarko, Lagankhel and Pulchowk respectively are also believed to have been founded by King Ashoka in 3rd century BCE, making them the oldest Buddhist monument of Nepal Mandala. However, the concrete inscriptions and scriptural evidences to verify the archaeological authenticity of the stupas are yet to be done. Ashokan Stupas do not bear statue. Famous scholar Slusser has suggested that Ashokan Stupas may even be funerary mounds of pre-Buddhist origin and may predate the Mauryan period.
- ✧ Many historians believe that most of the viharas of Patan were built during Lichchavi period and the construction of

viharas and other monuments reached its climax during the transition period (Thakuri period- 800 -1200 AD) and Malla period (1200 to 1768 AD).

- ✧ The Newar communities of Nepal Mandala have excelled in craftsmanship and arts, especially in stone arts, metal (bronze) arts, wooden arts, paintings and and pouva, and have maintained the coexistence between two great religions, Hinduism and Buddhism.
- ✧ Lichchavi period was the Golden Era of Nepal, especially in stonework. The Lichchavi kings established the custom of inscribing royal edicts on stone tablets. The stone sculptures of Lichchavi period were influenced by Mathura art and Gandhara art. Thakuri period (transitional period) remained significant especially for wood arts such as carving of wooden roof struts and toranas. Malla Period was the golden age for metal (bronze) work, especially in Patan.
- ✧ Newar Buddhists are also credited for making a vast library of Sanskrit manuscripts. Gold and silver written Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra is one of the important manuscripts that some viharas of Nepal Mandala have preserved, including Kwa Baha in Patan and Tham Bahi in Kathmandu.
- ✧ The images of Buddha enshrined in the main shrine of Hirandyavarna Mahavihara, Rudravarna Mahavihara, Jana Bahal are arguably the highly decorated (adorned with ornaments) Buddha's images in the world. Other icons and images such as votive stupas, dharmadhatu, Swoyambhu Chaitya, Taras, Mandalas are also very artistic elements of the viharas of Nepal Mandala.
- ✧ Indian Buddhist scholars who brought valuable images and manuscripts to Nepal during the time of Muslim conquest across the Gangetic plains also contributed to add Buddhist arts and manuscripts in Nepal, during the early Malla period.

- ✧ Many Nepalese artists and rulers of Nepal Mandala also contributed to flourish Buddhist arts in Tibet, China and Bhutan, including Prince Bhrikuti (7th century in Tibet), Arniko (12th century in China), 16th century to Bhutan (Guru Shandrung Ngawang Namgyal took Nepali artisans to construct several monasteries in Bhutan).
- ✧ Pilgrims and visitors can explore and buy varieties of craft items in Patan Mangal Bazaar, Bhaktapur city, Changunarayan, Swoyambhu Mahachaitya, Bouddha Mahachaitya, Basantapur, Thamel etc.

Nepal Mandala: A City of Ancient Viharas, Chaityas, Stupas and Gombas.

- ✧ Nepal Mandala is the largest repository of great viharas and monasteries of almost all Buddhist schools/traditions and of almost all periods since the earliest Lichchavi period. Hundreds of Buddhist viharas and thousands of chaityas, including votive stupas are found in the three districts of Nepal Mandala.
- ✧ Architecturally, there are three types of viharas (monasteries) and stupas in Nepal Mandala viz, (i) Stupas/Chaityas (three-dimensional mandalic monuments), (ii) Pagoda style roofed monuments, and (iii) Shikhara style temple monuments.
- ✧ In fact, the major Buddhist power places are stupas, not monasteries. Images of five Buddhas are enshrined in a stupa, 4 in four cardinal directions and 1 at center; all Buddhas are worshiped by circumambulation. Swoyambhu Mahachaitya, Bouddha Mahachaitya, Namo Buddha Stupa are the great stupas of Nepal Mandala. There are thousand of votive stupa and other stupas in Nepal Mandala. There is a gigantic landscape of votive stupas in Swoyambhu Chaitya. Swoyambhu Mahachaitya is arguably the oldest chaitya in Nepal Mandala and the Himalayas. Bouddha Mahachaitya is one of the largest and second tallest stupa in the world.

- ✧ Maha Bouddha-Patan, the terracotta made replica of Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhgaya is one of the best masterpieces of Shikhara style Buddhist shrine in Nepal Mandala. Bungamati's 9 towered temple is also a shikhara style monument.
- ✧ Nepal Mandala is predominated by hundreds of pagoda style viharas (bahas and bahis). Hirandyavarna Mahavihara (Patan) is possibly the most beautiful vihara of Nepal Mandala. Itumbahal and Yakhabahal of Kathmandu; Nagbahal (Kwa Bahal), Mu Bahal and Bhinchebahal of Patan are the biggest viharas of Nepal mandala by area. Key features of Newar Buddhist viharas in Nepal mandala include the highly decorated (adorned with ornaments) image of Buddha in the main shrine, placement of Vajradhatu Chaitya and Dharmadhatu just in front of the main shrine and placement of esoteric images (Yagambar) as Vajrayana deity in the five-fold windows Agamche (Tantric shrine room) room lying just above the main shrine. Some viharas dedicate a room for Gomba with image of Amoghapasa Lokeshvara and a room for Living Goddess Kumari. Big viharas consist of residential courtyard (Ilanani). The entrance of each vihara bears the image of Mahankala and Ganesa as door-keepers and guardians.
- ✧ Baha-Bahi system is one of the most ancient Buddhist systems in Nepal Mandala. Bahas were used for residing by the monks where as bahis were used as study centers where the Chakrasambhara teachings are imparted. Based on the sangha system, there are (i) 18 mu bahas (main monasteries) in Kathmandu and Lalitpur each; (ii) 16 bahis in Kathmandu and 18 bahis in Patan and (iii) Many Kacha Bahas (branch monasteries) in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts.
- ✧ As per the inventory of Jon K Luck (1985 AD) over three hundred Buddhist viharas still exist in Nepal Mandala with

at least 186 Vahas and Vahis in Patan; 106 Vahas and Vahis in Kathmandu and 23 Vahas/Vahis in Bhaktapur, 9 Viharas in Thimi, 9 Viharas in Sankhu, 2 viharas in Banepa, 2 viharas in Panauti and 1 vihara in Nala.

- ✧ Based on the Handigaon inscription of King Amshuvarman (c. 605-21AD), the construction of Buddhist vihara is believed to have started during early Lichchavi period; Guh Vihara of Sankhu Vajrayogini being in the first in the group of eight viharas mentioned in the inscriptions. Guh Vihara is believed to have been constructed at least during or before the reign of Lichchavi King Manadava I (464-505 AD) or his father King Vrisadeva. As also made references in the Handigaon inscription, Guh Vihara is believed to have followed Hinayana School during the time of establishment and later transformed into a Mahayana school during late Lichchavi period.
- ✧ All bahas and bahis of Nepal Mandala belong to Mahayana and Vajrayana, popularly known as Newar Vajrayana Buddhism. Most of the bahas and bahis are 2 to 3 storey building with gilded roofs. Artistically carved toranas (repoused and wooden), windows and struts are the unique characteristics of viharas of Nepal Mandala.
- ✧ All monasteries built after 1960s in and around Bouddha, Kapan, Swoyambhu, Pharping, Jamacho, Namobuddha, Sudal etc. belong to Mahayana school of Buddhism, mostly following Nyingma tradition followed by Kagyu, Gelug and Sakya. Construction of these monasteries have added the great value to the Buddhist architecture of Nepal Mandala. The Pagoda style monasteries have beautifully decorated images of Buddhas (Shakyamuni, Maitreya), Padmasambhava and 3 Lokeshvaras, including Avalokiteshvara. The monastery buildings bear great wall paintings (of mandalas, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and deities), pauvas (Thangka paintings), manuscripts and other important images.

- ✧ Triten Norbuche Gomba, Tinghare, Ichangunarayan, Nagarjun is the first Bon Buddhist Monastery of Nepal Mandala.

iii. Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value

Newar Vajrayana Buddhism: One of the Last and Longest Surviving Buddhist Traditions.

- ✧ Supposed to have entered during the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha or during the reign of Mauryan King Ashoka in 3rd century BC, the Buddhist tradition of Nepal Mandala, also broadly known as Newar Vajrayana Buddhism is arguably considered to be the last and longest surviving and the richest Mahayanist Buddhist doctrine, monastic/household tradition and cultural practice in the world.
- ✧ Though the earlier Buddhist teachings and monastic traditions were initiated according to the early Buddhist schools and nikayas, such as Mahasangkika Nikaya and Hinayana, the Buddhist traditions and rituals in Nepal Mandala is also influenced by the concept of Adhi Buddha and self-emergent chaitya 'Swoyambhu Chaitya'. The Newar Buddhists of Kathmandu worship Swoyambhu Chaitya as one of their tutelary deities and every vihara establishes the shrine of Swoyambhu Chaitya in its premises. Likewise, Dipankara Buddha has a special place in Newar Buddhism as there are several festivals and events dedicated to Dipankara Buddha, such as Samyaka Dana festival and Dipankara Yatra.
- ✧ Nepal Mandala is also considered to be the melting pot of Buddhist traditions and rituals of almost all schools and sects, including all schools of Buddhism viz, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, Theravada as well as all traditions of Tibetan Buddhism viz, Nyingmapa, Kagyupa, Gelugpa, Sakyapa and Bon Buddhism.
- ✧ The visit of Emperor Ashoka to Nepal Mandala in 3rd century

BCE is considered to have laid the strong foundation of Buddhism at community level with the foundation of Buddhist city (Ashokan Patana/Patan), foundation of Four Ashokan Stupas and a Chaitya in Chabahil.

- ❖ Buddhism is believed to have entered into Nepal Mandala probably in the form of Hinayana Buddhism. As per the travel account written by Huan Zang, there was a dominance of Hinayana Buddhism in Nepal Mandala till early Lichchavi period.
- ❖ Likewise the first dissemination of Vajrayana Buddhism, later known as 'Newar Vajrayana Buddhism' into Nepal Mandala is believed to have taken place after the arrival of Padmasambhava during 8th century. It is said that Lichchavi King Shivadev was ordained Vajracharya. Vajracharya word was also used in Lichchavi King's inscriptions at Swoyambhu.
- ❖ After 10th to 11th centuries, Newar Buddhism started combining its unique indigenous elements with the tantric and esoteric elements of Hindu traditions introducing multi-headed, multifaced, multi-legs and large images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, yidam deities and protecting deities. Newar Vajrayana initiations involve tantric deities such as Samvara, Hevajra, and their consorts (yoginis).
- ❖ With reference to the establishment of Guh vihara in Sankhu, it can be claimed that the vihar tradition (monastic tradition) in Nepal Mandala had started during early Lichchavi era. The viharas of Nepal Mandala are grouped into three types based on its sangha composition viz, (i) Mu Baha (main monastery), (ii) The Bahi, and (iii) Kacha Baha (Branch monastery). But, in Kathmandu, there are three sets of Buddhist vihara sanghas viz, (i) Eighteen Bahas of Acharya Guthi and their branches, (ii) Ten purely Shakya Bahas and its branches, and (iii) Sixteen Bahis. 'Other Viharas of Kathmandu' include Tham Bahi (which is run by Pradhan Guthi), and so on.

- ✧ Shakyas and Bajracharya are considered to be the highest-ranking sub-group amongst the Newar Buddhists in Nepal Mandala. Most of the main viharas (Mu-Baha) of Nepal Mandala consist of male Bajracharya (recipient of *Acharyabhiseka*) as a members of the Bajracharya Sangha. Only very few Mu Bahas have the mixed group of sangha members consisting of both the male Bajracharya and the Shakya Vikchhus. However, all bahis have Shakya Sangha consisting of only Shakya Vhikchhus (recipient of *Pravajya*).
- ✧ The senior sangha members are recognized as *Sthaviras*. Moreover, the senior most sthavira of Bajrayana sangha is regarded as *Chakreshvara*. Sangha members of the viharas can get married. Only the Bajracharya who have obtained the *Acharyabhiseka* and are trained on Buddhist Mamsahuti Homa at Astamatrika temple are empowered to become a patron of the vihara.
- ✧ Celibate monasticism diminished gradually following the introduction of tantric ritual practice within the framework of Vajrayana Buddhism and reached its climax with the imposition of caste system upon the Buddhist community during the reign of Jaya Sthiti Malla in the 15th century. As a strategy to survive (under Hindu rulers), Newar Buddhists started assimilating some elements of the Hindu Pantheon and some practices, such as fire-sacrifices into Buddhist tradition. Gradually, the Buddhist practices became more ritualistic, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas began to be worshipped as Gods and path of mental purification through meditation diminished.
- ✧ Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita, Pancharakshya, and NavaSutra are the scriptural bases of the Newar Buddhism. Namasangiti, Danagatha, Aparimita *Dharani*, Saptavidanottara *Puja Strotra*, Dasaparamita *Strotra*, and Buddha Trailokya *Strotras* are the most prominent recitations of Newar Buddhism.



- ✧ Recitation of Astasastrika Prajnaparamita Sutta is one of the richest vinayic practices still preserved in some viharas, including Hiranyavarna Mahavihara, the gold-written text of prajnaparamita is recited every morning.
- ✧ Several Mahayana sutras and stotras (verses of praise) addressed to Shakyamuni and other Buddhas, celestial bodhisattvas (Manjushri, Vajrapani, Samantabhadra, Arya Avalokiteshvara) are jointly recited by the members of sangha in some selected viharas even today, including Jana Bahal in Kathmandu and Hirandyavarna Mahavihar in Patan, though this ritual was common to all viharas in the previous days.
- ✧ Major ritual services of Newar Buddhist tradition include life-cycle rites (samskaras), fire rites (homa), daily vihara rituals (nitya pujas), mantra chanting protection rites, merit producing donation rites, stupa rituals, tantric initiations (abhisekhas), striking wooden gong etc. Visiting viharas and sacred tirthas (pilgrimage sites), vrata, Dana paramita, establishing chaitya, offering puja (Saptavidhanuttara puja, Harati puja, Homa puja, Sutra puja are some of the unique ritualistic features of Newar Buddhism.
- ✧ Major duties of Sangha in Vihara include organizing functions, rituals and festivals; performing initiation ceremony (Chudakarma, Achaluyegu); daily pujas (Dyo Khya Chayeke); regulating disciples, recitation; meditation practices etc.
- ✧ Newar Vajrayana Buddhism is also considered to be one of the most colorful and ritualistic Buddhist traditions in the world. Many rich traditions, rituals, festivals, events, dances etc. have been created during the period of last 1500 to 2500 years. Key festivals and events include chariot festival of living Goddess Kumari, Chariot festival of Karunamayasya (Red and White Matsyendranath Jatra), Samyak Mahadana Festival, Dipankara Yatra, Chuda Dana, Panchadana Festival (Panchara Parva), Gaijatra, Nayku Jatra Mataya,

Upaku festival, Yomari Punhi, Feasting the Sangha (Annual Festival), Bahidyo Boyegu (Exhibition of the Gods), Gunla Parva, Buddha Jayanti etc. Likewise, key dances and events include Charya dance, Lakhe Nach, Mask Dance etc.

- ✧ Inspired by the Theravadin monks of Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand, some progressive Buddhist monks, including Newar Mahaprajna and Vikchhu Amritananda etc. fought against the government, entered the robes, and eventually re-established **Tharavadin Buddhist tradition** in Nepal Mandala during the mid 20th century. Anandakuti Vihara in Swoyambhu, Dharmakirti Dormitory (for vikchhunis) are some of the early Theravada viharas founded in Nepal Mandala.
- ✧ Likewise, many **Mahayana Buddhist monasteries** were established in the second half of the 20th century, especially with the arrival of Tibetan Refugees in Kathmandu and the Himalayan region of Nepal as well as the internal migration of Himalayan Buddhist into Kathmandu Valley.

iv. Other Added Attractions and Activities

a. *Other (Non-Buddhist) Cultural Attractions*

- ✧ Some shrines and deities in Nepal Mandala are equally revered by both the Buddhists and Hindus. They include Yogini and Varahi temples, Karunamaya temples, Manjushree sites, Anglesh Cave, living Goddess Kumari temple, Mahakal and so on.
- ✧ Pilgrims and visitors may also like to visit Hindu power places and shrines such as Pashupatinath Temple, Narayan Temple (Budhanilkantha), Gokarneshwor Temple in Kathmandu, Krishna Mandir (Temple) and Banglamukhi Temple in Patan, and Dattatreya Temple, Suryavinayak Temple, Doleshwor Temple and Changunarayan Temple in Bhaktapur. The charnel ground (cremation ground) located on the bank of

Bagmati (at Gokarneshwor, Pashupati, Teku, Chovar etc.) are the perfect sites for performing tantric practices by both the Hindu tantric yogins and Esoteric and Vajrayana Buddhist practitioners. The Naropa and Virupa Cave in Pashupati Nath are considered to be sacred one by both the Buddhists and Hindus.

- ✧ Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and Bhaktapur Durbar Square are some of the outstanding historical and archaeological heritage sites worth visiting by both the Buddhists and Hindus.
- ✧ Janai Purnima, Gai Jatra, Indra Jatra, Bisket Jatra, Matsyendranath chariot festival, Teej, Dashain, Deepawali, Chhatah, Shivaratri, Fagu Purnima are some of the interesting festivals worth observing while being in Nepal Mandala. In fact, many festivals such as Gai Jatra, Indra Jatra, Karunamaya Chariot Festival etc. are celebrated by both the Buddhists and Hindus. Interestingly, some Newar families worship the deities of Buddhist and Hindu and celebrate festivals of both the dharma.

b. Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Rich Biodiversity

- ✧ The four sacred mountains and circular rim of Nepal Mandala offers an outstanding scene of the Mahabharat Hills in the south and the majestic and panoramic view of mountains in the north. Nepal Mandala is considered to be one of the most beautiful landscapes with one of the pleasant (mild) climate.
- ✧ Equally, rich in natural landscape and biodiversity, the four mountains include Shivapuri in the northern rim, Phulchowki in the southern rim, Jamacho/Nagarjun and Champadevi/Chandragiri in the western rim. The valley is adorned with the four major rivers, including Bagmati, Kasavati (Vishnumati), Manirohini (Manohara) and Prabhavati.
- ✧ Currently Shivapuri and Nagarjun complees have been protected

as Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park. Likewise, Surya Vinayak Zoological Garden has recently been established in Surya Vinayak, Bhaktapur.

- ✿ Areas covered by these mountain and associated landscapes offer tremendous tourist activities such as hiking, trekking, spiritual meditation, retreat, pilgrimage, cycling, jeep driving, bird-watching, butterfly watching, orchid watching, cultural homestay experiences, cable car ride, mountain panorama watching and so on.
- ✿ Also regarded as the jewel of the rim of Nepal Mandala, Chisapani, Jaharsingh Pouha, Nagarkot, Dhulikhel, Namo Buddha, Balthali, Panauti, Ranikot, Lakuri Bhanjyang, Phulckowki, Godavari, Hattiban, Champadevi, Chandragiri, Jamacho, Kakani etc. have already been established as leisure and holiday hubs.
- ✿ In the outer circuit of Nepal Mandala, Chitlang, Indrasarovar Tal, Tistung, Daman, Trishuli River, Nuwakot, Goshaikunda, Thadepati, Helambu, Dolalghat, Timal etc. are other established and/or promising tourist hubs.

4.7.3. *Significant Heritage Sites*

i. **Buddhist Viharas and Monuments of Kathmandu**

- ✿ Indrachowk, Kanteshwor Mahadev Temple is considered to be the epicentre of Nepal Mandala. There is an inventory of 106 Bahas and Bahis in Kathmandu district, including 16 prominent bahas and 16 prominent bahis. The Vihara cluster is more dense in and around including Basantapur.
- ✿ Significant Buddhist heritage sites of Kathmandu include Swoyambhu Mahachaitya, Bouddha Mahachaitya, Pharping, two Karunamaya Lokeshvaras, Jamacho/Nagarjuna Hill, Manichud, Sankhu-Vajrayogini, Charumati and several ancient bahas and bahis located in and around Basantpur area. Significant bahas

and bahis include Jana Bahal (Jhwa Baha), Thum Bahi, Itum Bahi, Kwa Baha, Dhawaka Baha, Gam Baha, Layku Bahi etc. Tundikhel Vajrabir Mahakal is another important Buddhist shrine in the area.

- ✿ Brief profile of the significant Buddhist heritage sites of Kathmandu are given below:

a. Pharping Asura Cave and Vajra Yogini

- ✿ Located above the Bagmati River, Asura Cave in Pharping is the sacred place where, according to Padma Kathang and other Buddhist scriptures, Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) together with his **consort Sakyadevi** practiced the Sadhana of Vajrasattva as **Sri Samyak Vajra Heruka** (Yangdang Heruka) and acquired the Mahamudra of Divinity and attained complete enlightenment.
- ✿ In doing so, Padmasambhava first had vision of the glorious Vishuddha and the Vajrakilaya deities; then performed a combined shadhana of Vishuddha and Vajrakilaya, and finally accomplished the Mahamudra.
- ✿ Legend has it that while doing sadhana in Pharping, he was obstructed by the local hostile spirits and upon receiving two mule-loads of Vajrakilaya-practice texts from his **Guru Vidhyadhara Prabhahasti** (from India), Padmasambhava performed the powerful Vajrakilaya rites, became able to subdue them and appointed them as guardians of dharma, especially of the Vajrakilaya teachings.
- ✿ A miraculous Handprint of Padmasambhava can be seen on the rock of the cave made by Padmasambhava in a triumphed **state of mind**. Yanglesho Cave, another important cave of Guru Rinpoche is located beside Shesh Narayan Temple in Pharping.
- ✿ There are many ancient viharas in Pharping, including Dharmadhatu Mahavihara which enshrines Vajra Yogini

Shrine. The ground floor of the vihara houses the image of Akshobhaya, flanked by Prajnaparamitama and Padmapani Lokeshvara, whereas the first floor of the vihara houses the shrine of Vajra Yogini. The 30-inch bronze repousse image of Vajra Yogini (Uddhapada Yogini), covered in silver and copper repousse ornaments and wearing an elaborate crown is flanked by Baghini and Shighini. Vajra Yogini (The Dorje Naljurma) is considered to be the female sambhogakaya form of Buddha of wisdom and great bliss. Whereas Tibetans regard Vajra Yogini, **a talking yogini**, Hindu tantra regards it as **Blue Tara** (Nil Tara). Vajra Yogini is also considered to be the secret dakini of the 11th century Mahasiddha Phamthingpa, hence also called as Yogini of Phamtingpa. There is a chaitya at the center of its courtyard. The image of Yogini is taken around the village during Gunla parva.

- ✧ Pharping which is considered to be one of the four oldest ancient towns and the southern gateway to Nepal Mandala was ruled by Solangi dynasty for some time between Lichchavi and Malla period. It remained as an important Buddhist education and practice center during ancient and medieval period, especially after the arrival of Padmasambhava during 8th century. It is the native village of Phamthingpa brothers, including Vagishorkirti. **Phamthingpa** was one of the great teachers who studied in India under the mahasiddha Naropa for nine years receiving the transmission of the Chakrashamvara and hevajra Tantras, among others.
- ✧ In recent years, Pharping has again re-emerged as a Buddhist dharma study and retreat center with the construction of more than 20 monasteries of various traditions. Currently, Drubney Pema Osel Ling Gomba has been preserving and promoting Asura Cave. Many Himalayan Buddhists make a pilgrimage to this holy place during Mangshir to Phagun (December to February).



- ✧ Other important spiritual sites located around Pharping include Shesh Narayan Temple, Dakchhinkali Temple, Shrine of Jhankeshwari, Gopaleshwor Temple etc. Pharping Gopaleshwor temple has a spiritual relation with Bhattas of Pashupatinath Temple. Guru Gorakhnathgufa is said to have practiced the sadhana of immortality at Asura Cave, Pharping.

b. *Chovar Adinath or Anandadi Lokeshvara*

- ✧ Chobar Adinath or Anandadi Lokeshvara is identified as one of the four principal forms of Karunamaya Lokeshvara and one of the two red faced lokeshvara of Nepal Mandala (another being Red Matsyendranath). The pagoda styled Adinath Lokeshvara temple, which dates back to 1642 AD is located within the complex of Cho Bahal or Kacchapala Giri Mahavihara on the western bank of Bagmati River at Chovar Gorge.
- ✧ The temple houses the image of Anandadi Lokeshvara or Adinath as the kwapadya of the bahal. The presence of a high Manjushree mandala altar on the west side of the temple reminds the legend of the foundation of Kathmandu Valley by Manjushree by draining water from Chovar.
- ✧ Other interesting sites located around Adinath Temple include Chovar Jal Vinayak Temple and Chovar Manjushree Cave. Chovar Jal Vinayak Temple is one of valley's four principal Ganesh Temples. About 1050 m long Manjushree cave has cave sections, including Mahadev Pokhari Gufa, Barahi Gufa, Tiger Cave, Pigeon Cave, Bat Cave etc. A 33ft tall statue of Manjushree has been installed recently in the Manjushree Park.

c. *Swoyambhu Mahachaitya (Phagpa Shingkun)*

- ✧ Inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979 AD, Swoyambhu Mahachaitya is arguably the oldest,

most powerful and most venerated Buddhist site in Nepal Mandala. Dedicated to Adhi Buddha, the supreme one of all Buddha, Swoyambhu Mahachaitya is one of the most iconic Buddhist sites in the world. The self-emerged or self-born Stupa is revered by Hindus as an incarnation of Vishnu. In the ancient epigraphic sources, Swayambhu hill is identified as “Padmagiri” and “Vajrakuta”.

- ✧ Many bodhisattvas, mahasiddhas, masters, monks, kings, queens and laity followers have visited this sacred stupa and contributed to the preservation, restoration, enlargement, and beautification right from the Lichchavi era.
- ✧ Various myths, legends, Buddhist scriptures, chronicles (including Swoyambhu Purana), inscriptions, manuscripts and written reports describe about the evolution and significance of Swoyambhu Mahachaitya.
- ✧ The prehistoric tale of the origin of Swoyambhu is linked with the myth of the origin of Kathmandu Valley. According to Buddhist chronicles (including Swoyambhu Purana), the emergence of Swoyambhu Chaitya goes back to Satya Yuga (The Eon of Truth) when present day Kathmandu Valley was still a vast lake (known as Kali Daha). According to legend, Vipasvi Buddha, the 1st of Seven Buddhas, who came to meditate at one of the hills rose on the western bank of the lake threw a lotus seed into the lake and when the lotus bloomed, a light shone from the center of its thousand petals that illuminated the entire valley. The light was called the Swoyambhu Dharmadhatu, the self-sprang infinite field of light and the flame of the enlightened mind of the primordial Buddha, Vajradhara, burned at its center. The light of Bajradhara also emanated in the colors of the rainbow and in each of the 5 colors appeared one of the Five Buddhas: Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi.



- ✧ Having heard about this strange incident, many pilgrims, including bodhisattva Manjushree came to pay homage to this auspicious flame with his two consorts Varada and Mokshada from Wutai Shan, the Five-Peaked Mountain in China. He paid a homage to Swoyambhu and drained the water of the Kathmandu Valley by cutting a gorge at Gokarna, Pashupati and Chovar. Manjushree then founded a town, Manjupatan and enthroned one of his devotees, Dharmakara, as king. Then to support the thousand-petaled lotus and its burden of flame, a high mound of earth and stone was then piled around the axis by 42,000 arhats from Vulture Peak, and finally the primordial Swoyambhu Stupa was erected (©1995 Keith Dowman, Power Places of Kathmandu).
- ✧ There is a lack of concrete historical and archaeological evidences to trace the dates on the establishment and restoration of Swoyambhu Mahachaitya. However, the stone sculptures and stone monolithic votive Chaityas give very close references that the history of Swoyambhu Chaitya may go back to the early Lichchavi period.
- ✧ Based on the available legends and scriptures, it can be inferred that Swoyambhu Mahachaitya had already become a sacred pilgrimage center as early as 5th century AD though it was a simple mud mound until it was repaired and enlarged in the Lichchavi period. The Gopal Raj vamsavali mentions that Swoyambhu Mahachaitya was founded by the Lichchavi King Vrisadeva during the early 5th century. It is also said that the king's death rites were also performed in the Swoyambhu hill. An inscription of King Amshuvarma found in Swoyambhu gives the references of various Kings, including Vrishadeva and Manadeva.
- ✧ According to Buddhist literary works, the king Pracandadeva (of Gauda/Bengal) who had renounced his throne and converted himself as an ordained monk Shantikara Acharya

is credited to have established the Swoyambhu Mahachaitya along with the foundation of five shrines, popularly known as Agnipura, Nagapura, Vayupur, Vasupura and Shantipura. He is said to have used Shantipura as his abode. However, some scholars suggest that Shantikara only restored the stupa to the present shape and size, that was already built by the Lichchavi king (s).

- ✧ Buddhist scriptures also suggest that great tantric master Padmasambhava had visited Swoyambhu Chaitya and established the Black Lord of Death (Yamaraja) as a protector of the place. Another Buddhist master, Atisha Dipankara, the abbot of Vikramashila Monastery (India) also came to Swoyambhu Chaitya on pilgrimage in the 11th century while travelling to Tibet.
- ✧ The significance of Swoyambhu Chaitya has also been described by Tibetan monk Dharmasvamin (1226-34) in his account.
- ✧ The present day Swoyambhu Mahachaitya is the result of restoration carried out by the Buddhist communities of Nepal Mandala and Tibet under the patronage of the kings of Kathmandu about 25 years after its vandalism by the Bengal Muslim invader Shamsuddin Ilyas in 1349 AD. The available inscription that dates back to the year 1371 AD also refers about the maintenance of Chaitya (as Dharmadhatu) destroyed by Sultan Shams Ud-din's force in 1349 AD.
- ✧ Many Malla Kings of Khasha kingdom had also made pilgrimage to Swoyambhu Mahachaitya on their arrival to Nepal Mandala.
- ✧ In 1614 AD, the 6th Shamarpa is said to have replaced the central axis of stupa and covered the Meditation Buddha's shrine in the gilt copper repoussé during his visit to Swoyambhu.

- ❖ Swoyambhu Mahachaitya complex consists of a main chaitya, shrines, temples, votive stupas, viharas, monasteries, statues, prayer wheels, Vajra etc. Much of Swoyambhu's iconography comes from the Vajrayana tradition of Newar Buddhism.
- ❖ The self-emerged stupa, the **Swoyambhu Vagishvara Dharmadhatu Stupa** is the principal monument in Swoyambhu Mahachaitya. Swoyambhu Mahachaitya is the archetype of Nepalese chaityas, especially for the Newari Buddhists. The principal stupa is accompanied by the shrines of elaborately decorated five Dhyani Buddhas- Akshobhya (east), Ratnasambhava (south), Amitabha (west), and Amoghasiddhi (north) in the 4 cardinal directions, and the shrine of Mahavairocana (supposed to be at the center), in the east beside Akshobhya's shrine. Moreover, the shrines of 4 Taras are located in the intermediate directions. The white dome and intricately painted Buddha's (Dhyani Buddha) eyes (with Vajradristi and Sunyadristi) on harmika are the major icons of the mahachaitya.
- ❖ The shrines of the Buddha are elaborately decorated with gilt repousse with jewel ornament on top. A signature Great Vajra (the biggest Vajra) offered by king Pratap Malla has been set upon a drum to the east of the stupa.
- ❖ Other significant monuments and shrines include Pratappur Shikhara Temple and Anantapur Temple (as residence of Bhairava and Bhairavi); Vasupura Temple (a shrine to Vasudha); Newar's Agamche, Drukpa Kagyu Gomba (Devadharma Mahavihara, Bhutanese), Ajima Hariti (protectress of children, dedicated to MahaManjushree) Temple, Shantipur Temple, Karma Kagyu Gomba (Karmaraj Mahavihara, Tibetan), Theravada Anandakuti Mahavihara (statue donated by the Burmese monk), Sri Lankan Chaitya, Bishwa Shanti Mahavihara (Karma Raj Mahavihara) built by Tibetan Lama) etc.

- ✧ Pratappur and Anantapur Temple were built by the king Pratap Malla in the 17th century. Vasupuri is considered to have consecrated by Shantikara Acharya, other 4 of 5 element shrines include Akasapuri, Agnipuri, Nagapuri, and Vasupuri. Bhutanese gomba was built in 1780 AD by the King of Bhutan for his queen who spent few years in Swoyambhu doing meditation and worshipping. Agamche house is believed to have imprisoned the naga serpents. Temple of Shantipur, the adobe of Shamvara is also regarded as the gateway to Naga kingdom and remains always closed with wooden door. It is believed that there is a secret entrance to the path to the Naga Realm. Only Thakali of Buddhacharya can perform worship and meditation in the Shantipur Temple. Here at Shantipur, Saint Vagisvarakirti is said to have attained rainbow body. The Tibetan Karma Kagyu Gomba, built by the venerable Tibetan Lama Sabchu Rinpoche in 1954 AD houses a large image of Budhha. Anandakuti Vihar which also consists of Sacred Bodhi Tree is the hub for the resurgence of Theravada Buddhism.
- ✧ Hundreds of stone **votive stupas** established in various periods along a large **standing Buddha** (possibly of the 12th century) have enhanced the spiritual and architectural quality of Swoyambhu Mahachaitya.
- ✧ Manjushree Hill (with Manjushree's Stupa) and Vipaswi's Stupa (The Gopucha Parvata Stupa) are other significant sites in Swoyambhu. Here in Gopucha Parvat Vipaswi Buddha had his throne and where Sakyamuni Buddha is believed to have visited and taught in his lifetime.
- ✧ Buddhist devotees, monks and masters from all over the world visit Swoyambhu throughout the year and during special occasions. Newars of Kathmandu Valley pay visit to the jungle of Swoyambhu for one month during Gunla parva.



- ✧ There are few craft centers full of metal and wooden statues, thankas, pouvas.

d. Nagarjuna Hill and Jamacho

- ✧ Located on the northwest rim of Nepal Mandala, Nagarjuna forest and Jamacho Hill are the sacred hills with extreme natural beauty. According to Swoyambhu Purana, Vipasvi Buddha came to the hill of Jamacho and performed meditation in Satya Yuga when Kathmandu Valley was still a big lake. Staying in this hill, Vipasvi Buddha is believed to have sown the seed of Lotus on a big lake that eventually led to the emergence of Swoyambhu Chaitya.
- ✧ The highest point of the hill which also marks the throne of Vipasvi Buddha has a monastery called Nagarjuna Jamacho Monastery. Jamacho hill is equally revered by Buddhists, Bons and Hindus. In the southern part of the hill top, there lies a stone image of Nagarjun Mahadev and a Naga. Moreover, a 8 ft tall stone image of Padmasambhava has recently been erected here.
- ✧ Four main caves, namely Cave of Nagarjuna and Shakyamuni, Cave of Acharya Vasubandhu, Cave of Akshobya and Nagarjuna, Cave of Buffalo Buddha are also the sacred place are also the sacred places worth visiting by the Buddhist devotees and practitioners.
- ✧ The Bon monastery Tristen Norbutse (Tinghare Bon Gomba) established in Ichangunarayan, Nagarjuna by Guru Yongen Rinpoche in 1987 AD is the first Bon Buddhist monastery in Nepal Mandala. It was built 20 years after the establishment of Bon monastery - Menri Monastery in Dolanji, Himanchal Pradesh, India in 1967 AD.
- ✧ Located within the territory of Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park, Jamacho is also a famous place for hiking and bird

watching. A view tower has been established at the hill top to view the spectacular landscape of Nepal Mandala and the mountain panorama. A big festival is observed at Jamacho annually on Chaitra Shukla Purnima.

e. Shipacho (Shivapuri) and Baghdwar

- ✧ Located on the northern rim of Nepal Mandala, Sankha or Sipuchva or Shivapuri is the tallest among the four sacred mountains of Nepal Mandala. According to Buddhist scriptures, Sipucho or Shivapuri is the sacred place where Kakruchhanda Buddha is believed to have emerged and meditated in the Treta Yuga. Two sacred rivers namely Bagmati (to the northeast) and Kasavati or Vishnumati (to the southwest) emerge from the sacred territory of Shivapuri Hill. The legend has it that Kakruchhanda Buddha himself caused Bagmati River to emerge from Baghdwar. During the first day of Baishakh, there happens a grand annual festival. Locals also believe that the Bagdwar water has the power to wash away sin and to cure leprosy.
- ✧ The famous Nagi Gomba (a retreat center) is located on the upper lap of Shivapuri Hill.
- ✧ As an important place of Shivapuri Nagarjuna National Park, Shivapuri Hill is also a famous site for hiking, bird watching, butterfly watching, orchid visit and observing the spectacular views of Nepal Mandala to the south and Himalayan panorama to the north.

f. Sankhu, Manichud and Vajra Yogini

Sankhu: A Tantric, Cultural and blessed ancient Buddhist town

- ✧ Located on the northeast rim of Nepal Mandala, Sankhu is considered to be one of four ancient towns (about 3320 years old) in Nepal Mandala. Sankhu, the ancient Newari settlement



lies on the ancient trade and spiritual route to Tibet via Helambu. Sankhu used to be an important stopover on the old trade route between Kathmandu and Lhasa, Tibet. According to Manisail Mahavadana, the first settlement in Shankhapur was established by king Shankhadeva, as inspired by Vajra Yogini. The Conch cell shaped cultural and tantric Newari town has 8 small settlements (toles), 7 gates, 8 viharas (plus one Dharmachakra Vihara), 8 Vinayak (Ganesh) temples, 8 Bhairav and Astamatrika.

- ✧ The multi-ethnic and multi-cultural city was a Buddhist town since the time of Lichchavi. Sankhu and Vajra Yogini area are considered to have blessed by bodhisattva MahaManjushree, and Great Tantric Master Padmasambhava.
- ✧ There are many legends about the places (including Sankhu) in the rims of Nepal Mandala where bodhisattva Maha Manjushree is believed to have spent for some time before he drained the water from Kathmandu Valley and founded a city called Manjupattana. Legend has it that Manjushree who came to worship self-emerged stupa (Swoyambhu) with his two consorts and 500 disciples also stayed in Sankhu Manichud. Manjushree is also believed to have witnessed a vision of Heruka Chakrasamvara together with his consort Vajrayogini.
- ✧ In the 7th century Princess Bhrikuti is believed to have travelled to Tibet via Sankhu. Locals believe that princess Bhrikuti had her Swoyamvara with the Tibetan dharma king Tsong Tsong Gampo in the first half of 7th century who initiated Buddhist dharma in Tibet.
- ✧ The biography of Padmasambhava mentions that Padmasambhava had travelled to Sankhu on pilgrimage; adopted Shakyadevi as his consort and practiced the Yangdak and vajrakilaya Tantras together at Asura Cave in Pharping.

Sankhu and Vajrayogini areas are believed to have blessed with a number of termas concealed by Guru Rinpoche.

- ✧ Sankhu is believed to be a **great pilgrimage site** for Tibetan pilgrims from 14th to 16th century AD. Vairochana, the great translator and the first Tibetan practitioner of dzokchen is said to have offered a golden icon to the vihara of Sankhu.
- ✧ It is believed that Jarsingh Pouwa was constructed targeting the pilgrims and traders from Tibetan visiting Nepal Mandala via Sankhu.

Manichud

- ✧ Located in the Shivapuri-Nagarjuna National Park at an elevation of 2192m, Manichud Daha is one of the sacred and beautiful places in the northeast rim of Nepal Mandala. It offers the majestic view of Shankarapur City, Manohara River and Bouddhanath Stupa to the south and the spectacular view of Gaurishankar Himal and other Himalayan range to the east.
- ✧ Like Namobuddha, Manichud Hill is identified with the previous birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha. As per Jataka story, bodhisattva **Prince Manichud (Manichura) of Saket** donated jewel of his forehead to accomplish his Dana Parmita for eradicating drought and illness in the kingdom. Lalitavistara suggests that Shakyamuni Buddha had made a pilgrimage to Manichud Parvat.
- ✧ Manichud Hill or Manisail Parvat is a spiritual place to mark the broader location of Manichud though the actual location of donation of jewel by the prince is located few hundred meters down from this daha where two old stone stupas are existed. At the sacred Manichud Daha, there is an Ashokan Stupa, a stone image depicting the scene of two people cutting the forehead of Bodhisattva Manichud to extract his jewel, and an image of Shiva and Parvati. Here at Manuchud Daha,

pilgrims perform circumambulation for 7 times and take holy water as sacred gift.

- ✧ Local Tamangs in collaboration with Kashing Lama Rinpoche are trying to promote Manichud as a sacred pilgrimage and spiritual retreat center. Manichud Festival is celebrated by locals during Shrawan Shukla Purnima.
- ✧ A 7 km road passing through Vajra Yogini Temple, Tamang villages and the blooming Rhododendron forest connects Sankhu Newari town with Manichud Daha. It can also be reached from Sundarijal, Dhap and Chisapani.

Sankhu Vajra Yogini (Khadga Yogini)

- ✧ Sankhu Vajra Yogini is considered to be the eldest of the Four Sister Yoginis of Nepal Mandala. In Tibetan Buddhism, Vajra Yogini is also revered as a female Buddha protectress and identified as Ugratara (the wrathful emanation of Tara), Ekjati, and guardian of the Dzokchen dharma. In Hindu tantra, she is identified as **Blue Tara** (Nil Tara). Tibetan regards her as the Naro Khachoma (Naropa's Dakini). Legend has it that king (prince) Manichud cut off his jeweled hair knot as an offering to Vajra Yogini; since then she is also known as Mani Yogini. Vajrayogini, as a yidam deity is considered to be the consort of Heruka.
- ✧ There are many legends about the establishment of Vajra Yogini Temple and other monument shrines including Swoyambhu Chaitya, Viharas and stupas.
- ✧ Legend has it that Vajra Yogini Temple was founded by the great Lichchavi king Manadeva I, the beloved son of Vrisadeva. According to Gopalraj Vamsavali, Manadeva innocently beheaded his father king Vrisadeva for ending the famine and drought in the kingdom and observed a penance. The severed head then flew from Narayana Hiti and towards Sankhu and upon reaching Vajrayogini, the great

Swoyambhu chaitya (Jojeshvara Chiba Temple) is said to have arisen spontaneously at the Mhasukhva Maju. Still today, the bronze head of the Buddha at the temple of Mhasukhva Maju is recognized as the head of Vrisadeva. During the Vajrajogini Jatra (Chaitra Purnima), Vajrayogini Ugra-Tara and the self-arising Swoyambhu Stupa are brought out in a procession to bless the public.

- ✧ Three storey pagoda styled Vajrayogini Temple is enshrined with the four-armed self-arising Vajrayogini as a main shrine deity. The self-arising Vajrayogini is flanked by Singhini and Byaghrini (female Singha and female Tiger). Evidence (circa 1350 AD) suggests that the image of Ugratara, also known as Mahachina Tara, was brought to this place from Bengal by Buddhist priests escaping the damages of the Muslim invasion.
- ✧ The temple is flanked by Basuki Nagraja (to the right) and Guh Vihara (to the left) that houses the Dhaval Chaitya (Swoyambhu Chaitya). Buddhists regard the Basuki Nagraj stone as Akchhovya Tathagatha. Guh Bahal is mentioned in the 7th century Harigaon inscription that relates to the donations offered by King Amshuvarman (c. 605-21) to various valley bahals, including Guh Bahal, which was mentioned first on the list. Thus, Guh Bahal is claimed to be the oldest certified vihara in Nepal Mandala. Guh Vihara houses a Swoyambhu Chaitya in the place of shrine. The extreme Hindu priest Shankaracharya is blamed to have destroyed the sites and made chaitya downward (down turned). A chaitya has been erected on a graduated plinth containing shrines of the four Buddhas in four directions.
- ✧ King Pratap Malla is credited to have demolished the previous Granthakuta styled temple and reconstructed the present three tiered temple of Vajra Yogini in 1651 AD. In 1725AD Jagajjaya Malla and his wife offered golden roof. Rana Prime



Minister Bir Shamsher replaced jhingati roof with brass sheets.

- ✧ There are at least three caves in the backside of the temple. The caves lying in the vicinity of Vajra Yogini are considered to have been used as meditation seats by many Tibetan monks and Indian Mahasiddhas, including Nagarjuna.
- ✧ Other sites worth visiting in the surroundings of Sankhu and Vajrayogini include Jaharsingh Pouva, Salinadi, Panchamahaxmasthan, Bhotechour, Kartike Bhanjyang, Changunarayan, Sundarijal etc.

g. *Bouddha Mahachaitya (Jyarung Khasyor, Khasti Chaitya)*

- ✧ Bouddha Mahachaitya which is known as Jhyarung Khasyor Chhorten in Tibetan language and Khasti Chaitya in Newari language is one of the largest, oldest and the most revered Buddhist monuments in the world.
- ✧ Listed in UNESCO WHS in 1979 AD, Bouddha Mahachaitya is believed to have entombed the relics of Kassapa Buddha, the predecessor of the historic Buddha Shakyamuni. However, it doesn't contain any tangible evidence in support of this belief other than a few inscriptions in Tibetan of late origin.
- ✧ Lying along the ancient route from Nepal Mandala through Sankhu to Lhasa (in Tibet), the great stupa is one of the best masterpieces of Buddhist stupa architectures of Nepal Mandala and the entire Himalayas.
- ✧ Bouddha Mahachaitya is the major center of Buddhist practice, learning and pilgrimage for Tamang and Newari communities in Nepal Mandala as well as followers of Mahayana Buddhism from the Nepalese Himalayas and from Tibet, China, Mangolia and other southeastern and eastern Asian countries.

- ✧ With the establishment of over 50 monasteries around Bouddha Mahachaitya, it has become the principal center of Himalayan Buddhist dharma studies and spiritual retreat center, especially for the western Buddhist enthusiasts and spiritual practitioners.
- ✧ More importantly, after the arrival of Tibetan Refugees after 1960s, Bouddha area has become a representative Tibetan Buddhist world in Nepal Mandala. The Chaitya has been continuously visited and supported for restoration by the Tibetan high lamas.
- ✧ Tibetan chronicles suggest that Bouddha Chaitya has always remained as an important practice center for the practitioners of Vajrayana Buddhism, as it is recognized to be one of the Eight Great Cremation Grounds of the Eight Mother Goddesses of Kala Bhairava's followers.
- ✧ There is no exact historical and archaeological evidences to trace the exact date of the establishment of this great chaitya. Chabahil Dando Chaitya's brick inscription, which is considered to be 2200 years old can be taken as a good reference to trace the foundation of Bouddha Stupa as some legends suggest that they the contemporary stupas.
- ✧ Many Buddhist scriptures and historical accounts, including that of Daniel Right's chronicle (of 19th century) suggest that the chaitya was built in the 5th century during the reign of the Lichchavi king Manadeva I (464-505AD). Some Tibetan legends suggest that Manadeva was the reincarnation of Tibetan Lama named Khasa. Newar chronicles suggest this stupa to have been constructed during the reign of king Vrisadeva, Mandeva's father in 5th century, who is considered to have built 4 other stupas in Kathmandu Valley.
- ✧ According to Gopal Raj Vamsavali, the chaitya is also believed to have restored by another Lichchavi king Shivadeva (r. 590-



604).

- ✧ There are many legends in Sanskrit, Newari, Tibetan sources behind the origin and foundation of Bouddha Chaitya. One popular Nepali legend is related with the Lichchavi King Manadeva who is believed to have founded this chaitya to get rid of his sin of beheading of his father Vrishadeva innocently (and as advised by his father).
- ✧ Newar legend suggests that Khasa Chaitya was made using dew water. In Newari language the “Khasti Chaitya” is derived from the word “Khasa” which means the lord of Wisdom or Lord Buddha.
- ✧ The legend which is widely popular amongst the followers of Tibetan Buddhism is related to the story of **Jhyaji Ma** (the Poultry Woman) who is believed to have initiated the construction of chaitya after getting order from the king. Based on the legend, the stupa is named as “Jhyarung Khasyor” in Tibetan language which literally means “I have given the order, I can’t take it back”. A legend related to Nyingma tradition suggests that the stupa was founded by **Jhyaji Ma**, the poultry woman at a time when Mahakashyapa was preaching in the central land of Magadha. According to the story, the poultry woman wanted to build a stupa and up on receiving rare permission from the king, she started to build a stupa and completed up to the vase. After her passing away, her four sons completed the rest of the stupa by enshrining the relics of Tathagata Mahakashyapa at the garva of the stupa. During the consecration of the stupa, the Tathagata Mahakashyapa, surrounded by his attendant Bodhisattvas, appeared in front of the stupa. All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions and the five lineages of Tathagatas, the Lords of the Three Worlds and the innumerable wrathful and peaceful deities appeared there honoring the occasion with their most auspicious presence.

- ✧ As per the legend, the stupa is also called **Unity of Buddhas** as all the Buddhas of the ten directions and all the Bodhisattvas dissolved in a single flash of light and vanished into the Great Stupa up on the completion of its successful consecration.
- ✧ All four brothers were blessed with the merit and wish fulfilling power by the vast assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In their next life, elder brother reborn as the dharma king (Tri Son Detson) to establish the doctrine of the Buddhas in the icebound land of savages (Tibet); the second brother reborn as a vikchhu (Santaraksita) to introduce the community of Sangha in Tibet; the third brother reborn miraculously from the lotus as a Tantric Yogin (Padmasambhava) to guard the Buddha's doctrine by establishing Samye Monastery in Tibet by subduing demons and subjugating all the poisonous cannibal natives, and the fourth and youngest son reborn as a religious minister to coordinate all efforts of his three brothers to establish, spread and safeguard the doctrine of Buddha in Tibet.
- ✧ Amongst the earliest Tibetan sources, The Biography of Great Guru Padmasambhava, has mentioned the location of Jarung Khashor first in Magadha in India (in 12th century) and in Kathmandu Valley in the 13th century eventually establishing the connection between Bouddha Mahachaitya and the Buddhist communities in Tibet.
- ✧ The Shakya Zangpo, a Nyingma Tantric master from Kham, Eastern Tibet (15th/16th Century AD), who is also recognized as an incarnation of Padmasambhava is believed to have identified the location of Chaitya, following the Terma revealed by himself and excavated and restored the stupa. The same Lama is credited to have established a line of tulkus associated with Yolmo, hence also called Yolmo Shakya Zangpo.
- ✧ After the restoration of the chaitya, the consecration ceremony



was held in 1728 AD. Another major beautification work started in 1821 AD. After Nepal-Tibet War in 1859 AD, Chini Teli Sim Lama was appointed as the priest of the Chaitya. In 1919/20 AD, the chaitya was again restored jointly by the Nepalese sponsors and the Tibetan disciples of Togden Shakya Shree.

- ✧ Bouddha Stupa looks like a giant mandala. At the bottom, the stupa is surrounded by wall with 20 corners. The 5 storey Stupa represents the mythical Mt. Meru, center of the cosmos. The 36 m tall stupa which is considered to be one of the largest stupas of Asia is believed to have enshrined the relic of Kasyapa Buddha in its Garva. The hemisphere-shaped dome of the stupa is 43.25 ft tall and 120 ft in diameter, making it the second tallest stupa in the world.
- ✧ As per Tibetan mandalas, there are shrines of four Dhyani Buddhas in four cardinal directions, with the fifth, Vairocana, enshrined in the center. Moreover, 108 forms of Avalokiteshvara (Padmapani) are depicted in stone sculptures around the base of the dome.
- ✧ The harmika box and the 13 rings of the spire are covered by gilt copper sheers. There is a pyramid with 13 rings from the base to the pinnacle that symbolizes the path to enlightenment. Pancha Buddha (Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi) have been placed in 4 directions of Soksing. The great stupa is topped with a square tower bearing the omnipresent Dhyani Buddha's eyes on all four sides of Harmika. A jewel pinnacle caps the entire structure.
- ✧ In the southern enclave, one can see three **Mani stones** and two **Chaityas** in the Lichchavi style. A separate temple dedicated to **Ajima** (or Hariti by Newars, Jadzimo by Tibetans and Shitala by Hindus) has been built in between two doorways of the principal entrance on the north.

- ✧ Bouddha Jayanti (April/March), Gai Jatra/Cow Festival (Ghinting Nakadhing Ho (August), Ghonai (August), Rice Planting Festival (August), Gathemangal (August), Lakhe Dance (August), Chhechyu Puja (Dec./Jan), Lhosar (Jan/Feb), Hariti Festival (Jan/Feb), Timal Jatra (March/April), Jhyalo Festival (12 Years Festival) are some of the key festivals celebrated in Bouddha Mahachaitya.
- ✧ In recent decades (especially after the arrival of Tibetan Refugees), more than 50 different Monasteries have been constructed around the great stupa. Significant monasteries located around Bouddha Mahachaitya include the following:
 - ✧ Jamchen Monastery or Trikala Maitreya Vihara (1986 AD): belongs to Sakya School.
 - ✧ Guru Lakhang Monastery: Nyingma School.
 - ✧ Dabsang Monastery or Thousand-Buddha Monastery (1966 AD): Belongs to Kagyu School.
 - ✧ Samtealing Monastery (1971 AD): Belongs to Gagyü School; a branch of Kidong Tashi Samtealing Monastery, Ketung, Tibet.
 - ✧ Thrangu Tashi Choling Monastery (1978 AD): Belong to Karma Kagyu School. It has branches in Vanaras, Nalanda, Lumbini, Namobuddha, Bhaktapur, Sitapaila (Ani Gomba).
 - ✧ Shechen Tennyi Dargyeling Monastery (1977-1980 AD): Belongs to Nyingma School, built in Bhutanese style.
 - ✧ Thralam Sasang Nangyal Ling (1991 AD): Belongs to Sakya School.
 - ✧ Tharik Monastery (1969 AD): Belongs to Sakya tradition.
 - ✧ Pal Dilyyag Monastery: Belongs to Kagyu tradition.
 - ✧ Pal Nye Ghon Monastery: Belongs to Kagyu tradition.
 - ✧ Sherpa Monastery: Belongs to Nyingma tradition.
 - ✧ Urgen Donger Choling Monastery (1995 AD): Belongs to Nyingma tradition.

- ✧ The responsibility of preservation and promotion of the chaitya has been entrusted to Bouddhanath Area Development Committee since 2053 BS.

h. Charumati Stupa (Salag Dolag) and Dhandu Chaitya

- ✧ According to Newari legends Charumati Stupa (Salag Dolag) is believed to have been constructed by Charumati, the beloved daughter of Emperor Ashoka during 3rd century BCE. Dando Chaitya's brick inscription is the only and oldest reference suggesting the establishment of chaitya 2200 years ago. The stupa is also known as Dhandu Chaitya or Manju Bahal.
- ✧ However, Tibetan legends suggest that the stupa was constructed from the gloriously consecrated earth and stone remnants of the Bouddha Mahachaitya, during 5th century or 3rd century BCE or even before. Lhuti Punhi (Chaitra Shukla Purnima) is celebrated with varied rituals.

i. Jana Bahal or Jamadya or Sweta Matsyendranath

- ✧ Also known as Kanaka Chaitya Mahavihara or Karunamaya Lokeshvara (the bodhisattva of compassion) or Sweta Matsyendranath or Jamal Bahal, Jana Bahal is the residence of Jamadya (or Jamaleshvara). For Tibetan Buddhists, it is identified with Jowo Dzamling Karmo (the white Lord of the world) or as Jowo Jamal Karmo (the White Lord Jamali). It is also recognized as Talking Bodhisattva, blessed with the power of speech. Hindus regard it as a God of Rain.
- ✧ Located in Khel Tole, in between Indra Chowk and Asan Tole, Jana Bahal is one of four Karunamaya Lokeshvara temples of Nepal Mandala. Equivalent to that of Red Matsyendranath of Patan, Sweta Matsyendranath is the powerful principal deity or protector deity of Kathmandu (northern territory of Nepal Mandala) and is honored by the entire town during chariot festival. The existence of Sweta Matsyendranath in current

location signifies the importance of the area as an epicenter of the northern territory of Nepal Mandala (Yambu).

- ✧ Jana Bahal is one of the 16 principal viharas of Northern Kathmandu Valley. The importance of this vihara is very high as it stands as the only or few of the vihara (s) in Kathmandu (district) that have been performing the Nitya puja, baha's complete rituals, all rites (including Chuda Karma) and sangha's all ritual functions, including annual sangha bhojana uninterruptedly since the very time of its establishment.
- ✧ Jana Bahal is believed to have been founded during the early Lichchavi period though there is a lack of strong historical and archaeological evidence to prove the exact date. Newari chronicles suggest that the vihara was founded in the 7th century during the reign of king Gunakamadeva.
- ✧ The present day vihara complex is said to have established after the image of Jamadya was unearthed in its previous location "Jamal Village" and moved to the present location during the reign of Yaksha Malla (1428-82 AD). The old stone image of Jamadhya was replaced by the present day brass image after the southern part of vihara was destroyed by disastrous fire in 1917.
- ✧ The two - roofed pagoda styled temple is surrounded by many votive chaityas, pillars and images, including 8-Bodhisattva Shikharakuta chaityas, a Kanaka Chaitya, a relief of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, 4 pillars supporting Sadakshari Lokeshvara, Simhasana Lokeshvara, Manjushree, Prajnaparamitama and Green Tara and so on.
- ✧ The main shrine temple is flanked by a relief image of 10-armed Namasamgiti Manjushree (to the right) and an image of Amitabha (to the left). In the middle of the courtyard lies the two-roofed pagoda styled temple of Kamadya.



- ✧ The main shrine temple houses a four feet tall image of Padmapani Lokeshvara as Jamadya. The Jamadya is flanked by White and Green Tara, and adorned with ornaments and garments with the sacred fivefold thread and golden tika on his forehead.
- ✧ The chariot of Jamadya is brought in the city of Kathmandu during the White Matsyendranath festival.

j. *Itum Bahal*

- ✧ The two-storey square shape viharais one of the largest Buddhist viharas of Kathmandu city. Also known as Keshchandra Mahavihar, the bahal was founded by Bhaskaradeva and thus the full name of the viharais Shree Bhaskardeva Samskarita Keshchandra Krit Paravart Mahavihara. Itum Baha is considered to be one of the prominent Vajrayana Buddhist viharas. There is a legend of a cannibal demon Guru Mapa (Maya) and a certain Keshchandra who traded with him.
- ✧ Many Khasha Kings of Khasha kingdom had donated gold and other offerings to this bahal during their pilgrimage to Nepal Mandala. Great Tantric Master Padmasambhava and Great Tibetan translator Marpha are said to have spent their time doing meditation in this viharais.

k. *Vikramashila Mahavihara (Thamel Bahal)*

- ✧ Also known as Vikramashila Mahavihara, Dharmadhatu Mahavihara, Bhagawan Bahal, Simhakalpanagar or Raj Vihara, Tham Bahi is one of the ancient Viharais of Nepal Mandala. The viharais believed to have founded previously in Samakhusi and later on moved to present location in Thamel.
- ✧ Tham bahi is one of the oldest, rich and significant bahis in Nepal Mandala. There is a lack of historical and archaeological evidences to pinpoint the exact year of its establishment in its first location (at Samakhusi). Based on Newari chronicles

and legends, the vihara is believed to have re-constructed at present location (in Thamel) for Atisha Dipankara Shrijnana (982-1054 AD) who spent about one year (1041 - 1042 AD) in Nepal on his journey to Tibet to revive Buddhism in the 11th century.

- ✧ Stone inscription of Itum Bahal suggests that Vikramashila Mahavihara was established by Bhashkardeva (1045-1047 AD) and later renovated by Kesh Chandra, the brother in law of Simhala Sarthabaha during 11th century. The bahi is said to have gone through series of restorations before 12th century, in 17th century during the reign of Pratap Malla and later period. The torana inscription of the bahi suggests that the restoration work of vihara was carried out by Hari Singh in 1287 AD during the reign of king Parthvendra Malla.
- ✧ Tham Bahi was one of the higher teaching institutes and a popular learning centers of Buddhist philosophy and Sanskrit language in early 11th century for not only the Buddhist masters, monks and practitioners of Nepal Mandala also but also for scholars from India and Tibet. Besides Atisha Dipankara, other renowned Indian and Tibetan Buddhist pundits and monks who visited and studied on Buddhist philosophies and Sanskrit languages in this vihara include Darmashri Mitra (a renowned Vikramashila scholar), Dharmasvamin (a renowned Tibetan Buddhist scholar), Vibhuti Chandra and Vanaratna etc. Atisha is said to have spent most of his time in this vihara writing Prajnaparamita books in Sanskrit, which is still preserved in this Bahi. Dharmasvamin had given credit to Atisha for the construction of this vihara.
- ✧ One of the major significant features of Tham Bahi is that it comprises of four volume of gold-written Satasahashrika Prajnaparamita Scripture. Initially, it had five volume, but now only four volume are preserved in the Bahi. The four volume Scripture contains a total of 2032 folio written with



pure golden ink. Each folio has nine lines in three rows (altogether 27 lines per folio). According to Bhagwan bahal inscription dated 1223 AD, the Satasahashrika Prajnaparamita Scripture was written in 1223 AD by Jinashri Mitra, a disciple of Manjushree. It is believed that, bodhisattva Manjushree wrote the first three pages with his finger, and after being inspired by Manjushree, Jinashri completed the remaining pages.

- ✧ Principal deity (Kwapadya) of this Bahi is **Dipankara Buddha** who is seen as Vavisyavyakarana mudra Buddha or Devavatar mudra Buddha and is also considered to be the **Singha Sartha Bahu** or **Garud Juju** (Garud Bhagwan).
- ✧ The four-storey vihara with three-tier roof structure has three courtyards: Tu courtyards, Mula courtyard and Agama courtyard. Main courtyard has four small chaityas. At the corner, there lies a temple with Shrine of Jatika Ajima.
- ✧ Despite having such as a huge ancient architecture and recorded history of being one of the significant centers of Buddhist teaching and learning in Nepal Mandala, Tham Bahi is not counted in the sixteen bahas and sixteen bahis of Kathmandu; instead it is counted in other vihara category, just because it is run by **Pradhan Guthi**, not by Vajracharya and Shakya Guthi.
- ✧ Pradhan family, who believe themselves as the descendants of Singha Sartha Bahu are the in charge of this vihara. In Jataka story, there is a popular legend on Singha Sartha Bahu (known as Norbu Sangya in Tibetan tradition) which is about the travel of Nepali merchant to Tibet, who encountered a She-devil, and returned to Nepal Mandala riding a flying horse. **Singha Sartha Bahu** is sanctified as Chakan Dyah, an incarnation of the Buddha, the founder of Thambahil.
- ✧ In contrast to the practices of other viharas of Nepal mandala,

3 Shrestha Newars, selected by Pradhan Guthi are given Barechuyegu initiation and are given right to worship in the main shrine of Bahi, image of Dipankara Buddha as Singha Sartha Bahu. They also recite the ancient manuscript of Prajnaparamita.

- ✧ However, Tham Bahi invites the Vajracharya of Kwa Baha, Jwa Baha, Dhawaka Baha, Gam Baha and Layku Bahi to perform the Puja on Agama deity. Kwa Baha (Maitripura Mahavihara) which belongs to the 16 bahas of Acharya Guthi (Vajracharya Sangha Guthi) has a special relation with Tham Bahi. The Thakalis of Kwa baha act as Vajracharya priest in Tham Bahi to perform daily Nitya Puja of Agam deity in the morning and evening. These priests are considered as **Dyahpala** of Tham Bahi.
- ✧ In the past, the Kumari of Kwa Baha used to be worshiped as the incarnation of Vajradeva, a purely Buddhist deity in Tham Bahi as well. For this purpose, there is a separate three storey pagoda style temple in Tham Bahi. She used to be worshiped four times (during Disi pujas and Gunla parvas) in a year by the Pradhan communities of Tham Bahi. However, there is no Kumari in Kwa Baha for the last many years due to resource constraints.
- ✧ Several Puja rituals and festivals are performed in this bahi during different occasions, including Disi Puja, Yamani Purnima, Manamaigu Jatra, Chakan Dya Puja, Pitha Puja, Golden Prajnaparamita Puja, Panchadana Puja, Kati purne, Khadga Jatra etc.
- ✧ During Gunla parva (July/August), all volumes of prajnaparmita are recited for four days by four Vajracharyas of four renowned viharas of Kathmandu. During the last day of recitation, Satasahashrika Prajnaparamita Scripture is made public. On the last day, Living Goddess Kumari of Kumari Bahal makes a visit to the vihara and observe recitation by

the Vajracharya priests. During the festival, the images of Dipankara, other Gods and Goddesses and various poubha painting, including scroll painting story of voyage to Lhasa of merchants led by Simhala Sarthabaha are displayed.

I. Vishwo Shanti Vihara (Theravada Vihara)

- ❁ Vishwo Shanti Maha Vihara in Min Bhawan, Kathmandu is one of the leading and active Theravadin viharas in Kathmandu. Besides performing daily vinaya activities, occasional Buddhist events, and short and longer days meditation courses, it also offers Masters degree course on Theravada Buddhism.

ii. Buddhist Viharas and Monuments of Patan

- ❁ If legends are to be believed, Buddhism had already entered into Patan in the 3rd century BCE with the arrival of Emperor Ashoka. Believed to have been founded by Ashoka, Lalitapatana (present day Patan), is arguably considered to be the first Buddhist city of Nepal Mandala.
- ❁ Having Four Ashokan Stupas in four cardinal directions and Pimbahal and other many viharas at its center, Patan city itself forms a mini Buddhist Circuit within the geo-physical and cultural landscape of Nepal Mandala.
- ❁ Several hundreds of Buddhist viharas and chaityas were believed to have founded in Patan in the last 2300 years. In the book written by JK Locke (1985 AD), there is an inventory of 186 Vahas and Vahis in Patan. Still today, 15 prominent Bahas (plus 3 bahas), 15 prominent Bahis, 4 prominent Stupas, Mangal Bazaar as a living craft center and still preserved centuries old Buddhist traditions and rituals have maintained the identity of Patan as a Buddhist city. Three bahas added to the previous 15 bahas include Co baha of Chobhar, Chilancho baha of Kirtipur and Bunga baha of Bungamati.
- ❁ Four Ashokan Stupas, Hirandyavarna Mahavihara (Golden

Temple), MahaBouddha, Rudravarna Mahaviraha, Aksheshwor Mahavihara, Yempi Mahavihara, Lokakirti Mahavihara, Naka Bahil etc. are the key Buddhist viharas and monuments of Patan.

- ❁ Other Buddhist heritage sites around Patan area include Bungadya (Red Matsyendranath), stupas of Bodegaon (Lachhi Stupa), four stupas of Lubhu, Phulchowki Hill (Phucho) etc.
- ❁ Other signature monuments and sites in Patan include Patan Dhoka, Patan Durbar Square, Pimbahal Pond, Kumbheshwor Pond and so on.
- ❁ Following two routes can connect the major Buddhist heritage sites and other cultural monuments in Patan area: (i) Patan Dhoka-Silimha Tole-Pim Bahal-Naka Bahil-Nag Bahal- Kwalkhu-Khumbheshwor-Swotha-Patan Durbar Square; (ii) Haugal-Saugal-Sundhara-MahaBouddha-Yokubahal- Ikhlabu- Purna Chandi.
- ❁ A brief detail of the most significant Buddhist vihara and monuments are presented below:

a. Four Ashokan Stupas of Patan

- ❁ Four Ashokan Stupas of Patan are considered to be the oldest and sacred Buddhist monuments of Patan. According to Newari chronicles and local belief, the four ancient sacred stupas currently located in the four cardinal directions such as Sankhamul in the north, Pulchowk in the west, Lagankhel in the south and Gwarkho in the east are believed to have founded by Emperor Ashoka during his pilgrimage to Nepal Mandala in 3rd century BCE.
- ❁ Foundation of Lalitapatana (as a Buddhist city) and four Ashokan Stupas by Emperor Ashoka is considered to have laid the strong foundation of Buddhism at community level in Patan in 3rd century BCE.
- ❁ Daniel Right's chronicles (19th century) also mentions that Emperor Ashoka might have visited Nepal Mandala with

his queen and supporting team members including Gurus; established the city (Ashokapatana or Lalitapatana), spread dharma teachings and constructed four stupas.

- ✧ However, there is still a lack of epigraphic evidence to justify the claims. Another great scholar Slusser has suggested that these four Ashokan Stupas may be the funerary mounds of pre-Buddhist origin and may predate the Mauryan period.

b. *Hirandyavarna Mahavihara (Kwa Bahal)*

- ✧ Also known as Kwa Bahal, Golden Temple, **Hiranyavarna Mahavihara** is the most significant monastery in Patan in terms of its contemporary religious vitality, art, architecture and size of sangha member. To the Tibetans it is known as the Yerang Shakya Thumpa (Patan Shakyamuni Buddha). It is one of 18 important bahas of Patan with the 2nd largest sangha composed of 14 community and 13 private vihara as sangha members.
- ✧ Kwa Baha is the only vihara in Patan to have performed the Buddhist traditions and rituals on a continued manner since several hundred years. The facts that (i) this vihara has been continuously performing daily Buddhist rituals and reciting the gold-written prajnaparmita by Buddhist Vajracharyas every day, and (ii) that the statues of Buddha from various viharas of Kathmandu Valley are brought to this vihara during Samyak Dana festival signify the religious significance of this vihara as an epicentre.
- ✧ Hirandyavarna Mahavihara has been able to preserve its **gold-written Pranjaparamita Scripture** (a widely renowned and venerated text), the Arya Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra (Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines) written in gold Ranjana script in its main shrine under the custodian of two child monks, called Bare-chuyegu. The manuscript dates back to 1215 AD and was compiled by

Bhikchhu Ananda of Kapitanagar during the reign of Abhaya Malla (1217-1255 AD).

- ✧ Hirandyavarna Mahavihara is said to have been built in the 11th century during the reign of Bhaskar Deva (1045-1048 AD cr). King Bhaskardeva is credited for installing the image of Shakyamuni Buddha as principal deity. Accordingly, its Sanskrit name is read as “Bhaskaradeva Samskarita Hirandyavarna Mahavihara”.
- ✧ About the origin of this vihara, there is a widely believed legend of a Woman, his son who used to make a **mud sculpture of Buddha** and a Hiranyaka mouse. According to the legend, the sculpture of Buddha prepared by the son of a woman was brought from its original location to the present location by a Vajracharya Kulapada as instructed by his king (who was advised in his dream to do so).
- ✧ The gold gilded pagoda styled and three-roofed vihara is considered to be one of the masterpieces of Newari Buddhist arts. At least two colophon of manuscripts, 38 copper plate inscriptions and 17 stone inscriptions describe the significance and chronology of the vihara.
- ✧ The three-storey main shrine building has Buddha Aksobhya, identified as **Shakyamuni Buddha**, as main shrine (kwabahaju) in a Bhumisparsha Mudra and flanked by his chief disciples Sariputtra and Maudgalyayana. The statue is adorned in a Mahayana style wearing a diadem, ornaments etc. It also bears 32 major marks and 80 minor marks of a Sambhogakaya Buddha.
- ✧ The single-roofed temple in the center of the courtyard, covered in gilt copper repousse, enshrines a small Swayambhu chaitya in the Lichchavi style. This is the lineage deity of Kwabaha sanga members. The chaitya also bears a rare image of Manjudeva with his two consorts Varada and Moksada. The



main doorway is guarded by Shariputra and Maudgalyayana.

- ✧ Whereas the southeastern corner of the central courtyard has the image of Manjushree, remaining three corners of the central courtyard have the images of Padmapani.
- ✧ The hall of the first floor of the adjoining southern building is dedicated to the shrine of Amitabha Buddha in a Dhyana mudra flanked by bodhisattvas Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamaprapta.
- ✧ The first floor of the building in the eastern direction from the courtyard is **agamche** and it bears a Kwa Baha's Tantric deity **Yogambara** and **his consort Jnanadakini**. Here various rituals (such as Gurumandala rite), initiation related activities and tantric performances are performed by Chakresvara Aju and Ten Senior most elder vajracharya members (Dasa Paramita).
- ✧ The hall of the first floor of the adjoining northern building is dedicated as the Gomba and houses an image of **Amoghapasa Lokeshvara** (built by Lhasa Newars) flanked by White Tara and Green Tara along with a very large prayer wheel. The Gomba was established in 1940s after the arrival of **Tibetan yogi** named **Kyanchi Lama** in the valley. This gomba is also famous as a center of Tibetan Buddhism for Newari people and is the best example of strong connection between the Newars of Kathmandu and the Tibetan Lamas (of Lhasa and Sigatse). Learned Tibetan Buddhist masters often came here to give initiation and teaching on Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. Newar monks who are ordained according to the Tibetan tradition often come to the shrine to give the uposadha vows, 5 precepts, and 88 precepts to the laity.
- ✧ The tantric shrine of Chakrasamvarashana and Chakrashamvara in union with Vajra Yogini, dedicated to the highest yoga tantra deity are located in the 1st and 2nd floor

of a 2 storey building located in the residential courtyard (Ilanani). Besides performing the tantric rituals such as Amdipuja, Astamivrata etc. the annual Sangha Vojana is also organized here.

- ❖ Other significant shrines and objects include Dharmadhatu (in front of Swoyambhu Chaitya), Vajrasattva Shrine, Tara Shrine, Namasangiti Shrine (one of the manifestations of Manjushree), Guheshwori Shrine, Mahakala etc.
- ❖ One of the interesting features of Newar Buddhist Traditions 'Pachadana Festival' is reflected here in the Kwa Baha with the statue of Four Monkeys in the four corners of the main courtyard. As per the legend, the panchadana festival is held on the anniversary of the king Sarvananda 's initial gift to Dipankara Buddha. There is an interesting legend about the Monkey Jnanakara- Dipankara Buddha- Alms Giving- Sarvananda King and Panchadana Festival. According to the legend, a monkey Jnanakara living in a dense forest up on offering Dipankara Buddha a Jackfruit accumulated merit and reborn as a human being 'Dharmasri'. When Dharmasri offered Dipankara Buddha a handful of dust, it turned to Gold and he was later reborn as a king 'Sarvananda'. King Sarvananda then started offering panchadana to Dipankara Buddha which is popularly known as Panchadana Festival in Newar Buddhist tradition.
- ❖ The vihara has been continuously performing the vihara's Nitya Puja, regular rituals, occasional rituals, family rites, annual sangha functions etc. uninterruptedly ever since the time of its establishment. Key daily ritual activities starts at 3.00am and ends at 9.30pm. Key ritual activities include daily ritual practices, purification bath, recitation of Namasangiti and Aparimita dharanis (regular as well as on sponsored) by the Namasangiti Recital Group members, recitation of Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita Suttra, beating the wooden



gong 108 times for several occasions, offering of Arati lamps etc.

- ✧ Kwa Baha is the most revered one amongst the viharas of Patan. Baha-puja of Newar Buddhists of Patan starts from here. In the Swoyambhu Chaitya the annual digu puja is performed by its members from Patan and throughout the country during April/May.
- ✧ Key festivals and events include Samyak Dana Festival (happens once every four years), Panchadana Festival (celebrated during the month of Gunla - July/August), Feasting the Sangha (Annual Festival), Dipankara Yatra/Festival (once every 12 years or at even longer intervals), Bahidyo Boyegu (Exhibition of the Gods; during Gunla festival), Gunla Parva/Dharma (month long sacred festival during the month of August/September) etc.

c. *Rudravarna Mahavihara*

- ✧ Also known as Oku Baha, the Sanskrit name of Rudravarna Mahavihara is “Shiva Deva Sanskarit Om Kuli Shri Rudravarna Mahavihar”. Rudravarna Mahavihara is one of the oldest, best documented and best preserved bahas of Patan. It is one of the 18 bahas of Patan with largest sangha composed of 29 affiliated sangha members.
- ✧ According to Newari chronicles and as its name implies, the establishment of Rudravarna Mahavihar dates back to 6th century AD during the reign of Lichchavi king Shiva Dev. King Shiva Dev is believed to have taken retirement in the same vihara. However, historians/architects such as Prof. Sudarshan Raj Tiwari do not agree with the fact that Rudravarna Mahavihara was founded in 6th century AD. King Rudra Dev is said to have renovated the vihara.
- ✧ The vihara consists of three complexes, namely U baha Gathicha (first and northern-most), Mu baha (the main

complex) and Yatalibi or Tago Chi baha (last and southernmost). The main shrine of the baha is oriented towards the North.

- ✧ Inside the courtyard there lies a Sumeru chaitya and two shrines, each containing image of Aksobhya Buddha (to the east) and Padmapani lokeshvara as kwapadya (to the west).
- ✧ The entrance to the main complex is marked by two stone lions, each resting on an elephant and each elephant resting on a turtle. The lion is surmounted by Hari Bahan Lokeshvara.
- ✧ The central sunken courtyard (just in front of the main shrine), is filled with a large collection of elements, including Lichchavi style chaitya, Dharmadhatu mandala, votive chaitya, stone pillar and life-size image of Juddha Shumsher Rana. It also bears eight bronze images, a pair of winged horses, a pair of garudas, a pair of horned horses and a pair of lions.
- ✧ The three storey and two-roofed main shrine building houses a large image of **Red faced 'Kwapadyo'**, the **Shakyamuni Buddha** facing north and adorned with various ornaments. The image of Red-faced Shakyamuni Buddha of Rudravarna Mahavihara is considered to be **one of the best decorated and attractive images** of Buddha. The image is detached from rare wall in such a way that dyo-pala can make a circumambulation during nitya-puja. On the second floor, just above the head of kwapadyo, there lies a **chaitya**. The top roof is surmounted by a row of 15 gold plated Chityas as gajura.
- ✧ At the southern part of the open hall in ground floor of the Eastern wing of Mu Baha lies an image of **Living Goddess Kumari** where locals perform Kumari Puja "wanegu".
- ✧ In the Agamche room at the first floor of Mu Baha there is an image of **Yogamber**, where Chahre puja is performed by



locals on 14th of Newari calendar.

- ✧ The first floor of west wing of Mu Baha houses the **Gumba complex** with the statue of **Amoghapasa Lokeshvara** where religious activity is conducted in every full moon day and first and eight day of Newari calendar.
- ✧ Yatalibi is the far most complex of Okubaha. The etymological meaning of Yatalibi is 'Yata' means South and 'Libi' means courtyard. The brick paved courtyard of Yatalibi bears a **stone Chaitya** (Tago Chi va). Also considered as one of the finest carved stone statues of Patan, the chaitya was built in 1685 AD under the supervision of Pandit Jayamuni Shakya.

d. *MahaBouddha of Patan*

- ✧ Founded by Abhay Raj Shakya; MahaBouddha is the replica of Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya, India. Also known as 'Temple of a thousand and eight Buddhas', it is one of the finest examples of terracotta arts in Nepal Mandala.
- ✧ Abhay Raj Shakya himself was the chief architect of the sikhara style Buddhist temple. He had designed this temple after his visit to Mahabodhi Temple in 16th century (500 years ago). The temple consists of terracotta images with 1000 Buddhas, each terracotta piece bearing an image of the Buddha. The structure is flat up to the first storey about 30 feet but thereafter assumes a tapering shape.
- ✧ The temple also houses a blessed stone image of Buddha brought from Vajrasan (Bodhgaya). A replica of Maya Devi temple has been established in the corner of courtyard.

e. *Yempi Mahavihara*

- ✧ Yempi Mahavihara is said to have been founded by Khatkuti Aju or Sunaya Shree Mishra in the 1st century AD. Though, there is no any textual evidence to justify the claim that

the original vihara was founded in the 1st century AD. The present structures are believed to be constructed on the same site where the previous structures used to be.

- ✧ This vihara is considered significant due to its connection with the two Indian icons, Red Matsyendranath and Guru Rinpoche.
- ✧ This is the place where Guru Rinpoche is believed to have stayed first when he came to Nepal Mandala from India in 8th century. It is considered to be of three seats of Guru Rinpoche (other two being Udiyana and Samye), where he is believed to have stayed with his Nepalese consort Shakyadevi.
- ✧ Because it was one of the seats of Guru Rinpoche, Yempi Mahavihara is considered to be a blessed place. The presence of the charnel ground (in Sankhamul) on the bank of Bagmati River also signifies that this place must be the favorite place of Guru Rinpoche. Nyingma followers believe that many termas (treasure teachings) may still have been concealed here by Guru Rinpoche. Many mahasiddhas, including Hungkara are believed to have stayed here and accomplished their enlightenment. HH Chatral Rinpoche also confirmed this site to be the real historical site of Yempi Mahavihar and the sacred seat of Guru Rinpoche. One of the halls in the vihara has maintained the image of Guru Rinpoche in the vihara.
- ✧ This site is also identified with one of two favorable places of Red Matsyendranath (Bungdhya). Red Matsyendranath is believed to have spent his early days in this place when he came to Nepal Mandala from Kamakchha, Assam. Still today, Karunamaya Chariot wheel maintenance work is performed in this blessed site.
- ✧ There are some artistically engraved stone stupas in the central and outer courtyard of the vihara. The northern Ashokan Stupa of Lalitapatana is located in the nearby area.



f. Aksheshwor Mahavihara

- ✧ Aksheshwor Mahavihara is one of the oldest viharas of Patan. It is located close to the Western Ashokan Stupa of Patan in Pulchowk. This vihara does not perform the detailed monastic activities. Instead, it has been promoted as a Buddhist meditation, education and information center. It has good facilities, including residence facility for short and long term Buddhist meditation and education. The shanga members are also trying to develop it as a Buddhist information center. The rooftop of the vihara complex, which is equipped with the telescope, is the best place for observing the majestic view of Kathmandu Valley and the Himalayan panorama.

g. Bungadya or Red Matsyendranath

- ✧ Red Matchchhindranath or Red Karunamaya or Mina Nath or Bungadya is worshipped as Lokeshwora, the bodhisattva of compassion. It is one of four Karunamaya Lokeshvaras of Nepal Mandala. The arrival of Red Matsyendranath to Nepal Mandala and emergence of Nath cult in Nepal Mandala is also linked with the legend of Guru Gorakh Nath. Whereas the Buddhists of Patan consider Red Matsyendranath as Padmapani (4th of the five Buddhas), Hindus regard it as Karunamaya.
- ✧ The Bungadya (red Matsyendranath) is the most venerated Lokeshvara in the valley. Initially, Red Karunamaya is believed to have spent his time in Yempi Mahavihara. Later on, he started spending 6 month in Bungamati and 6 months in Matsyendranath Vihara (**Ta Bahal**) in Patan.
- ✧ The **Shikhara temple of Bungadya** in Bungamati houses a miraculous image of Avalokiteshvara made of sandal wood, of red color. Ichnographically, he is represented as **Padmapani** holding a lotus in his left hand. Hindus worship it as **Rato Matsyendranath**, the guru of Gorakhnath, and patron siddha of Patan. Throughout India it is famous as Arya Bu-kham.

- ✧ According to the Swoyambhu Purana and local legends, Bungadya was brought from outside the valley in order to relieve a 12 year long drought. Bungadya's great significance as Karunamaya began during the time of **King Narendradeva** (644-680 AD).
- ✧ According to Newar Vajracharya legend, Karunamaya was brought to Bungamati from Assam (India), hence a temple was built in Bungamati.
- ✧ A manuscript dated 1079 AD contains an illustration of a Red Avalokitesvara called Bungma Lokeshvara. In the 13th century, Tibetan monk Dharmasvamin described about his veneration to the Arya Bu-Kham, and the image of Avalokeshvara, on his way to Bodh Gaya.
- ✧ In the later stage of Malla period and during the Shah period, Karunamaya, was integrated to Shaiva tradition and Hindus started regarding it as the great siddha Gorakhnath.
- ✧ The **Shikhara style** Bungamati Karunamaya temple is one of the outstanding temples in Nepal Mandala with nine shikhara towers.
- ✧ Repousse Torana on the main door (north) consist Bungadya as Padmapani in the center, flanked by two protecting gods. Likewise, the wooden toranas on south, west and east door show the forms of Manjushree.
- ✧ The 3 feet tall **image of Bungadya** (Rato Matsyendranath) has been enshrined at the sanctum. Each Shikhara tower has window with a protective deity.
- ✧ In the north, there is a dharmadhatu mandala. In the west, there are two domed temples and a row of recent **Sumeru chaityas**. The larger-domed temple contains an **image of Amitabha**.
- ✧ Red Matsyendranath is regarded as protector deity of Patan.



The great glory of Bungadya is revealed during the **chariot festival** of Red Matsyendranath in **Patan**. Revered by both the Buddhists and Hindus, Red Matsyendranath Chariot festival is celebrated twice a year. The climax of the festival is called the Bhoto Jatra. The image of Bungdyah is brought to Patan through chariot procession for 6-month period and then brought back to Bungamati for the rest 6-month period. King Sri Niwas (764 NS), is credited for playing a significant role for the continuation and expansion of Red Matsyendranath Chariot festival in Patan.

- ✧ Many Buddhist festivals and rituals happen in culturally rich ancient Newari villages of Bungmati and Khokana.

h. Four Stupas of Lubhu

- ✧ **There is a mention of a chaitya** 'Marochaitya' in the ancient Newari town, Lubhu. Currently four ancient chaityas, two larger and two smaller can be seen in the ancient Newari town-Lubhu. Lubhu lies on the ancient route to Panauti and Namo Buddha from Patan.

i. Phucho (Phulchowki)

- ✧ Phucho or Phulchowki is one of four sacred mountains that delineate the boundary of core Nepal Mandala. According to legends, Visvabhu Buddha is believed to have emerged in Puchva (Phulchowki) in Treta Yuga. Local residents of the area are Tamangs. There are some old stupas (Mane) in the Tamang villages.

iii. Buddhist Viharas and Monuments of Bhaktapur and Surroundings

- ✧ Enlisted in UNESCO World Heritage Site, Bhaktapur is considered to be a **Tantric and cultural City**. Bhaktapur is famous due to its unique architecture, traditional lifestyle, rituals, colorful festivals (including Bisket Jatra), finest wooden arts and so on.

- ❁ Despite having significant Buddhist viharas and deep-rooted Buddhist traditions and rituals, Bhaktapur is almost nowhere in the Buddhist heritage geography. As per the inventory of John K. Locke, there are 23 viharas in Bhaktapur city only, 9 in Thimi, 2 in Banepa, 2 in Panauti and 1 in Nala. However, only 2 Mahayana Monastery and 15 Vajrayani Viharas (11 Bahas and 4 Bahis) are currently active in Bhaktapur. Buddhist heritage walk in Bhaktapur can be started from Thathu Bahi (Jayakirti Mahavihara). The route passes through Kamalvinayak, Prasannasheel Mahavihara and other viharas and ends at Khutu Bahi (near mini buspark).
- ❁ Significant **Buddhist viharas** of Bhaktapur include Mul Dipankara Bihara (Dev Nani)- the oldest vihara of Bhaktapur, Prasanasil Mahabihara, Manjubarna Mahavihara (Wang Baha), Vishwa Baha, Aadipadma Mahavihara, Indrabarna Mahavihara), Dharma Uttar Mahavihara, Shankarawart Vihara, Akhandshil Mahavihara, Lokeshwor Mahavihara (Jetbarna Baha), Jetbarna Mahavihara (Niwa Baha) Dharmakirti Vihara, Jesthbarna Mahavihara, Lubarna Mahavihara, Mangal Dharmadip Vihara, Jayakirti Vihara, Budhasamakrit Vihar etc. The National Art Gallery has an exclusive collection of Buddhist Poubha paintings, palm leaf manuscripts and metal and stone crafts.
- ❁ Other signature monuments and sites include four squares (Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Taumadi Square, Dattatraya Square and Pottery Square), 55 Windows Palace, Madhyapur-Thimi, Changunarayan Temple, Doleshwor, Suryabinayak etc.
- ❁ Buddhist heritage sites located in the vicinity of Bhaktapur city include Lashapa Ko (Milarepa Cave), Nala Karunamaya Lokeshvara Temple, viharas of Banepa, viharas of Panauti, Namo Buddha and so on. Two Viharas of Banepa include Parvata Mahavihara (Nhu Baha) and Banepa Bahi. Likewise, the two viharas of Panauti are Dharma Dhatu Mahavihara (Pantiya Baha) and Kasivarpa Mahavihara (Nhu Bha).
- ❁ Samyak Dana Yatra is performed annually on 1st day of Magh in



Bhaktapur which is performed once in every 12 years in Kathmandu and in 5 years in Patan. Bisket Jatra is one of the most elaborate Newari Festivals and only chariot festival in Bhaktapur. During Pancha Dana festival (on Bhadra Krishna Trayodashi), Pancha Dipankara Buddhas are carried through the city; dana is offered by locals to Vikchhus taking blessings from Dipankara Buddhas.

- ❁ Samyak Dana Yatra, Pancha Dana, Mask dance, Bisket Jatra, Karunmaya festival (Thimi and Nala) are some of the signature festivals organized in Bhaktapur and Thimi.
- ❁ A brief detail of the most significant Buddhist vihara and monuments of Bhaktapur and surrounding area are presented below:

a. *Prasannasheel Mahavihar (Pasu Mahavihara)*

- ❁ Located in Kwathandau, Prasannasheel Mahavihara is one of the oldest Vajrayani Viharas of Bhaktapur. It houses the image of Padmapani Lokeshvara. It also bears Vajradhatu Chaitya, Dharmadhatu Chaitya, Khamba Chaitya and Gaju Chaitya. Many followers of Himalayan Buddhism also visit this vihara while visiting Namu Buddha.

b. *Mul Dipankara Vihara (Dev Nani)*

- ❁ Located in Kwathandau, Dev Nani Vihara is considered to be the oldest and main Dipankara Vihara of Bhaktapur. It houses the image of Mul Dipankara Buddha. Other images include Mahakal, Manjushree, Ganesh and Shiva-Parvati.

c. *Buddhasamakrit Vihara (Khuthu Bahi)*

- ❁ It is located behind the Bhaktapur Mini Bus Park. Major images include Akchhovya Buddha, Vajravarahi, Vajradhatu Chaitya, Mahakal, Dharmadhatu Chaitya and Sikharkut Chaitya.

d. *Wang Baha (Manjuvarna Mahavihara)*

- ❁ It is also located in Kwathandau and the main image is Mahavairochana Buddha.

e. *Akhandasheel Mahavihara (Akha Baha)*

- ✧ It is located at Balachhen Twa. It was built during the reign of King Narendra Dev. Main image of the vihara is Akchhovya Buddha.

f. *Lokeshwor Mahavihara (Jetvarna Baha)*

- ✧ Also known as Laska Deo, this vihara is located in Khauma Twa. It is considered to be significant due to its connection with Red Matsyendranath chariot festival (of Patan). During the period when Patan could not perform the chariot of Matsyendranath, Bhaktapur performed it successfully in Takulachhi, Lokeshwor Vihara.

g. *Chaturbramha Mahavihara (Tadhi Chhen or Bahal Chhen)*

- ✧ Located in Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Chaturbramha Mahavihara is one of the attractive viharas of Bhaktapur. The main image of the vihara is Padmapani Lokeshvara. It is also the residence of the Living Goddess Kumari in Bhaktapur. The 24 roof struts (of 15th century) with different gesture of Lokeshvara have added to the architectural significance of the vihara.

h. *Vishwa Baha*

- ✧ This vihara was built in 1876 AD during the reign of Jung Bahadur Rana. The main image of vihara is Padmapani Lokeshvara.

i. *Aadipadma Mahavihara (Tung Baha)*

- ✧ It is located in Taulachhen and houses Shakyamuni Buddha as its main shrine image.

j. *Indravarna Mahavihara (Indrawart Maha Baha)*

- ✧ Built in 1671 AD, this vihara is located in Inacho Twa. The main image of the vihara is Akchhovya Buddha which is flanked by Prajnaparmita and Avalokiteshvara.



k. Shankarawart Vihara (Khushi Baha)

- ✧ It is located on the west bank of Hanumante Khola. It houses Padmapani Lokeshvara as its main image.

l. Dharma Uttar Mahavihara (Ina Baha)

- ✧ This vihara is considered to be the first Theravadin Vihara of Bhaktapur. This vihara is located at Inacho Twa. This vihara is believed to have founded in cooperation with the Tashihumpo Monastery of Tibet to commemorate MahaManjushree.

m. Jetvarna Mahavihara (Niwa Baha)

- ✧ It is located in Tekhacho Twa. It is believed to have been founded by Gunashinga Dev. Major images include Maitreya Buddha, Padmapani Lokeshvara and Chintamani Lokeshvara.

n. Dharmakirti Vihara

- ✧ It is located in Kwathandau. Recently, a new monastery called Mangal Dharma Dip Gomba has been founded in the area.

o. Mangal Dharmadip Vihara (Jahur Baha)

- ✧ Founded in 1707 AD, this vihara is located in Gomari Twa. Major icons of the vihara include Dipankara Tathagata, Akchhovya Buddha, Lokeshvara, Tara, Vajradhatu Chaitya, Shikhara Chaitya, Mahakal, Ganesh etc.

p. Lubarna Mahavihara (Sukudhoka Baha)

- ✧ It is located in Sukudhoka Twa. There are terracotta images of Shakyamuni Buddha, Dipankara Buddha, Manjushree etc. It also houses the images of Hindu deities such as Bhimsen, Drupadhi, Sikali and Ganesh.

q. Jayakirti Vihara (Thathu Bahi)

- ✧ It is located at Tinikhaya. It is one of the outstanding viharas of Bhaktapur. Major icons include Gandhuri Devta (Buddha standing with Biswa Byakaran gesture), Lokeshvara, Vajradhatu chaitya, Padma Chaitya, and Amitabha Buddha.

r. Gunakirti Mahavihara (Digu Baha), Thimi

- ✧ It is located at Digu Tole in Thimi Municipality. It houses a statue of Guru Rinpoche in a ruin state. An ancient chaitya has enhanced the value of the vihara.

s. Lashapa Ko Milarepa Cave/Manjushree Cave (Sudal)

- ✧ **Manjushree** is believed to have come from Mahachin (China) during Treta Yuga to pay homage to Swoyambhu Stupa. Manjushree is also credited to have drained the water of Kathmandu valley and founded a town, Manjupattana. While entering into Kathmandu, some legends say Manjushree directly emerged at Sudal through cave (Manjushree Cave) whereas others suggest that he spent some time on his way to Swoyambhu Stupa via Sankhu. Annually, Manjushree is offered Oil Massage in this temple, a day before Basanta Panchami.
- ✧ Lashapa Ko has also connection with the Great Yogi Milarepa. Milarepa is believed to have spent some time in this area perfecting his meditation. There is a foot-print of a cow which locals say, has a link with Milarepa. Bhaktapur Tara or Talking Tara is believed to have asked the King of Bhaktapur to invite Milarepa to Bhaktapur city.
- ✧ There is a Buddhist study and retreat center run by the high Mahayani Buddhist Lamas.

t. Nala Karunamaya (Nala Baha or Uttarapantha Mahavihara)

- ✧ Nala Karunmaya or Nala Baha is one of four Karunamaya Lokeshvara temples of Nepal Mandala. It houses an image of white-faced Karunamaya. Annual Karunamaya Jatra is celebrated annually in Nala and Thimi two days after the Janai Purnima.

u. Namu Buddha (Tagmo Luijin)

- ✧ Located at Hiranyagiri Hill, about 40 km east from Kathmandu



Valley and about 12km south from Dhulikhel, Namo Buddha (Tagmo Luijin in Tibetan), is **one of the 3 principal Buddhist pilgrimage places (Tin Tirtha)** of Nepal Mandala, especially for the Newar and Tamang Buddhist communities of Kathmandu Valley and the followers of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism from Nepal, India, Bhutan, Tibet and the Himalayan region.

- ✧ According to 'Jataka Sutra' and Mahayana 'Suvarnaprabhasottama Sutra' Namo Buddha is identified as the **previous birth place of Shakyamuni Buddha**. The story has it that Shakyamuni Buddha took birth as a Bodhisattva (prince Mahasattva) of this territory in his previous life and **donated his body flesh to the hungry tigress**, out of spirit of great love and compassion. The literal meaning of Tagmo Luijin (in Tibetan) stands for "Tigress Body-Gift". Because Shakyamuni Buddha had sacrificed his own life to save the life of the tigress and her 5 cubs due to his great kindness and compassion, this place is one of the most revered pilgrimage places for the Buddhist devotees.
- ✧ There is a widely believed and popular story on the "King Maharatha, his three sons (including prince Mahasattva) and the hungry tigress of Pancala (Panauti)". In Tibetan sources, the name of the king is mentioned as 'Shingta Chenpo' and his three sons were Dra Chenpo, Lha Chenpo and Semchen Chenpo' respectively.
- ✧ It is said that the king and queen then made a casket of seven precious jewels, put the relics of the bodhisattva inside, buried it and erected a stupa above the relic.
- ✧ According to *Mulasarvastivada* and also mentioned in the *Wright's chronicle*, Shakyamuni Buddha himself made a pilgrimage to Namo Buddha after delivering sermon at Gopucha Parvat on Manjushree Hill and visiting Swoyambhu Chaitya and Guhyeshvari. The legend further elaborates that

Shakyamuni Buddha also taught the Jataka story of his previous incarnation here in Namo Buddha and upon concluding his teaching with clapping, the previously undergrounded stupa of bodhisattva miraculously appeared.

- ✧ In the own words of venerable Trangu Rinpoche, donating own body flesh to the hungry tigress is a practice of **“Difficult giving”** that stands at the highest level of “Transcendent generosity or perfection of generosity” (one of six transcendences).
- ✧ This area is also lying in the **spiritual travel route of Padmasambhava** to Timal, Sailung and Haleshi from Pharping Asura Cave and Kathmandu.
- ✧ Namo Buddha is also one of the best places for observing the spectacular views of Kathmandu rims and the Himalayan panorama. The unique combination of mild climate, strategic location overlooking the mountain panorama and religious vitality has established Namo Buddha as a **promising Buddhist study and spiritual retreat center**.
- ✧ The **bell-shaped white stupa** in Namo Buddha is believed to have founded during the late Malla period. The principal shrine- stupa is 25 feet high and was restored between 1917 and 1920 under the auspices of the Tibetan Lama Tokden Shakya Shri. There are 4 chaityas on the corners of the base plinth; 2 large chaityas on the northern side and 4 large chaityas on the southern side of the main stupa, both votive chaityas and traditional Newari chaityas.
- ✧ On the top of the ridge (Kotdanda), there is a complex of **Thangbu Tashi Yangtse Monastery** founded by **Venerable Trangu Rinpoche**, a Karma Kagyu lama based in Boudha. On the western side of the Thangbu Monastery, under the tree, is a **Newari relief** with an image of a tigress with five cubs accepting the flesh of the bodhisattva.

- ✧ Various monuments and structures have been developed around the newly established Trangu Monastery depicting the love and compassion of bodhisattva (prince Mahasattva). Major features include a stone sculpture dedicated to Prince Mahasattva's mother, a small shrine dedicated to Prince Mahasattva, a small cave having stone sculptures of a hungry tigress and her five cubs in front of Prince Mahasattva, a series of 8 stupas and a tall image of Buddha.
- ✧ With the establishment of **Thangbu Tashi Yangtse Monastery** in Kotdanda, Namo Buddha is now becoming one of the promising Buddhist philosophy study and spiritual retreat centers in Nepal Mandala. The monastery offers facilities such as library, guesthouse/hostel, meditation and retreat center, amchy clinic etc. It offers courses on Buddhist philosophy and Amchy education with various durations, viz, 3 month, 6 month and 1 year courses.
- ✧ Namo Buddha is one of the great pilgrimage sites for Newar, Tamang and Himalayan Buddhist communities. Major festivals take place during Kartik Purnima and Buddha Jayanti. Newar communities make pilgrimage during Gunla Parva and Kartik Purnima and offer lamp for the diseased one.

4.7.4. *Extended Buddhist Circuits of Nepal Mandala*

✧ The outer sub-circuits lying around the inner circuit of Nepal Mandala as an extended circuit include the following:

- i. **Swoyambhu-Nuwakot Mahamandala-Sing La-Beyul Namgo dagam (Langtang) Sub-circuit.**
- ✧ Lying along the historical and spiritual route to Tibet from Nepal Mandala via Kerung and Mangyul Gunthang, this sub-circuit connects the significant Buddhist heritage sites blessed by Padmasambhava and Milarepa.

- ✿ Also lying in the ancient spiritual and trade route to Tibet from the northwestern exit gateway of Nepal Mandala, the **blessed sites of Padmasambhava** in Nuwakot and **Beyul - Namgo Dagam** in Langtang Valley are the central attractions of this circuit.
- ✿ Key sites in **Nuwakot** (Bhalpo Dzong) include Kakani, Changkha La (Kabilas), Chhawa Chhaso (Devighat), Nuwakot Durbar and Mahamandala, Risum Gonpo Bumthang, Kaule, Dha La (Kispang), Phikuri, Balche, Sing La, Pangsang etc. Likewise, key sites in **Rasuwa** include Gatlang, Bonjho Mane Durbar, Goljung, Chilime, Brimdang Gomba, Nagthali Gomba, Thuman, Timure (Kerung Tibet and Dragkar Taso in Tibet), Briddim, Langtang, Kyanjin Gomba, Langshisha etc.
- ✿ Sites located in this circuit are believed to have blessed by the great tantric master Padmasambhava during his frequent journey to Tibet from Nepal Mandala since the very beginning of the second half of 8th century. Besides concealing the hidden treasures (Terma) in the Beyul - Namgo Dagam (Langtang Valley), Padmasambhava is believed to have spent his time meditating in the Changkha La (Kabilas), Devighat, Dha La (Kispang), Sing La, Nagthali and so on.
- ✿ Likewise, sites located in this circuit are believed to have received blessings from the great yogi Milarepa. Just because Gunthang Mangyul was the birthplace and Dragkar Taso (in Kerung) was one of the most preferred hermitage sites of Milarepa, Tsum Valley, Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Helambu were also the playground and meditation seats of Milarepa. Nuwakot is believed to be the place where Milarepa and Dharma Bodhi met for the first time and where Milarepa sang many 'Doha' songs.
- ✿ Kakani is the gateway to Nepal Mandala from Nuwakot. There are Five Mane (Panchmani). Changkha La (Kabilas): As described in Marche Lamsod, Chankha La (Kabilas) is identified with the place where Padmasambhava subdued 21 spirits, including Changala Lathog which is worshipped by the Newars of Kathmandu as



Padhmanatheswor or Natraja. There is a temple of Kapileshwor Mahadev and an old statue of Buddha in Kabilas.

- ✿ Devighat (Chhawa Chhaso): It is identified with the place where Guru Padhmasambhava subdued Bhairabhi. There are 24 power places in Devighat area. Many statues of Buddha are still found scattered in the area. It is also the place where the Vajracharya initiation is taken. There was a tradition of bringing the Yasthi (Sal wood) of Swoyambhu from Devighat. The name of great Lama Kathog Tsewang Norbu is associated with the supply of Yasti from Devighat to Swoyambhu during the reign of Prithvi Narayan Shaha.
- ✿ **Nuwakot Durbar** (the Seven Tiered Palace) and Mahamandala are historically and religiously significant sites for both the Hindus and Buddhists. Main durbar, Bhairav Temple, Taleju Temple, Malla era stupas are some of the significant sites. Nuwakot Mahamandal has significant stone icons such as ancient chaityas, foot-print of Manjushree, Ganesh, Kal Bhairav, etc.
- ✿ Dha La-Bhalche-Phikuri-Sing La-Pangsang-Thongsha-Nagthali could be the sacred sites blessed by Padmasambhava on to his travel to Tibet via Kerung. In one of the Tibetan scriptures, Milarepa is mentioned to have traveled from Palbar to Yolmo Kangra and then to Singla forest. A new Gelug monastery is being constructed at Dha La (Kispang Lake). Temple of Bumthang (built in 1944 AD), Temple of Kaule (that houses the statue of Guru Rinpoche), Temple of Balche are some of the sacred sites in this route.
- ✿ Gatlang, Bonjho Mane Durbar, Goljung, Chilime, Tetanche, Thuman, Timure, Rasuwagadhi are considered to be lying in the ancient trade and spiritual route to Kerung (Tibet) from Nepal Mandala. Hundreds of stone mane (chortan or stupa) engraved with Tibetan Buddhist mantras can be seen standing along the main trail to Rasuwagadhi from Gatlang via Goljung, Chilime, Thuman and Timure.

- ✿ Bongjo Mane Durbar (Gatlang and Goljung) and Nagthali Gomba have strong connection with Padmasambhava.
- ✿ Timure, Briddim, Langtang, Kyanjin Gomba, Langshisha areas are the core sacred sites of **beyul - Namgo Dagam**. The entire Langtang Valley is considered to be the sacred beyul -Namgo Dagam (Valley of Heavenly Gate: shaped like a Half Moon). The 400 years old **Kyanjin Monastery** (3830m) is considered to be the epicentre and the major spiritual power place of this beyul. On the eastern base camp of Langtang Lirung, at a two hours walk from Kyanjin Gomba, there lies a meditation cave of Padmasambhava. Kyanjin Valley used to be the sacred pilgrimage and meditation center even for the Buddhist followers from Tibet until 1788/92 AD. People of Langtang Village are of Tibetan Origin. They still have maintained rich Buddhist culture and rituals.

ii. Sankhu Vajrayogini-Beyul Hyolmo Sub-circuit.

- ✿ Sankhu-Beyul Hyolmo Sub-circuit: Lying along the ancient and spiritual route to Tibet from Nepal Mandala via Kuti/Nyalam, this sub-circuit connects the significant Buddhist heritage sites blessed by bodhisattva MahaManjushree, Padmasambhava and Milarepa.
- ✿ Lying in the ancient spiritual and trade route to Tibet from the northeastern exit gateway of Nepal Mandala, beyul Yolmo Gangra (Helambu) is the central attraction of this circuit. This circuit is also believed to have partially overlapped with the ancient route used by bodhisattva MahaManjushree and Princess Bhrikuti.
- ✿ Key Buddhist sites include Sankhu Vajrayogini, Melamchi Ghang, Ghocheling Gomba (Tarkeghang), Dharcheling Ghang, Shermathang, Chiri Gomba (where a white stone thrown from Tibet is still in existence), Ama Yangri, Padmasambhava Cave (Thuptang or Guru Drubphuk), Footprint of Padmasambhava, Milarepa's Cave (Timbu), Mandharawa Cave, Goshaikunda (Chhuku Chhonang), Khando Chhema or Dema (Panch Pokhari), Chhu Ghanglak, Dragan Cave (Dug Rehenjen) in Panchpokhari

area), Mt. Dorje Lagpa (named after the wrathful deity with the identity of Vajra-sadhu), Ama Cho Mehn (Bhairab Kund), place of Dakinis and so on.

- ❁ **Sankhu** is also the gateway to Beyul Yolmo and to Tibet via Tatopani (ancient Kuti). Helambu is the ancestral place of Hyolmo people. Helambu region has a deep spiritual and cultural connection with Bouddha Stupa and Tibetan Buddhism. Incarnate Tulku (of Padmasambhava) Shakya Zangpo, also established a line of tulkus associated with Yolmo.
- ❁ The entire Helambu region is known as **beyul Yolmo Gang-ra** (also known as Bepa Pema -tsel) means 'The Yolmo Enclosure of Snow-Capped Mountains' and corresponds with the Yolmo valley, also known as Helambu. Helambu region is one of the rare sites blessed by the great Tantric Master Padmasambhava and greatest Yogi Milarepa. Both figures had spent their significant time in Helambu perfecting their meditation.
- ❁ The centre of this hidden land is Jhemathang (also known as Bemthang) which contains the source of the Melamchi River.
- ❁ Guru Drubphuk is the practice cave of Padmasambhava. There is a foot-print of Padmasambhava or Lord Shiva, Chhulagenjen (108 natural water spouts),
- ❁ Tag Phug Senge Jing (Milarepa Cave) is a famous meditation cave near Timbu where Milarepa deepened his realization. It has original statue of Milarepa.
- ❁ Ama Yangri Mountain is considered to be the most powerful local Protectress (Tsiringma or dharmapala) of Helambu region.
- ❁ Dragan Cave (or Dug Rehenjen) is located in the middle of dense forest area of Larke in Panchpokhari Thangpaldhap Rural Municipality-3.
- ❁ Helambu region is also known as monastic city. Many followers

of Tertön Gö-demchen and laity practitioners have founded many sacred monasteries, stupas and chortens in Tarkeghang, Melamchighang, Shermathang and so on dedicated to Shakyamuni Buddha, Padmasambhava, Milarepa and other deities. Most of the monasteries belong to Nyingma tradition with few Kagyu monasteries, establishment of some monasteries even date back to the 14th century. **Chiri Gomba** is one of them which is believed to have preserved a stone thrown from Tibet. Several monasteries all over Helambu region offer meditation and retreats facilities.

- ❁ Local governments have initiated to build a **Padmasambhava Great Wall Trekking Trail** (about 60km long), connecting the significant Buddhist heritage sites and natural sites of Helambu region, including proposed Buddha Park, Shermathang, Jomthan, Ama Yangri Mountain, Dukphu Bhemethang (Guru Rinpoche Cave), Pasangsiri, Gufapokhari Jalamsa, Dawalanggufa, Semisidang Mountain etc.

iii. Pharping -Chitlang-Daman Rekheswor Sub-circuit.

- ❁ Lying along the ancient and spiritual route to Buddhist heritage sites of India from Nepal Mandala via Chitlang, Daman and Parsa, this sub-circuit connects the significant Buddhist heritage sites blessed by Emperor Ashoka and Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche).
- ❁ Also lying in the ancient spiritual and trade route to India from the southern exit gateway of Nepal Mandala, Pharping, Chitlang, Rikheswor (Daman), Buddhist Vihara in Parsa are the central attractions of this circuit.
- ❁ The first historical icon for this circuit is **Emperor Ashoka**. Though there is no exact inscriptions and Buddhist scriptures about the arrival of Ashoka to Nepal Mandala, Newari chronicle suggests that Emperor Ashoka had visited Nepal Mandala, founded Ashokapattana (Lalitapatana) or Patan city and erected four Ashokan Stupas in its four cardinal directions. Locals believe



that Ashoka might have entered into Nepal Mandala following the historical route that passes through Kushinagar-Birgunj-Bhimphedi-Chitlang and on to Nepal Mandala. Chitlang is one of the oldest Newari Villages and there is an old stone stupa. Locals call it **Ashokan Stupa**. However, more research is yet to be done to explore more about the foot-steps of Ashoka.

- ❁ The second and even more significant icon for this extended circuit is **Padmasambhava**. It is not clear what route did Padmasambhava use while entering into Nepal Mandala on his way to Tibet in the 8th century AD. But, Asura Cave in Pharping and Riksheshwor Cave in Daman are two prominent places blessed by Padmasambhava. At Asura Cave (Pharping), Padmasambhava spent some time doing meditation and acquired the Mahamudra of Divinity. Likewise, Riksheshwor Cave in Daman (close to the location of Everest Panorama Hotel) is another sacred site where Padmasambhava is believed to have spent some period doing meditation. There is a naturally formed image of guru on the rock. There is a tiny natural spring sprung from the rocky cliff, also known as 'Spring of wisdom'. It is believed that Padmasambhava made it possible while he was meditating in the rocky cave. There is a monastery, established by Bhutanese monk and some stupas (or chortens). Devotees take the water from the 'Spring of wisdom' as holy water. Daman is also a famous tourist destination. The area is filled with blooming Rhododendron and in a clear day, one can see Mt. Everest from Daman View Tower. Indrasarovar Lake lies en-route to Chitlang from Pharping. Country's 2nd Cable Car is just above the Chitlang Homestay Village.

4.7.5. *Other Satellite Tourism Destinations and Product Linkage Opportunities*

- ❁ Most of the satellite tourism destinations are located in the outer circuit of Nepal Mandala. Key tourism sites include the following:
 - ❁ Trishuli River (water based tourism/rafting).

- ✿ Nuwakot Durbar and surrounding areas (heritage and sightseeing).
 - ✿ Langtang National Park, including Goshaikunda Lake.
 - ✿ Melamchi and Helambu region.
 - ✿ Dhulikhel, Dolalghat and Sukute beach area.
 - ✿ Indrasarovar, Chitlang and Daman area.
- ✿ Other segments (trekking, mountaineering, safari etc.) of international visitors who enter Nepal via Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) can also make a visit to all or selected Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal Mandala. Moreover, Buddhist visitors who wish to visit other Buddhist circuits of Nepal can also combine their package with Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit package.
- ✿ Nepal Mandala can be linked with the following tourism destinations and products:
- ✿ Langtang Trek and Ruby Valley Trek.
 - ✿ Maratika (Haleshi) via Namobuddha and Timal.
 - ✿ Tsum and Nubri Valley via Gorkha/Arughat.
 - ✿ Lapchi and Rolwaling via Barabise or Charikot.
 - ✿ Transit gateway to Kailash Mansarovar Yatra via Rasuwagadhi (Kerung) and Tatopani Road.

4.7.6. *Potential Markets and Market Segments*

- ✿ Domestic Markets: Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit will remain as a dream pilgrimage site for the followers of all Buddhist schools and traditions. Newar Buddhists from Kathmandu Valley may visit Sankhu Vajrayogini, Namo Buddha and other sites in the extended circuits during the special occasions and rituals.
- ✿ Likewise, three stupas (Swoyambhu Mahachaitya, Bouddha Mahachaitya and Namo Buddha) and Asura Cave (Pharping) will remain as dream pilgrimage sites for the Buddhists living in Kathmandu Valley and the Himalayan region.



- ❁ Triten Norbuche Monastery in Nagarjuna Hill will remain as a sacred pilgrimage site for all followers of all Himalayan Bongs.
- ❁ Other Non Buddhist visitors may visit all Buddhist heritage sites in Nepal Mandala especially for realizing peace, observing colorful rituals, dances, making family/group holiday trips studying historical and archaeological sites.
- ❁ Three great stupas will remain as a major pilgrimage site for the followers of Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions from Sikkim, Ladakh and Kashmir region of India.
- ❁ Non Buddhist Indian segment may also visit Bouddha Mahachaitya and Swoyambhu Mahachaitya during sightseeing for peace and leisure purposes.
- ❁ International Buddhist pilgrims and general visitors may be attracted to the Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal Mandala for various reasons. Vishwo Shanti Vihara (Min Bhawan) and other Theravadin viharas can be a good place for visiting by Theravadin Buddhists from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand etc.
- ❁ Kwa Bahal (Golden Temple), Jana Bahal, Tham Bahi (Vikramasheela Mahavihar), Prasannasheela Mahavihara (Bhaktapur) and other Newari Buddhist Viharas of Nepal mandala can be the dream destinations for the followers of Vajrayana and Mahayana Buddhism from Mangolia, Inner Mongolia, Tibet, China, and so on.
- ❁ Likewise, three major stupas (Swoyambhu, Bouddha and Namo Buddha) and Pharping Asura Cave will remain a dream destination for the followers of Mahayans Buddhism from around the world.
- ❁ Triten Norbuche Monastery in Nagarjuna Hill can attract international Bon Buddhist practitioners for practicing and learning Bon philosophies and traditions.
- ❁ New monasteries built in Manichud, Gokarneshwor, Arubari, Bouddha Mahachaitya area, Kapan, Pani Muhan, Nagi Gomba, Swoyambhu

Mahachaitya, Jamacho/Ranikot area, Pharping area, Namo Buddha, Sudal, Godavari area can attract thousands of pilgrims and western visitors for Buddhist philosophy study, spiritual meditation and retreats and short and longer days education on Buddhist philosophy and traditions.

4.7.7. Approach Routes, Suggested Itineraries and Activities

a. Approach Routes

- ✧ International visitors can enter into Nepal Mandala through Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), the only international airport of Nepal. Kathmandu has a good road access from the major border immigration points, including Tatopani (Kodari), Rasuwagadhi, Kakadvitta, Biratnagar, Birgunj, Bhairahawa, Nepalgunj, DhanGadhi, Mahendranagar (Bankatta).

b. Suggested tour itinerary and tour packages

- ✧ Various tour packages, ranging from a half day to a multiple days tour packages can be designed for pursuing pilgrimage, spiritual retreat and peace related activities the NMBC. Duration of tour package depends on the activities to be performed as well as the places intended to visit by the pilgrims and visitors.
- ✧ However, at least 2 to 3 days package is required to make a short visit to the sacred Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal Mandala.
- ✧ Even longer days tour package may require to engage visitors in meditation and retreat activities and to make a visit to the extended Buddhist Circuit i.e. Nuwakot-Rasuwa, Sankhu-Helambu and Pharping-Rikheshwor.

c. Suggested pilgrimage, spiritual and leisure activities for NMBC

- ✧ Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit may arguably offer the highest number of activities to the pilgrims and visitors due to its diversity in Buddhist heritages site by location, Buddhist canons/traditions and religious vitality.
- ✧ Key activities may include the following:
 - ✧ Visiting viharas/monasteries; worshipping Buddhist shrines and deities; offering lamps and reciting sutras.
 - ✧ Sitting for short to longer period meditation and spiritual retreats at Buddhist viharas, monasteries and dharma centers.
 - ✧ Visiting monks, nuns, Shakyas, Vajracharyas in different monasteries and viharas and getting blessings.
 - ✧ Observing the recitation of Gold-written Astrasahasrika Prajnaparmita Sutta at Hiranyavarana Mahavihara and Vikramasheela Mahavihara.
 - ✧ Studying/learning about the historicity and architectures of ancient Buddhist monuments such as viharas, chaityas, stupas, monasteries and other associated structures.
 - ✧ Observing traditional festivals and rituals such as Chariot festival of Matsyendranath, Chariot festival of Living Goddess Kumari, Samyaka Dana Jatra, Mataya Jatra, Dipankara Buddha Yatra, Bisket Jatra, Chhath, Mask dance, Lakhe nach and so on.
 - ✧ Visiting cultural museums and craft centers (metal, wooden, cloth, paper). Buying souvenir items related to Buddhist traditions, philosophies and rituals.
 - ✧ Sightseeing to Buddhist viharas and monasteries through walking, hiking, cycling, jeep drive, luxury bus drive.
 - ✧ Pursuing formal education and degrees on various schools of Buddhism such as Masters in Theravada Buddhism, Masters in Mahayana Buddhism, Masters in Buddhism and

Himalayan Studies, course on Bon Philosophy and practice and so on.

4.7.8. *Efforts Undertaken for Heritage Based Tourism Promotion and Conservation*

- ❁ Many kings, queens, ministers, religious/spiritual leaders, Buddhist monks, masters, maha-siddhas and practitioners and laity Buddhist followers have contributed in various ways and manner to create, preserve, and promote the world-class Buddhist heritage sites and age-old Buddhist traditions and rituals of Nepal mandala since last 2300 years.
- ❁ 7th century AD Handigaun inscription reveals that the initiatives for the maintenance of cultural monuments, including Buddhist viharas had already started by the early Lichchavi kings.
- ❁ Many Buddhist viharas, stupas and chaityas were established; many inscriptions and manuscripts created, many manuscripts translated and many traditions and rituals were established through a rigorous process of learning and practicing during the period of last 2300 years.
- ❁ Guthis (as a trust) have remained as a very important community institution for the survival and preservation of Buddhist monuments as well as for the continuation of traditional Buddhist rituals in Nepal Mandala. It is considered that the first such trust was set up in Deopatan in 477 AD by Ratna Sangha and by one lady in Chabahil Stupa in 499 AD. At least 29 different Guthis are reported to have involved for performing various functions of annual Indra Jatra in Basantapur, Kathmandu.
- ❁ In recent decades, the formal efforts for heritage conservation and heritage based tourism promotion in Nepal Mandala gained momentum with the establishment of Department of Archaeology (DoA) in 1952/53 AD, promulgation of Ancient Monuments Preservation Act in 1956 AD (2013 B.S), and formulation of Nepal's first Tourism Master

Plan in 1972 AD. Since its establishment, DoA has been working to undertake research, awareness raising program, preservation activities and promotion of tangible and intangible heritages together with various governmental, non-governmental and private institutions, including UNESCO.

- ❁ After 1959 AD, efforts were also made to establish monasteries and dharma centers (with Buddhist practice and retreat facilities) in Nepal Mandala by the Tibetan Refugees and Himalayan Buddhists immigrated to Kathmandu Valley.
- ❁ The global importance of key Buddhist heritage sites as outstanding universal value (OUV) was further enhanced with the inclusion of seven cultural sites of Kathmandu Valley in the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in 1979 AD. The 7 sites include Swoyambhunath and Bouddhanath, Pashupatinath, Changuarayan, Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and Bhaktapur Durbar Square.
- ❁ In 1972 AD, Government of Nepal/DoA and UNESCO implemented a project on Development of Cultural Tourism and Conservation Work on Hanuman Dhoka in Kathmandu Durbar Square. The Patan Museum project was initiated in the beginning of the 1990s. The German-aided Bhaktapur Urban Development and Conservation Project, was initiated in 1974 and completed in 1986 with various positive outcomes.
- ❁ Bhaktapur Municipality has been a role model for the promotion of cultural heritage based tourism promotion in Bhaktapur. Lalitpur Metropolitan City and Kathmandu Metropolitan City have also made their best to promote cultural heritage based tourism.
- ❁ Respective guthis, and viharas, committees have also been preserving the respective viharas, stupas as well as performing traditional Buddhist rituals.
- ❁ Swoyambhu Area Development Federation composed of various relevant institutions have been preserving and promoting the heritages of Swoyambhu area.

- ❁ Bouddhanath Area Development Committee has been preserving and promoting the heritage of Bouddha Mahachaitya since 2053 BS.
- ❁ Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Monastery Development Committee (BPPMDC) has a big role for the promotion of Buddhist philosophy and preservation of Buddhist monasteries throughout the country.
- ❁ Shivapuri and Nagarjun National Park has been conserving and promoting the natural and cultural heritage sites, including Shivapuri (Sipacho), Ani Gomba, Manichud, Nagarjuna Hill (Jamacho) etc.
- ❁ Various Buddhist organizations, such as Dharmodaya Sabha are working for undertaking discourses on Buddhist philosophy and promoting Buddhism.
- ❁ Various NGOs such as ICOMOS, Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT), Bhaktapur Tourism Development Committee etc. have also undertaken various activities on heritage conservation awareness, heritage site restoration, tourism promotion and so on.

4.7.9. *Key Issues, Gaps and Threats*

- ❁ The current state of ancient viharas, stupas and chaityas are in dilapidated condition due to resource constraints for regular maintenance; encroachment by individuals and unplanned building construction.
- ❁ Inadequate documentation, publicity and dissemination of the significant Buddhist heritage sites and Buddhist traditions/rituals of Nepal Mandala.
- ❁ Inadequate promotion and marketing of these rich Buddhist heritage sites, particularly for tourism purpose.
- ❁ Inadequate efforts for the promotion of spiritual meditation and retreat despite having enormous potentials for doing so.
- ❁ Buddhist traditions and rituals, especially the Newar Buddhism, are



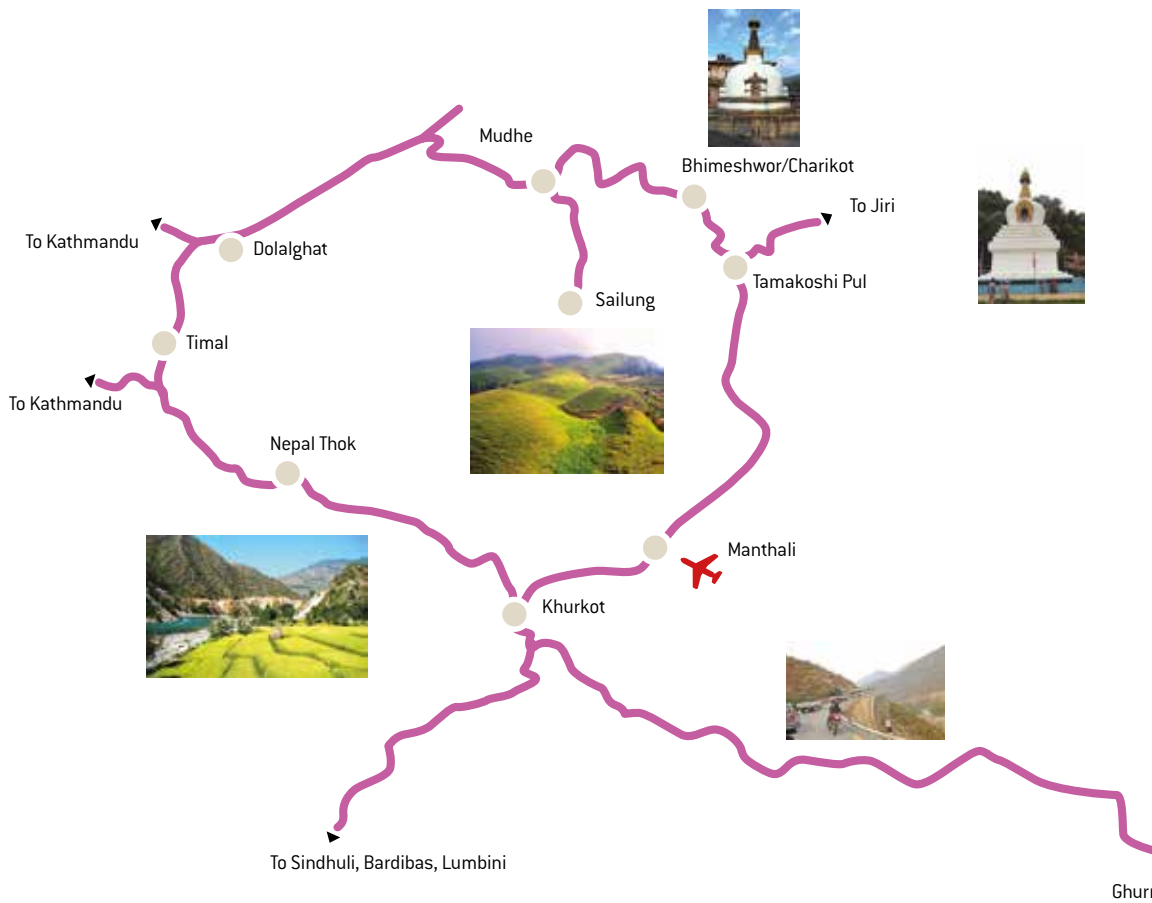
being shrunk due to the lack of adequate resources and motivation amongst the youth.

- ❁ Lack of adequate human resources (heritage tour guides) to disseminate information on Buddhist philosophy, history, archaeology, traditions, rituals and practices of Nepal Mandala.

4.7.10. *Key Opportunities*

- ❁ Promotion of Nepal Mandala as an international Buddhist practice, learning and education center.
- ❁ Promotion of Nepal Mandala rim and foothills as spiritual meditation and retreat centers.
- ❁ Promotion of Newar Buddhism as a living Buddhist heritage museum.
- ❁ Promotion of Nepal Mandala as a national gateway hub to other Buddhist Circuits of Nepal, especially Haleshi (Maratika), Rolwaling-Everest, Tsum-Nubri Valley and Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit.
- ❁ Promotion of Nepal Mandala as an international gateway hub to other international Buddhist heritage sites, especially the Buddhist heritage sites of TAR China (Lhasha, Sakya monastery, Dakar Tasho, Kailash Mansarovar).
- ❁ Restoration and preservation of Buddhist monuments such as viharas, chaityas, monasteries, inscription, and manuscripts etc. Promotion of Buddhist architecture in tourism sector, especially in hotel architecture.
- ❁ Organization of Buddhist religion, philosophy, archaeology, tradition, culture, ritual based international conventions, seminars, workshops, symposiums etc. jointly with the stakeholders in Lumbini and Himalayan region.
- ❁ Promotion of Buddhist tradition and rituals based festivals and events such as Chariot festivals of Living Goddess Kumari, Red Matsyendranath, White Matsyendranath; Dipankara Yatra etc. as signature events.

Map-8: Maratika (Haleshi) - Sailung-Timal Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit





- ✿ Establishment and promotion of international Buddhist museum and information center (Aksheshwor Mahavihar can be a model).
- ✿ Linking Buddhist heritage sites and Buddhism related experience with other forms of tourism such as trekking, mountaineering, safari, village tourism etc.
- ✿ Promotion of Buddhist education, research and studies in collaboration with LBU, TU, KU and other international universities.

4.8. **MARATIKA (HALESHI)-SAILUNG-TIMAL PADMASAMBHAVA MEDITATION CAVE CIRCUIT**

Following the perfected meditation caves and footsteps of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche).

4.8.1. *Background*

- ✿ Maratika (Haleshi)-Sailung-Timal-Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit (MSTPSMCC) connects some of the **perfected meditation sites** and **foot-prints** of Great Buddhist Tantric Master **Padmasabhava** (Guru Rinpoche), who is also regarded as the second Buddha (Shange Nipa) by the adherents of Tibetan Buddhism.
- ✿ The **Rocky Cave of Maratika (Haleshi)** is the epicenter of this circuit, and other equally significant sites in the circuit include Timal Area (in Kavre), Sailung Area (Dolakha, Ramechhap), and Charighang and Bhimeshwor in Dolakha.
- ✿ Maratika can be promoted as a **gateway** to other Buddhist circuits and sites in the eastern region, including Rolwaling-Everest Beyul Circuit, Khempalung Beyul circuit and Maratika Circuit itself.
- ✿ In the present geo-political map of Nepal, sites connected by MSTPSMCC are located in Khotang, Ramechhap, Dolakha & Kavre

districts of Province No. 1 and Bagmati Province.

- ❁ The significance of the major sites connected by the MSTPSMCC stands as given below:

- ❁ **Maratika Cave (Haleshi):** The sacred cave where Great Tantric Master Padmasambhava and his Indian Consort Mandarava attained the state of Vidyadhara of Immortal Life (Vajra Body).
- ❁ **Sailung:** The sacred cave where Padmasambhava spent the longest duration of his stay in Nepal; doing Mahayoga and subduing eight Yakchhas.
- ❁ **Charikot/Bhimeshwar:** The ancient Tamang and Newari town that houses some of the oldest Buddhist monuments and that used to serve as a transit hub for Kathmandu/Simronghad-Kuti-Tibet pilgrimage and Trade route.
- ❁ **Timal Area:** The perfected meditation sites of Padmasambhava and the sacred garden of Bodhi Chitta Mala.

4.8.2. *Significance of the Sites Contained in the MSTPSMCC*

i. **Significance for Pilgrimage, Spirituality and Peace**

- ❁ The Lotus-born Tantric Master Padmasambhava spent most of his time perfecting his meditation in the various sacred caves that lie in the Mahabharat range; **accomplished major siddhis** and then headed to Tibet for the establishment of Buddhism, including the establishment of first monastery, **Samye**, together with the Dharma King Trisong Detson and Pandit Santaraksita in 8th century. The sacred caves of **Asura** (Pharping) and **Maratika** (Haleshi) are considered to be the blessed one as Padmasambhava **attained two important siddhis** in these cave. Since then, the followers of Mahayana Buddhism, especially the Nyingma followers have always had the tendency to visit caves and places consecrated by Padmasambhava.
- ❁ Maratika (Haleshi)-Sailung-Timal-Padmasambhava Sacred Cave

Circuit (MSTPSMCC) is particularly designed to connect the perfected meditation caves and the footprints of Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava). Many caves in Timal area, Sailung, and Haleshi are believed to have been used as meditation seats and eventually was blessed by Guru Rinpoche during his stay in Nepal before heading to Tibet. Tibetan scriptures suggest that Padmasambhava entered into Tibet only after perfecting siddhis, basically the Bidhyadhara and Vajrakilaya in Nepal, and these caves used to serve as meditation seats for the Tantric master (Padmasambhava). Major caves and sites associated with Padmasambhava include the following:

a. *The Rocky Cave of Maratika*

- ✧ Also popularly known as **Haleshi**, this holy place is equally revered by three different communities- Buddhists, Hindus and Kiratis (Tri-Dharmik Sthal in Nepali).
- ✧ For **Hindu followers**, Lord Shiva (Mahadev) is manifested there in the form of a linga. Legend has it that the Lord Vishnu was the first ever devotee to pay homage to the Haleshi Mahadev in the Satya Yuga. Chaite Purnima, New Year (Baishakh), Bhadra, Tij festival, Balachaturdashi (Satbij offerings), Shivaratri, Tiradashi are key festivals celebrated by Hindus in Haleshi.
- ✧ For **Kirat followers**, the entire Tuwachung Hill, including Haleshi, is regarded as sacred place. **The Kirat's ancestral Raichhakule** is associated with this hill. There is a popular belief that the sacred cave of Haleshi was discovered by a Rai Hunter, **Bagbansi Rai**, in pursuit of a deer. There is a story about the discovery of the cave by a hunter (Bagbangsi Rai) using his hunting dog. Baishakh Purnima, Ashad Purnima (Undhau) and Mangsir Purnima (Ubhouli) are key events celebrated by Kirat communities. The Kirat legend of this cave goes back to Naga period. Kirat clan deities, Parohang and Sumnima are worshipped here in Tuwachung Hill. On the

top of Tuwachung Hill, there lies several stone structures/ images (locally known as **Tan Dhunga**), depicting the stories of **Toyama and Khiyama**. A newly built statue of Raichhakule can be seen at the center of the road before Maratika.

- ✧ For **Buddhists followers**, especially for the followers of Nyingma tradition, Maratika is a blessed cave where Padmasambhava and his Indian consort Mandharava attained **Vidyadhara of Immortal Life**. Padmasambhava is believed to have achieved realization through practicing 'Yangdag Heruka' but only after combining it with the practice of Vajrakilaya. This holy site is popularly known as the **Rocky Cave of Maratika**, amongst the Buddhist communities. Buddhist scriptures say, here in this cave, Padmasambhava and his Indian consort Mandharava disclosed the mandala of Buddha of Boundless Life, **Amitayus** (Amitabha) and performed the practice of Vidyadhara of longevity (mastery over life) for three months. Amitayus, the root master of Padmasambhava, appeared in person and conferred empowerment upon them and blessed them to be inseparable from him. Upon receiving blessings from Amitayus, Padmasambhava and Mandharava attained the **State of Vidyadhara of Immortal Life** or the **Supreme Mastery of Immortality** (tshe la dbang ba'i rig dzin) or the **Vajra Body**, the 'invincible body' transcending birth and death. Buddhist scriptures further tell that Amitayus placed a very holy object or long-life vase (**Tse Bum**) made of stone on the heads of Guru Rinpoche and Mandarava while bestowing immortal life upon them. Tse Bum is considered to be the most holy object of Maratika and it is believed that any prayer made at the tse bum will be fulfilled.
- ✧ The entire Maratika Hills are known by the name of three Bodhisattvas (rigs-gsum mgon-po) that include Avalokiteshvara, Manjushree and Vajrapani. The main hill that comprises Maratika Cave is known as Avalokitesvara Hill. Manjushree Hill lies to the southeast from Avalokitesvara

Hill, whereas Vajrapani Hill lies to the south-west. There are a number of caves in these hills. The main cave of pilgrimage is the **Maratika Treasury Cave**, which is believed to have contained a number of terma that had been elementally encoded by Dakini Sangwa Yeshe. Tibetan scriptures say that at the request of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, **Buddha Amitabha** taught the eighteen tantras of Long Life. The **dakinis** wrote them down in their symbolic script using melted lapis lazuli on golden paper, and deposited them in a box made of five precious jewels, which they concealed in the secret Cave of Maratika. Legends have it that there are many treasures buried in this holy place. Adjoining to the Maratika Cave, there lies a Nyingma monastery built in 1980 AD.

- ✧ The lower cave, commonly known as **Basaha cave** is the Cave of the Eight Means of Attainment. A demon is believed to have been subdued by Padmasambhava in this cave. One can see the stone emanation of the flesh and blood of the demon inside the entrance of this cave. There is a **white conch shell** that comes out from the rock at the left corner of the entrance. The evil states of cyclic existence are believed to be shattering on hearing the sound of this conch. Guru Rinpoche is believed to have flown through the roof of this cave, leaving a large hole, called the **sky door**.
- ✧ On the south-east of the Maratika Cave, there lies a **Manjushree Cave** and on south-west, one can find a **Vajrapani Cave**. Manjushree Hill looks like the Tiger Nest Cave of Bhutan. En-route to Tuwachung Hill from the Maratika Cave, there lies **Mandarava Cave** and some **holy caves** are seen leaking drops of water, considered to be the nectar of immortality. On the north-west of the Maratika Cave there set another cave called **Garuda Cave**. It is considered to be the good place to visit by the people suffering from cancer. Besides, there are other several auspicious places for retreat.



- ✧ Buddhist pilgrims make both the inner kora of Maratika Cave as well as the outer kora of all three sacred hills. It is believed that pilgrims obtain the realization of their very individual goal by paying visit to this sacred pilgrimage center, by offering gifts to the deities, and by performing certain ritual practices. It is believed that (i) as soon as one **visits** this sacred place by the exclamation of amazement, one is assured of not being reborn in one of the bad realms, and (ii) as soon as one **hears** (of its virtues), one is purified from the five sinful acts and pollutions (Eberhard Berg, 1994).

b. Sailung

- ✧ Sailung is another perfected meditation site of Padmasambhava. Here in this beautiful hill-top, Padmasambhava is believed to have spent the longest duration (some says 3/4 months and some says five years) of his stay (in Nepal) doing Mahayoga and subduing at least 8 Yakchhas, including one in Timal. Padmasambhava is believed to have departed to Maratika Cave from Sailung.
- ✧ Significant sites in Sailung include **sacred caves, old chhortens, Sacred Rocks, Footprint of Padmasambhava** and so on. On the southern lap of Sailung, there lies a monastery, **Raj Veer Monastery** built in 1972 by the Bhutanese Drukpa Kagyu School. It bears beautiful paintings and frescoes made by Bhutanese artisans. Lama Kalsang is the patron of the gomba. This gomba is one of the best sites for solitary meditation. Recently, Sailung Rigsum Gonpo Sewa Samaj is constructing a **Bodhi Chaitya** (Jyangchhub Chorten) at Sailung.
- ✧ Sailung is also regarded by the Tamangs as the abode of the territorial deity **Sailung Phoi Sibda Karpo**, Sailung's 'White Male Lord of the Earth'. The chorten atop the hill of Sailung is the seat of this divine protector and the Tamang Community are the 'custodians of the land'. There are **four groups of**

stone chorten on the summit. At the chortens Tamang priests perform Buddhist offerings, including '**mandala offerings**' for the rebirth of the souls of the deceased, especially during Saun Purnima (moon of July/August) and Manshir Aunsi (November/December). After the 'Mandala Offering' is complete the souls become detached from the shamanic ancestral abode of Sailung and become integrated into the Buddhist realm. Nowadays, the shamans have surrendered to Buddhist dominance and refrained from offering blood to the fierce female deities.

- ✧ Other site of interest around Sailung include **three rocks** symbolically representing tiger, snake and cow. Two rocks below the summit of Sailung bear the **footprint** of Padmasambhava and his **sword**.
- ✧ On the northern lap of Sailung, there are **three caves**, Gaurighat Cave, Buddha's Gate and Godavari Cave. **Gaurighat cave** is believed to be a source of fertility and health. It is believed that on full moon nights 'milk' is said to ooze from the stalactites inside the cave. Legend has it "when a yogi meditates inside the cave for five years, a door leading to the interior of the mountain appears". A second cave locally known as **Buddha's Gate** or the '**Door of Dharma**' has an exit hole that is almost too small for human passage. Only the most devout Buddhists who have not committed any sins can pass through. Either Gaurimati Cave or Buddha's Gate Cave could probably be the **meditation seat of Padmasambhava**. The third small cave, **Godavari cave** is associated with Lord Shiva. It is believed that every twelve years during the full moon of August/September white water is said to flow in which the pilgrims take a sacred bath to ritually purify the body.

c. **Charikot and Dolakha Bhimeshwor**

- ✧ The significance of Charikot area lies in the presence of



Charighang Monastery and Tamang Buddhist community. This monastery is one out of six famous monasteries of Dolakha and consists of **Gold-written text of prajñāpāramitā**. The lamas of this monastery are said to have good relation with the kings of Kathmandu since the time of Malla Period. The ruined state of monastery (due to Earthquake 2015) is yet to be re-built. The first **Buddhist Monasteries** were founded with guthi grants by Malla Kings, transforming local ritual centres into Buddhist pilgrimages. Between 1832 and 1846 AD six Tamang Buddhist gompas were given as guthi donations to Deva Dharma Lama of the Drukpa Kagyu school from Bhutan. These Tamang Guthi lands that were confiscated after the Nepal-Tibet war (1854-56 AD) were again given to Tamang after 1951 AD.

- ✧ The oldest bazaar, **Bhimeshwor**, is considered to be one of the gateway hubs that lies on the ancient pilgrimage and trade route to Tibet and China from Kathmandu via Kuti and Nyalam. It could have served both the Singati-Lamabagar-Lapchi-Nyalam route and Singati- Bigu-Kodari-Nyalam route. Some scholars argue that Padmasambhava had entered into Tibet via Kuti, though others argue that he entered Tibet via Nuwakot-RasuwaGadhi-Kyirong. Whatever be the route of Padmasambhava, Kathmandu-Kuti route has been the popular pilgrimage and trade route since 7th century. The **stone image of Manjushree** found in Tilincho, on the hilltop of Bhimeshwor signifies that this area may also lie on Manjushree's route to Kathmandu Valley from Wu Tai Shan Mountain, China.
- ✧ Moreover, there are several old **stone stupa**, locally called Swoyambhu in Mathilo Tole, Tallo Tole, Nakchhe, Dungle Tole of Bhimeshwor Bazaar. Interestingly, the Newar community of Bhimeshwor celebrate the **Karunamaya Chariot festival**, a festival still popular in Lalitpur and Kathmandu city. Local Newars claim that the Sherpas of Bigu

still worship Dolakha Bhimsen.

- ✧ The nearest town, **Jiri**, efforts have been undertaking to promote Jiri as nature based and Buddhist heritage based tourism in recent years. There is a big white stupa at the middle of the Jiri Bazaar. Jiri Municipality is facilitating a project to build a 195 ft. tall statue of Guru Rinpoche at Buddha Park in Bull Danda, Jiri. Trained by Swiss Experts, **Jirel Community** of this area are famous for Yak Cheese making. **Thodung Monastery** of Thodung (near Deurali) lies at the far eastern border of this circuit.

d. Timal Area

- ✧ Timal area is one of the **meditation grounds of Padmasambhava**. It is believed that Padmasambhava visited Timal Area and spent some months meditating in the caves of Timal on his way to Maratika Cave prior to his departure to Tibet in 8th century. Timal area is also linked with the legends associated with Buddha Kasyapa. Significant Buddhist sites in Timal Area include two meditation caves of Padmasambhava, 6 Ghyangs (monasteries), stupas, statues of Kasyapa Buddha and sacred lakes associated with Padmasambhava. Bodhi Chitta and Timal Shaman Festival are other significant intangible heritages of Timal associated with Buddhism.
- ✧ The Tantric Master Padmasambhava is believed to have visited Timal area and spent some years in meditation in two major caves of Timal, called **Gyolung Woo** (Yari Nagla Dubbaze) and **Tongsum Kundag** just below the village Yanngbel or Yangphel. The native people of **Yangbel Village** are believed to have received empowerment from Padmasambhava. Legends, including Bartshet Lhamsal, have it that Padmasambhava subdued the **Hyaksha Nagpo**, the fierce and human flesh and livestock eating black demon who used to rule over the land in Timal. Legend further details that Padmasambhava, after going through meditation in this

cave, accumulated tantric power and finally gained victory over the demon with flames of fire by magic power through his instrument called **Phurba** (Vajra). Padmasambhava is believed to have chased the demon from Gyolung Woo cave and finally subdued the demon at Rosaiba (hyaksha Nagpo Duldulag). A large statue of Padmasambhava has been erected on the seat of Lotus Flower, in a lake located nearby Rosaiba.

- ✧ Padmasambhava is believed to have attained tantric siddhi at **Gyolung Woo cave** in Timal. Many **religious images** such as Dorje, Phurba, Shell, Drum, Beads of Bodhi Chitta have been carved on the rocky cliffs of Gyolung Woo. A **foot-print of Padmasambhava** can be seen on the door-step of cave entrance. The altar of the cave houses a small statue of Padmasambhava.
- ✧ Padmasambhava is also believed to have meditated in the **Tongsum Kundag Cave**. Close to the cave, there lies a small lake. It is believed that the lake was created by Padmasambhava piercing with his magical Phurba. The altar inside the cave houses statues of Shakyamuni Buddha, Guru Rinpoche, Avalokiteshvara, Mandarawa, Yeshe Tsogyal and so on.
- ✧ A 33 ft tall **statue of Kasyapa Buddha** has been erected in between Gimdi and Thulo Gimdi village near Roshi Khola where the Buddha Kasyapa is believed to have meditated.
- ✧ Timal area is increasingly becoming popular for the sacred **Bodhi Chitta Mala Tree** (Phrengba). Legend has it that Tantric Master Padmasambhava threw Phurba, Torma, a peace of bead of Bodhi Chitta and seed of Ritthe tree (now a local tree species of Timal) from Tibet. The Bodhi Chitta and Ritthe seed germinated and grown up as trees exactly at a place where the current **Tharbeling Monastery** is located. The locals of Timal believe that **Bodhi Chitta Mala** is a treasure revealed by Padmasambhava. Now many trees of

Bodhi Chitta Mala can be seen everywhere in Timal area.

- ✧ Currently there are about two dozens of monasteries mostly belonging to the Nyingma tradition. Tharbeling Gomba (re-constructed), Tashi Targeling Gomba, Guru Pemaling Gomba Syabje Ling Gomba (near Gopti Village), Arya Avalokiteshvara Dhyan Kendra Yari Nag Gomba are among these monasteries of Timal area. Worth visiting in Gopti Village are **three giant stupas**, also known as Swoyambhu, Bouddha and Namu Buddha.

ii. Archaeological and Historical Significance

- ✧ Buddhist heritage sites contained in this circuit are more of pilgrimage and spiritual value than archaeological and historical. If legends are to be believed, the sacred caves of Timal, Sailung and Maratika, meditated by Padmasambhava are the sites of oldest historical/archaeological value in this circuit.
- ✧ The three stupas of Timal, four groups of chortens in Sailung, stone Swoyambhu Chaitya of Bhimeshwor, six Gombas of Dolakha/Timal, including Charighang in Charikot are some of the oldest built Buddhist monuments lie in this circuit. Moreover, there are many new monasteries built in Timal, Sailung, Thodung and Maratika in recent decades.
- ✧ In **Kot Timal** one can see the ruins of the palace of the last Tamang King, **Rinzen Dorje**. Tamang communities in Timal claim themselves to be the descendants of famous King Rinjen Dorje, the only Buddhist king of the then Baise and Choubise kingdoms, before Shah dynasty.
- ✧ The caves of Maratika are mentioned in Tibetan literature from the 12th century onwards. One of the biographies of Padmasambhava, the **Bka thang zangs gling ma** (1987) has described the Maratika caves as a sacred place for Buddhists and has called it Maratika Phug.

❁ **Thubten Choling Monastery** was built by Ngawang Chopel Gyatsho, later known by the name of **Maratika Lama**, in 1980, near the Treasury Cave of Guru Rinpoche with the great inspiration from three great Nyingma-pa masters Dudjom Rinpoche (1904-1987), Khentse Rinpoche (1910-1991) and Khrul Zhig Rinpoche (1924-2011). Today there are about twenty-seven monks studying in the monastery and performing daily rituals in monastery. The monastery houses statue of Shakyamuni Buddha, Padmasambhava and Avalokiteshvara.

❁ Recognizing the importance of Padmasambhava for Haleshi, Haleshi Tuwachung Municipality is going to make **Vajra** as the official emblem of the municipality.

iii. **Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value**

❁ This circuit bears the highest number of ethnic groups including Tamang, Sherpa, Thami, Hyolmo (Sunapati, Ramechhap), Newar, Majhi, Jirel, Rai, Sunuwar, Gurung, Magar, etc. consisting of different religious discourses, practice of shamanism (jhankri tradition) being common to all.

❁ Moreover, most of the pilgrimage sites such as Timal Narayansthan, Sailung, Haleshi (Maratika) are revered by both the Buddhists and Hindus, depicting a religious syncretism and coexistence of different religious discourses. Over the course of many years, followers of these two communities have honored and worshipped the caves, but each with their own mythology and own interpretation. Respective deities are revered by each group according to a specific schedule by performing pojras, presenting offerings, and making circumambulation.

❁ In recent decades, Haleshi has become a **famous pilgrimage site for the Sherpas** of Solukhumbu and eastern Himalayas. Huge number of Buddhist pilgrims make a pilgrimage to Maratika during the month of Kartik to Magh/Falgun when the Tibetan Lhosar festival also falls.

- ✿ Timal also carries the inter-mingled culture of **Buddhism, Bon and Hinduism** in the form of shamanism. **Timal Shaman Festival** or **Timal Narayan Jatra** is one of the popular festivals celebrated in Timal Area. The big Timal Shaman Festival is celebrated in Narayanthan Temple during the full moon of August/September (Janai Purnima). Hundreds of shamans, including more than 200 shamans from Timal area only and thousands of devotees from Kavre, Ramechhap, Dolakha, Sindhuli and Sindhupalchowk visit Narayanthan Temple during this festival. **Sailung Purnima Festival** (July/August) is also celebrated by both Hindus and Buddhists. Hundreds of Buddhists and Bonpo shamans come to Sailung to celebrate this festival.

iv. Other Added Attractions and Activities

a. *Other (Non-Buddhist) cultural attractions*

- ✿ Narayanthan Temple in Timal, Tuwachung Hill (sacred site of Kirat), Majhuwagadhi and Kalika Temple (Diktel), and Sindhuligadhi are other popular pilgrimage and historical sites worth to visit while making pilgrimage to Maratika Cave.
- ✿ From ethnic point of view, this circuit passes through some of the diverse cultural groups including Tamang, Sherpa, Thami, Majhi, Newar, Jirel, Rai, Sunuwar, Gurung, Magar, Chhetri, Brahmin, Shakyas and so-called Dalit communities. Visiting this circuit offers visitors and pilgrims a chance to observe the rich culture, rituals and costume of these diverse communities, including very colorful and living culture of Rai (Kirat).

b. *Outstanding natural landscapes and rich biodiversity*

- ✿ Timal, Sailung, Charikot, Tuwachung, Majuwagadhi, Temke are some of the beautiful and best hilltops lying in the Mahabharat range. In fact, these beautiful hilltops mark the southern border of the spiritual zone blessed by



Padmasambhava in Nepal Himalaya. These sites also offer an excellent opportunity to observe the best views of mountain panorama from Annapurna to Everest range. About 25 mountain peaks, including Gaurishankar, Numbur, Dorje Lhakpa, Langtang, Phurbigyachu, Gangchenpo, Lhotse etc. can be seen from these sites in a clear day.

- ✧ With mild climate, good access, best views of mountain and diverse ethnic groups, these sites could also be the best sites for soft trekking for all seasons and all age groups.
- ✧ During the month of March and April, the prominent hilltops turn into colorful garden with the variety of rhododendrons blossoming accompanied by the chirping of birds.
- ✧ Sunkoshi River, one of the best rivers for white water rafting, also flows almost parallel to the circuit. At least four major tributaries (Indrabati, Bhotekoshi, Tamakoshi and Dudhkoshi) of Sunkoshi River need to be crossed during the visit to Maratika Cave.
- ✧ At least two formally branded trekking trails (i) Indigenous Peoples Trail-IP Trail (Mudhe-Sailung-Dorambha-Sunapati-Lubhughat- Nepalthowk), and (ii) Mundhum Trail (Haleshi-Majuwagadhi-Rupakot-Temke and on to Silicho Danda (Salpa pass) can be traversed fully or partially during the pilgrimage to Maratika. **Mundhum Trail** links some of the rich Kirat cultural heritage sites, best viewpoints of mountain panorama (including Everest range), and significant pilgrimage sites, including Haleshi (Maratika).

4.8.3. *Other Satellite Tourism Destinations and Product Linkage Opportunities*

- ✧ Other satellite sites lying along and around the circuit include Banepa, Dhulikhel, Dapcha, Sunkoshi River, Sindhulighadi, Pattale Danda

(Okhaldhunga and Solukhumbu), Manthali, Thame Danda/Deurali, Thodung Monastery, Shivalaya, Jiri, Kalinchowk Bhagwati etc.

✿ Amongst the selected Buddhist circuits, this circuit has the greater opportunity for linking with other destinations and circuits. Linkage opportunities for this circuit include the following:

- ✿ Linking with Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit, including three famous stupas.
- ✿ Linking with Everest- Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit.
- ✿ Linking with Indigenous Peoples Trail (IP Trail).
- ✿ Linking with Sindhuligadhi and Janakpur Dham.
- ✿ Linking with Salleri and Everest Base Camp trek.
- ✿ Linking with Mundhum Trail and Chatara/Dharan.
- ✿ Linking with Beyul Khempalung and Makalu Base Camp Trek.
- ✿ Linking with Sunkoshi River Rafting.

4.8.4. *Potential Markets and Market Segments*

✿ Being equally revered by the non-Buddhist communities, this circuit is potential for a wide range of market segments. Potential markets for MSTPSMCC include the following:

- ✿ Domestic market: Maratika Cave can attract huge number of Buddhists, Hindus and Kirat pilgrims. It has already become a popular pilgrimage center for the Himali Buddhist communities, especially the Sherpas. Many Buddhists and Hindus from Kathmandu Valley and many Hindus from Terai region, including Janakpur come to Haleshi. Timal and Sailung area can also attract both the Buddhist and Hindu pilgrims along with other segments, including trekking, rafting, sightseeing etc.
- ✿ Indian Markets: Few Buddhist pilgrims from Sikkim and Darjeeling area have already made their way to Maratika Cave. Ladhakh is another potential market for Maratika. Many Indian Hindus are nowadays visiting Haleshi via Kathmandu and Janakpur. Indian

leisure segment can also be attracted to Haleshi by connecting it with Pattale, Salleri and Everest Base Camp trek.

- ❁ Other International Market: About 10,000 international visitors, especially from China, Bhutan, Mongolia, Singapore etc. are visiting Haleshi annually. This circuit has a huge potential to attract other segments, such as leisure, soft trekking and rafting. Soft trekking activities can be combined with spirituality and meditation activities in Timal, Sailung, Haleshi, Majuwagadhi, Temke, Thodung, Jiri, Charikot and other potential sites.

4.8.5. *Approach Routes, Suggested Itineraries and Activities*

a. **Approach Routes**

- ❁ The following approach routes can be used to reach Haleshi (Maratika) and other associated Buddhist sites located in the circuit:
 - ❁ Kathmandu-Banepa-Dhulikhel-Bhakundebesi-Timal-Nepalthowk-Khurkot-Ghurmi-Jayaramghat-Haleshi (Maratika)-216 km.
 - ❁ Kathmandu-Timal-Sailung-Manthali-Ghurmi-Haleshi.
 - ❁ Jiri - Bamti Bhandar - Salleri - Pattale - Okhaldhunga - Jayaramghat - Haleshi.
 - ❁ Janakpur-Bardibas-Sindhulighadi-Khurkot-Ghurmi-Haleshi.
 - ❁ Udayapur-Gaighat-Ghurmi-Jayaramghat-Haleshi.
 - ❁ Dhankuta-Hile-Bhojpur-Temke-Diktel -Haleshi.

b. **Suggested tour itinerary**

- ❁ A customized package from Kathmandu may follow Kathmandu-Banepa-Dhulikhel-Bhakundebesi-Timal-Nepalthowk-Khurkot-Ghurmi-Jayaramghat-Haleshi (Maratika)- Tuwachung Hill-Majhuwa Gadhi (Diktel)-Temke (Everest view point)-Jayaramghat-Ghurmi-Khurkot-Manthali-Thamedanda-Deurali-

Thodung Monastery-Shivalaya-Jiri-Charikot-Sailung-Sunkoshi-Kathmandu.

c. Suggested pilgrimage, spiritual and leisure activities for MSTPSMCC

- ✿ Visiting, praying and worshipping (caves, temples, monasteries).
- ✿ Visiting Gomba at Maratika, Thodung, Charikot, Sailung and Timal and receiving a blessing from the Monks/Nuns.
- ✿ Circumambulation around the sacred hills and caves. Getting blessings on knowledge (prajna) at Manjushree Cave at Haleshi.
- ✿ Offering incense puja with Maratika Lama. Receiving long-life vase (**Tse Bum**) from Maratika Lama.
- ✿ Collecting holy water from the sacred caves in Maratika, which is considered “the nectar of immortality”.
- ✿ Entering into deep meditation at Maratika Cave, Sailung, Timal.
- ✿ Observing colorful festivals such as Timal Jatra, Tuwachung Kirat Festival, Chaite Jatra.
- ✿ Promoting Timal as Shaman Healing Center. Promote Timal Bolde Kalleri Jhankri Tour.
- ✿ Enjoying indigenous culture, food, costumes, music, dance etc.
- ✿ Trekking and sightseeing, including observation of Mountain panorama views from Timal, Sailung, Charikot, Temke.
- ✿ Cycling and driving through one of the beautiful roads, BP Highway.
- ✿ Rafting and boating experiences.

4.8.6. *Efforts undertaken for heritage based tourism promotion and conservation*

- ❁ Planned efforts for the preservation and promotion of heritage sites has only been carried out in Haleshi (Maratika Cave) by **Haleshi Mahadevsthan Development Committee** (formed under MoCTCA) and Haleshi Temple Development Committee (under Guthi). Various infrastructures, including construction of temples, development of circumambulation path, welcoming gate, access trail with railing, drinking water facilities etc. have already been developed. A masterplan has just been prepared by Haleshi Area Development Committee. Tuwachung Haleshi Municipality is in the process of preparing new master plan with long-term vision for the promotion and conservation of Greater Haleshi Area. Private sectors have invested huge amount of money on accommodation and transport sector.
- ❁ In **Sailung area**, Department of Tourism (DoT), DCC Ramechhap and local tourism committee have developed some infrastructures, such as walking trails, view tower, stupa etc.
- ❁ The development and upgrading of Buddhist monuments and tourism infrastructures, such as monasteries, stupas etc. in **Timal area** are primarily initiated, funded and managed by local communities, religious organization, entrepreneurs and local governments.

4.8.7. *Key Issues, Gaps and Threats*

- ❁ The huge potentials of all these sites for Buddhist heritage based tourism promotion are not yet explored and documented adequately.
- ❁ The Ghurmi-Khurkot section of road to Maratika cave on Lokmarga is yet to be black-topped in full-phase with construction of bridges in the required places.
- ❁ Sailung and Timal area lack adequate and quality accommodation facilities and services.

- ❁ Haleshi has already become a crowded hub and requires strategic plan with proper zoning of area. Haphazard construction works have already started in Sailung, gradually damaging the scenic landscape and spirituality of the area.
- ❁ Effort has never been made to connect the sites contained in this circuit in a single pilgrimage tour package despite of the huge potential of these sites for the same.

4.8.8. *Key Opportunities*

- ❁ Development and promotion of Maratika Cave (Haleshi) as an epicenter for pilgrimage (especially the Buddhists pilgrimage) in the eastern Nepal by linking it with major Buddhist hubs such as Lumbini, Kathmandu, Lapchi, Everest, Khanpalung etc.
- ❁ Opportunity for developing and promoting tour packages that can nicely combine soft trekking, cultural experiences and spirituality.
- ❁ Developing and promoting meditation, yoga and retreat centers in and around the sacred hilltops such as Timal, Sailung, Thodung/Deurali/Pattale, Tuwachung, Majhuwagadhi, Temke.
- ❁ Making circuit more circular and vibrant by connecting Haleshi and Jiri/Thodung Monastery via Pattale Danda.
- ❁ Promoting Timal area as the hot-spot of Tantric Buddhism (Vajrayana Buddhism) with the promotion of Shamanism.
- ❁ Establishing accommodation facilities (Hotels, lodges, homestays, Dharmashalas) in the major hubs.
- ❁ Formulating and implementing master plan and site plan for the sacred sites.



4.9. EVEREST-ROLWALING SACRED BEYUL CIRCUIT

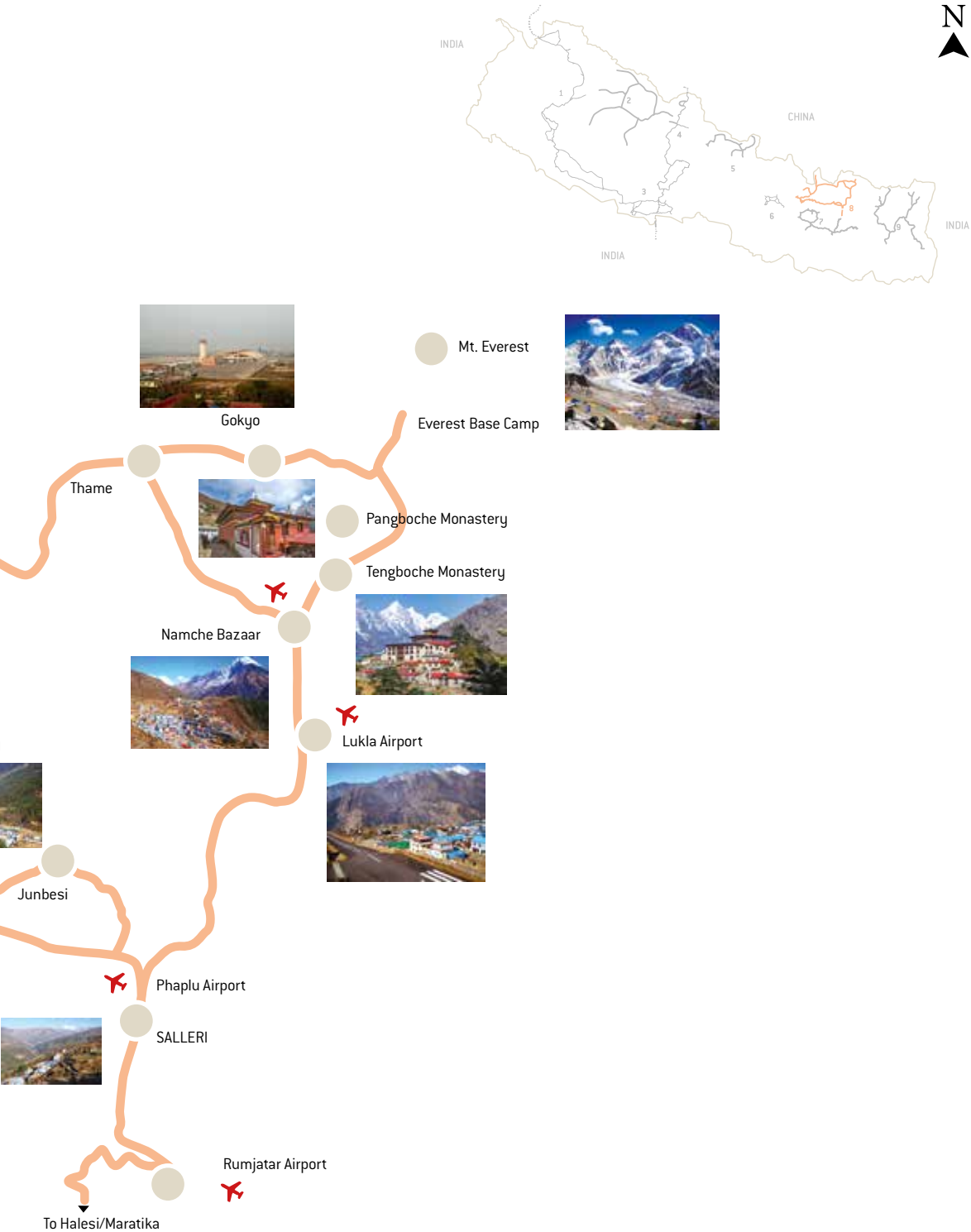
Spiritual Journey to the Roof of the World through the sacred beyul, monasteries and spiritual meditation centers.

4.9.1. Background

- ❁ Everest Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit (ERSBC) connects some of the most sacred Buddhist heritage sites lying en-route to the roof of the world (Mt. Everest) that are blessed by the most venerated figures in the Himalayan Buddhism, the Great Tantric Master Padmasambhava and Yogi Milarepa.
- ❁ Significant sites connected by the circuit include Beyul Khandro Rolwaling, Lapchi (Godavari) and Khumbu Valley. Other important sites include Bigu Tashi Gomba in Dolakha and Thupten Chhoeling Gomba in Junbesi, Solu.
- ❁ This circuit roughly overlaps with the worlds' famous trekking and mountaineering trail to Mt. Everest and thus offers a great opportunity for combining world-class mountain adventure experience with the Buddhist cultural and spiritual experience.
- ❁ In the present geo-political map of Nepal, the sites connected by ERSBC are located in Dolakha and Solukhumbu district of Bagmati Province and Province No. 1.
- ❁ The significance of the major sites connected by the ERSBC stands as given below:
 - ❁ **Lapchi Snow Mountain:** The Speech Mandala of Chakrasamvara; one of the most preferred and perfected meditation caves of Yogi Milarepa; the holy Godavari; one of the most sacred spiritual retreat and meditation centers in the Himalayas.
 - ❁ **Beyul Khandro Rolwaling:** The Sanctuary of the Playful Dakinis; the sacred valley blessed by Padmasambhava and protected by Tseringmas (The Five Sisters of Long-life).

Map-9: Khumbu- Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit





- ✿ **Khumbu Valley:** The sacred hidden valley lying on the lap of Mt Everest (Dzo.mo.lung.ma) and the gateway to beyul Khandro Rolwaling (to the west) and beyul Khempalung (to the east).
- ✿ **Bigu Tashi Gomba:** The first Nunnery founded in the Nepal Himalaya.
- ✿ **Thupten Chholing Monastery:** The largest Nunnery founded in the Nepal Himalaya.

4.9.2. *Significance of the Sites contained in the ERSBC*

i. **Significance for Pilgrimage, Spirituality and Peace**

- ✿ Sacred pilgrimage sites of great spiritual value that lie in this circuit include the following:

a. ***Lapchi Cave: The Speech Mandala of Yidam Chakrasamvara.***

- ✿ Located in the northern-west part of Dolakha district and to the west of Rolwaling Valley, Lapchi Cave is one of the most sacred Buddhist pilgrimage and meditation centers in the Himalayas.
- ✿ In the present day map of Nepal, major parts of Lapchi Snow Mountain lie in Nepal, though some parts also lie in TAR China, including Nyanang, Chubar, Dingri and so on. From Nepal side, Lapchi Cave can be reached via Singati-Lamabagar-Lumanang (winter palace of Lapchi) -Thangchhemu- Lapchi route. Lapchi can also be reached from Tatopani (near the Chinese border) following the Tshotang-Phoma Pass-Tsho Shampho- Lapchi Dhamchen Temple. From TAR China, Lapchi can be reached either via Nyalam (Tashi-gan) or via Dingri-Rongshar-high passes.

Significance:

- ✿ Blessed by both Padmasambhava and Milarepa, Lapchi Snow Mountain is considered to be the **Speech Mandala**

of Yidam **Chakrasamvara** (Demchok in Tibetan language). According to Buddhist scriptures Mount Kailash and Tsari are considered to be the Body and Mind Mandala of Chakrasamvara respectively. Arguably, Lapchi is believed to be the most sacred pilgrimage and meditation center in the Nepal Himalaya and some of the topmost sacred pilgrimage sites in the entire Tibetan-Himalayan geography.

- ❖ The sacredness and significance of Lapchi has been described by many Tibetan treatises and religious books. The biography of Yeshe Chogyal, Tibetan consort of Padmasambhava, has mentioned Lapchi as one of the 25 sacred **Snow Mountains** of Padmasambhava in Tibet. Lapchi is identified as **Godavari** (Nyan-yon in Tibetan), one of the 24 tantric pitha cults of Demchok; the self-manifested left ear mandala of Chakrasamvara
- ❖ Lapchi is widely known as the perfected meditation seats of great Yogi Milarepa. At one of the most sacred caves, **Du Dul Phug** in Lapchi, Yogi Milarepa attained siddhi feats and mastered the “**Tummo**” practice. Du Dul Phug is one of the Four larger well-known caves of Milarepa. Milarepa performed many miracles in Lapchi and left behind sacred marks such as his **footprints**. It is believed that Milarepa also subjugated the demons, the same Five Tseringmas that Padmasambhava is believed to have subdued during 8th century, and preached the truth of Karma Dharma, the teaching of Taking -in-Refuse and the Growth of the Bodhi-Mind. Milarepa is believed to have sang many dohas out of his hundred Thousand Songs while converting the demons.

Sacred Places of Lapchi:

- ❖ The entire Lapchi Snow Mountain is as sacred as Mt. Kailash. Lapchi Snow Mountain is composed of three holy mountains, namely holy Mountain of **Chenrezig** (Kar Po Boom Ri), holy mountain of **Vajrapani** (Nag Po Boom Ri) and holy mountain

of **Manjushree** (Ser Po Boom Ri). Key sites to visit in Lapchi include sacred meditation caves, stupas and monasteries. Here in Lapchi, 33 meditation caves are believed to have received blessings from Milarepa. Lapchi is also famous for medicinal herbs and wild mushrooms.

- ✧ Milarepa's major sacred caves in Lapchi include Du Dul Phug (Cave of Subjugation of Mara), Ze Phug (Crest Cave), Bepa Gong Phug (Revelation of all Secrets-Upper Cave), Bepa Og Phug (Revelation of All Secrets -Lower Cave), Rechen Phug and Lungten Phug (Prophesied Caves of the Great Forest). Tak Tsang Phug (Tiger Nest Cave) and Drag Chang Phug (Bee Cave) are other famous caves.
- ✧ Here in Lapchi Caves, Milarepa is believed to have **manifested** as a **snow leopard**. In **Rechung Phug**, a stupa (**Jangchub Stupa**) has been built by Zhabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol. Later, as advised by H.H. Chetsang Rinpoche of Ladhak, a new stupa was built covering the ancient one. During the 13th century, Lord Jigten Sumgon is believed to have sent altogether 55,525 disciples, including Dorzin Yangru Padrak to meditate at **Lungten Phug** (prophesied Cave of the Great Forest) and other caves in Lapchi. Yuthok Yonten Gonpo, who is believed to be the emanation of Medicine Buddha, meditated at **Yuthok Phug**. **Rechen Phug** houses a Rechen Temple and a footprint of Milarepa on the rock wall. Lapchi Namkha Gyaltshen also meditated for 30 years in Rechen cave.

Lapchi as a Center of Pilgrimage, Retreat and Meditation:

- ✧ From 12th to early 20th century AD, Lapchi remained as the most sacred pilgrimage, retreat and meditation center on a larger Himalayan pilgrimage circuit attracting many accomplished yogis, Rinpoches, Khenpos, retreat masters, Lamas, monks, nuns and practitioners. The 13th century AD marks one of the peak periods for flourishing dharma in

Lapchi Snow Mountain. Not only the followers of Kagyu, but the followers of all traditions visit Lapchi. Nyingma followers consider Lapchi as a separate beyul consecrated by Padmasambhava.

- ✧ Lapchi is considered to be one of the two major meditation centers where Milarepa spent most of his time as a retreat (Sherpa 2016). Here in the Snow Mountains of Lapchi, enlightened Yogi Milarepa (1040-1123) meditated for many years and left sacred marks such as his footprint. Milarepa is believed to have been sent to Lapchi (Godavari) by his Tibetan Master Marpa because it was the best meditation place to perform his practice (illustrated as Drog-Lapchi-Gang-Kyi-Raba is Godavari in Tibetan language; Nechok Lapchi Kagyu Milarepa Association-NLKMA, Brochure).
- ✧ Blessed by the great tantric master Padmasambhava, Lapchi was the sacred meditation seat for other great masters of higher attainment, including Sarahapa from India, Rechung Dorje Dragpa from Tibet, H.H. Chetsang Rinpoche from Ladhakh and so on.
- ✧ Lapchi was a major intellectual and spiritual center of Tibet especially during 13th century when **Bri-gung-pa** and **Brug-pa schools** of Kagyu tradition had developed a network throughout southern and western Tibet extending from Ladhakh in the far west to Purang and to Nepal. Pilgrims and retreat masters believe that higher merit can be accumulated by meditating in the caves where Milarepa meditated. It is believed that on meditating in the caves one will find in plenty the necessity of life and will be inspired by the grace of the previous masters of the apostolic succession. It is claimed that greater progress and realization can be achieved through Meditating in Lapchi than other sites (NLKMA Brochure).
- ✧ During the 13th century, Lapchi used to be one of the major Buddhist intellectual and spiritual centers attracting as many

as 6,600 Buddhist monks at a time from India, Ladakh, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. It is said that the founder of the Drikung Kagyu lineage **Kyobpa Loard Jigten Sumgon** (1143-1217) also sent 55,525 disciples simultaneously to do retreat in Lapchi (NLKMA Brochure). In the 15th century, one of the great masters **Lapchi Namkha Gyaltsen** practiced for more than 30 years with many disciples and entered into parinirvana here in Lapchi. In the 18th century, **Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol** came to Lapchi and built Chora Gephel Ling and Jangchub Stupa.

b. *Bigu Tashi Gomba*

- ✧ **Bigu Tashi Gomba** is the western gateway to Lapchi Snow Mountain and beyul Khandro Rolwaling. Bigu Tashi Gomba was founded in 1934 by Serab Dorje Drukpa Rinpoche as first nunnery in the Nepal Himalaya. The same Rinpoche built a gomba (Mu Gomba) and a nunnery (Rachen Gomba) in Tsum Valley, Gorkha. Before founding this monastery, Serab Dorje spent some years in Lapchi. Belonging to the Kagyupa tradition, Bigu Tashi Gomba is famous for Nunnery teaching.

c. *Beyul Khandro Rolwaling*

- ✧ Beyul Khandro Rolwaling is located in the Gaurishankar Rural Municipality on the lap of sacred Mt. Gaurishankar (Jomo Tseringma in Tibetan language) in between Khumbu Valley (to the east), and Lapchi Snow Mountain and Bhote Koshi Valley (to the west). The spiritual meaning of Khandro Rolwaling means “**Sanctuary of the Playful Dakinis**”. The beyul valley is the residence of protector Goddesses such as Tseringma (the Five Sisters of Long-life).
- ✧ Khandro Rolwaling is a blessed site for Padmasambhava. Here, Padmasambhava is believed to have meditated and subdued the demons, called the **Five Sisters of Long-life** and converted them as the protectors of the Dharma, symbolized

as Gaurishankar. The Five Sisters of Long-life include the following:

- ✿ Tashi Tseringma, riding on a white snow-lioness.
 - ✿ Ting gyi Shai Zangma, riding on a wild ass.
 - ✿ Miyo Lozangma, riding on a tigress.
 - ✿ Chöpen Drinzangma, riding on a doe (female deer).
 - ✿ Tākār Drozangma, riding on a female turquoise dragon.
- ✿ Local legend has it that Padmasambhava meditated for three months with his consort and 100 followers. Legend goes that these Tseringma sisters took oaths from Guru Padmasambhava in Khandro Rolwaling and made promise themselves to be the guardians of the area. These sisters are considered to be the worldly goddesses of the land. Due to the presence of the five Tseringma sisters, the Khandro Rolwaling is considered to be more prosperous.
- ✿ Sacred sites to visit in beyul Khandro Rolwaling include Mt. Gaurishankar (Tseringma), sacred lake Tso Rolwa, Padmasambhava Cave around Na and Nimare, and Beding Monastery. Pilgrims and some culture experts compare the sacredness of Mt. Gaurishankar -Tso Rolwa and Beding Monastery as similar to that of Mt. Kailash-Manasarovara Lake and Khojarnath Gomba. Gaurishankar (7159m) has two summits i.e. the northern (higher peak) and southern summit (lower peak) thus, as per Vedic mythology, they are called as Shankar (manifestation of Shiva) and Gauri (manifestation of Parvati) respectively.
- ✿ In the nearby area of **Na**, there is a **Padmasambhava Cave** with a huge quadrangular rock carved with old Buddhist mantras. It is believed that Padmasambhava meditated here in this sacred cave after subduing the famous five demons residing on Gaurishankar.

- ✧ **Sangag Choling Monastery** (also known as **Beding Monastery**) is the major pilgrimage center of beyul Khandro Rolwaling. It is believed that the gomba was established around 300 years ago, probably with the arrival of first Sherpa group in this valley. Tulku Ngawang Lapsum Rinpoche who was enthroned as Rinpoche of Khandro Rolwaling in 2009 is the head of this gomba. The famous **Tso Rolpa Lake** is also considered as a sacred one.
- ✧ Complete circumambulation around Mt. Gaurishankar is practically difficult as it covers larger geographical areas in Nepal and TAR China, and requires well-organized and costly logistics to traverse across many adventure passes, including Tashi Labtsa and Nangpo La. So, pilgrims usually visit Beding Monastery, Tso Rolwa and Padmasambhava Cave at Na, and worship Mt. Gaurishankar from certain distance.
- ✧ The beyul valley can be reached from following approach routes:
 - ✧ From North-west: Lapchi-Lamabagar-Simigaon-Dokhang and on to Beding and Tso Rolwa.
 - ✧ From East: Lukla-Thame-Tashi Labtsa pass and on to Tso Rolwa and Beding.
 - ✧ From South: Charikot/Jiri-Singati-Suri-Khare and on to Beding and Tso Rolwa.
 - ✧ From West: Bhotekoshi-Bigu Gomba-Singati-Simigaon-Dokhang and on to Tso Rolwa.
- ✧ The western entrance to the valley is marked by the sacred footprint left by Padmasambhava on the steep slope en-route to Simigaon.
- d. ***Khumbu Valley: A Newly Claimed Beyul (or A Pseudo Beyul)***
 - ✧ The sacred **Khumbu Valley** lies on the lap of world tallest peak Mt. Everest (Dzo.mo.lung.ma) flanked by beyul

Khempalung in the east and beyul Khandro Rolwaling in the west. The Khumbu Valley was opened with the arrival of the first Sherpa migrants from Amdo/Kham region of eastern Tibet via Upper Tsang region crossing Nangpa La (5,716m) about 500 years ago.

- ✧ Many Buddhist Rinpoches and Buddhist masters regard Khumbu Valley as a separate beyul. However, other Buddhist masters and scholars consider Khumbu only as a sacred valley sand-witched by two beyuls i.e. beyul Khandro Rolwaling (to the west) and beyul Khempalung (to the east), and thus often define Khumbu Valley as a disputed beyul or a pseudo beyul.
- ✧ Khumbu Valley has on outstanding spiritual, cultural, physical and natural features to become a spiritually sacred geography, called beyul. Many scholars have described Khumbu Valley as a sacred beyul, including Dr. Lhakpa N. Sherpa who has written a book “Through a Sherpa Window, 2008” presenting Khumbu Valley as a sacred beyul. However, many Buddhist scholars and lamas claim that Khumbu Valley is not yet included in the Pema Kathang and other original sources, baring it to become a beyul. The famous **Northern Treasures** revealed by terton Rigdzin Go- Demchen only mentions about the existence of beyul Khempalung (to the east) and beyul Khandro Rolwaling (to the west of Khumbu Valley). Nevertheless, **Khumbu**, as a hidden valley, is mentioned in (i) the Great Catalogue of Prophecies, (ii) the list of Six Categories of Close Transmissions of the unobstructed Primordial Mind of the Great Completion, (iii) The Lamp of Clear Meaning: the Profound Instruction of [Dorje] Phagmo, and (iv) Great Source of Treasures of Ratna Lingpa (Ven. Jamyang Wangmo; Dancing in the Clouds 2008).
- ✧ Be it a sacred beyul or not, Khumbu Valley is a significantly sacred valley teeming with many protector deities (Tseringmas), sacred caves and monasteries worth to visit

by pilgrims. Many of the mountains, caves and boulders in Khumbu valley are considered the abodes of gods and goddesses and are believed to have contained termas. There are many stories about the arrival of Padmasambhava in the Khumbu Valley from Tibet via Nangpa La. Khumbu Valley may be desperately waiting for a tertön who can reveal the termas concealed by Padmasambhava in Khumbu Valley.

- ✧ There are many sacred caves, stupas and historic monasteries of more than 300 years old. The sacred caves are particularly associated with the legends of Padmasambhava and great Lama Sangwa Dorje.
- ✧ The people of Khumbu valley regard **Mt. Everest** or Dzo. mo.lung.ma in Tibetan Language (Jomo Miyo Langsangma) as the abode of Tseringma “Immutable Elephant Fair Lad”; one of the Five Sisters of Long-life.
- ✧ **Khumbi-Yul-Lha** residing on the rocky peaks of Khumbila (5,761m) and Tawoche (6,542m) act as local protector deity for the Sherpas of Khumbu Valley. The Khumbila, divide the entire Khumbu valley into two; Dudh Koshi and Imja valley to the east, and Nangpa and Thame Valley to the west.
- ✧ **Pangboche Monastery** is the first Sherpa monastery found in Khumbu Valley. It was founded by Lama Sangwa Dorje in 1667 AD. Studied in Kochag, Kham with the Drogönpa Rigzin Jigdröl Zangpo, Lama Sangwa received the empowerments, oral transmissions and commentaries of the works of tertön Ratna Lingpa and Rigzin Godem-chen, among others, and eventually became a skilled tantric practitioner (Ven. Jamyang Wangmo 2008).
- ✧ Other important and historic monasteries include Thangme Monastery, Rimejung Monastery, Thupten Chholing Monastery and so on.



ii. Archaeological and Historical Significance

- ❁ Lapchi was one of the trade and pilgrimage gateways to Tibet since the very ancient time. Many traders and pilgrims from Nepal Mandala, Simronghad, and Tirahut used to follow the ancient trade route via Dolakha, Lamabagar, Lapchi and on to Lhasa in Tibet. The archaeological and historical significance of Lapchi Snow Mountain started with the arrival of Yogi Milarepa in 12th century. There are around 30 meditation caves of Milarepa, including famous Du Dul Phug, many of which also bear sacred marks such as footprints of Milarepa.
- ❁ Lapchi Chora Gephel Ling Monastery was built by lama Dorje Chang (Zhabs-dkar eDo-rje-chang) in 1818 AD and was dedicated to Milarepa. Lama Dorje renovated Bouddhanath Mahachaitya in Kathmandu, spent three years in retreat at Du Dul Phug and established this monastery. Lapchi Monastery houses a **bronze statue** made by Rechung Dorje Dragpa (a disciple of Milarepa) and consecrated by Milarepa himself. It also houses a **sacred relic stone**, a stone taken from the site of Milarepa's cremation heart that manifests the sacred mantra, Om Mane Padme Hum (Mani mantra of Avalokiteshvara). A **new monastery** has been constructed at Lower Lumanag village to ease the worshipping by monks during the winter.
- ❁ It is believed that Milarepa had made a statue of himself, **Shang Drak Ma** (Nasal-blood image) with clay mixing with his blood from his nose and his saliva. Later H.H. Chetsang Rinpoche managed to remake three more statues in Lapchi (Nepal), Drigung Thil Monastery in Tibet and Jangchub Ling in India; using the remains of the original statue.
- ❁ Sangag Choling Monastery in Beding is the signature Buddhist monument built around 300 years in beyul Khandro Rolwaling. The legendary **Padmasambhava Cave** located in Na area with a huge quadrangular rock displays the beautifully carved old Buddhist mantras.

- ✿ Built in 1934 AD, **Bigu Tashi Chheme Gomba** is the first nunnery built in the Nepalese Himalaya. The monastery complex houses main monastery building, gold-tipped eight white stupas, and residence buildings of nuns.
- ✿ Founded in 1667 AD, **Pangboche Monastery** is the first Sherpa monastery built in Khumbu Valley. Lama Sanwa is said to have constructed this monastery under the instruction of his tutelary deity, who appeared here in Khumbu Valley, probably in the Gonpo Maning form. One can see the imprint of Lama Sangwa Dorje's buttocks behind the main altar of Pangboche monastery. Locals believe that Dumji Festival was introduced by Lama Sangwa in Khumbu Valley.
- ✿ **Thangme Monastery:** Thangme Monastery was built by Ralwa Dorje (or Rolpe Dorje), one of two brothers of Lama Sangwa, soon after the establishment of Pangboche Monastery. Later, Tulku Ngawang Dorje was credited for the rebuilding of the old Thangme Monastery and making various clay statues. His son Chatang Choying Rangdrol had played a significant important role in transformation of Nyingma traditions amongst the Sherpa communities in Khumbu Valley.
- ✿ **Rimejung Monastery:** Rimejung Monastery was built by Khenpa Dorje, another brother of Lama Sangwa.
- ✿ **Tengboche Monastery:** Tengboche Monastery or Dawa Choling Monastery was built by Lama Gullu with the blessings of Ngawang Tenzin Norbu. In 1919 AD, the new building of Tengboche Monastery was consecrated by **Dzatul Ngawang Tenzin Norbu**. Many Sherpa men and women took monastic vows during the auspices of the consecration of this new building.
- ✿ **Thupten Chholing Monastery:** Thupten Chholing Monastery was established in 1968 by **Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche** near Junbesi (Lower Khumbu Valley or Solu). It is one of the pioneer nunneries with more than 300 nuns learning and practicing the teachings



of Buddha. Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche had entered into Khumbu Valley from Rongbuk Gomba in Tibet during early 60s, with large group of disciples, monks and nuns. Now Thupten Chholing has become the permanent seat of Trulshik Rinpoche. Lama Zopa also played a crucial role in flourishing Buddhism in Junebesi and establishing this monastery. Thubten Chodling Gomba has a close relation with Kapan Monastery in Kathmandu.

- ✿ Thubten Shedrup Ling monastery in Lower Solukhumbu and Lawudo Retreat Center in Khumbu Valley offer professional retreat package under the guidance of fully qualified teacher.

iii. **Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value**

- ✿ Like the Newars of Kathmandu, the Sherpa people are some of the prominent groups in Nepal who have been practicing Buddhists dharma without any discontinuation. People sometime use the term Sherpa Buddhism to describe the Buddhism in Eastern Nepal.
- ✿ Sherpas are considered to be the **first large group of Buddhist settlers** who immigrated to Nepal Himalaya from Amdo and Kham in Tibet (Hoivik S. 2007); belonging to the four original clans: Changpa or Chawa, Minyag, Thimmi and Lama (Ven. Jamyang Wangmo 2008). The Sherpas of Rolwaling are also believed to have crossed the Tashi Labtsa pass from Thame area in Khumbu region and then settled in Rolwaling Valley, probably during 16th or 17th century AD. The inhabitants of Lumanag village in Lapchi are the descendants of Nyalam and Chubar in Tibet.
- ✿ Until before the advent of tourism in Khumbu Valley during 50s, the Sherpa people were the highland **traders and Yak herders**. People of Khumbu and Rolwaling used to do cross-country trade with Tibet via Nangpa La (5741m). During the late spring and summer seasons, people from Rolwaling Valley cross Tashi Labtsa pass (5,755m) to reach Khumbu valley. Sherpa communities of Khumbu and Rolwaling have now developed a unique cultural brand “Sherpa Culture” with their extraordinary and outstanding

physical posture, costumes, food, music, dance, lifestyle, housing pattern and their profession as mountain climbers.

- ✿ Main settlements in Khumbu Valley include Pangboche, Phortse, Tengboche, Khumjung, Khunde, Thame, Namche, Monjo, Phakding, Chaurikharka, Lumka, Surke, Paiya, etc. Nowadays, every settlement in Khumbu Valley are filled with monastery, colourful stupas and colourful mani-walls carved with Buddhist mantras.
- ✿ Likewise, Beding is the oldest and largest Sherpa settlement in Rolwaling. Bigu Village and Lumanag village (in Lapchi) are also the Buddhist villages.
- ✿ Majority of the Sherpas of Khumbu and Rolwaling region are the followers of Nyingma tradition. However, some Sherpas in Junbesi area later became the followers of Gelug tradition with the influence of Lama Zopa (incarnated form of late Tibetan Latod Lama). Lama Zopa went to Tibet to learn Buddhism under Lama Yeshe but had to return very shortly due to Chinese influence. Sherpas of Lapchi and Bigu village are mostly the followers of Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.
- ✿ Local Sherpas of Rolwaling Valley have the tradition of performing annual rituals for opening the sacred valley (Khandro Rolwaling) for grazing. **Lhosar** (Tibetan New Year) is celebrated by all Sherpas with various rituals and events. In every 12 years, there happens **Lapchi Festival**. Pilgrims and monks come from around various places of Nepal and Tibet during the festival.
- ✿ Mani Rimdu and Dumji are the signature cultural festivals celebrated by the Sherpa people in the region. Each year, **Dumji Festival** is celebrated to commemorate the death of Lama Sangwa as well as the birth of Padmasambhava. **Mani Rimdu**, a popular masked dance, is a strictly religious and monastic festival and is held during the 10th lunar month of the Tibetan calendar. The Tibetan festival was first introduced in Khumbu Valley in

Chiwang Gomba in Shorong few years after the consecration of new Tengboche Monastery in 1919 by the spiritual leader Dzatul Ngawang Tenzin Norbu.

- ❁ Sherpa people worship mountains as their protector deities. Images of the local mountain protector deities, as well as the more distant five long life sisters (tsering-che-nga), can be found in every gomba in Khumbu. The Sherpas of Khumbu Valley worship **Khumbi-Yul-Lha** as their protector deity. It is worshipped during a ritual (called Lha-sang-tang-go) held in the month of Baishakh (April/May), Shravan (July/August), and Kartik (October/November). The Sherpas of Rolwaling worship Gaurishankar and other Five Sisters of Long-life (Tseringmas) as protector deities.

iv. Other Added Attractions and Activities

a. *Other (Non-Buddhist) cultural attractions*

- ❁ The lower part of Lapchi and Rolwaling region is the home to Thami, Jirel, Magar, Tamang, Newar, Chhetri, Brahmin and Dalit communities. Various festivals, fairs and events can be experienced while travelling to Lapchi and Rolwaling through these settlements.
- ❁ Likewise, Lower Khumbu region, Solu and Kulung area is home to famous Rai community. Before the advent of Sherpas into Khumbu Valley from Tibet, the region was the highland pasture for Rai people. Rai herders used to enter upto Everest Basecamp, Golko, Digmoche areas from Kulung Valley via Amphu Labtsa pass, and to Nagpo Valley and Thame Valley via Lukla.
- ❁ Even today, majority of the service providers in the Everest trekking route are Rai people. Pilgrims and visitors can enjoy colorful Rai culture, tradition and rituals, including Ubhouli and Udhoulis festivals. Major pilgrimage sites include Kalinchowk Bhagawati Temple, Bhimeshwor Temple (Dolakha).

b. Outstanding natural landscapes and rich biodiversity

- ✧ Khumbu Valley comprises the world's highest ecosystem that also includes Mt. Everest (8,884m), the roof of the world. Khumbu region comprises three of the Nepal's 8 highest mountains with more than 8,000m elevation, namely Mt. Everest (8,884m), Mt. Lhotse (8,414m), and Mt. Cho Oyu (8,201m). Other famous mountain peaks include Mt. Ama Damlam (6,856m) and Mt. Gaurishankar (7,135m).
- ✧ Beautiful and sacred lakes include Gokyo Lake, Imja Lake, Tso Rolwa (Lake), Dudh Kunda (Lake) etc. Tributaries of Sunkoshi River, including Bhotekoshi, Tamakoshi, Khimti, Likhu, and Dudhkoshi are also added attractions for the visitors and pilgrims.
- ✧ Popular adventure passes include Tashi Labtsa (5,755m, between Khumbu Valley and Rolwaling Valley), Rinjo La (5,360m, between Gokyo Lake and Thame Valley), Cho La (5420m, between Khumbu Glacier and Gokyo Lake), and Amphu Labtsa pass (5845m, between Barun Valley and Khumbu Valley).
- ✧ Khumbu and Rolwaling region are also the home to many flagship and endangered wild animals and bird species, including Snow Leopard, Musk Deer, Red Panda, Himalayan Tahr, Blue Sheep, Impeyan Pheasant (Danfe) and so on.
- ✧ The outstanding geographical and cultural landscapes of Khumbu and Rolwaling region have been managed under Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) and Gaurishankar Conservation Area (GCA) respectively.

4.9.3. Other Satellite Tourism Destinations and Product Linkage Opportunities

- ✧ Other satellite sites lying in the circuit include Kalinchowk, Charikot,

Jiri, Shivalaya, Thodung Monastery, Bamti Bhandar, Pikey Peak, and Salleri etc. Likewise, Sukute, Barabise and Tatopani are other tourist sites lying en-route to Bigu Gomba and Lapchi.

- ❁ Linkage opportunity with this circuit include the following:
 - ❁ Linking with Makalu Base Camp and beyul Khempalung via famous Amphu Labtsa pass.
 - ❁ Linking with pilgrimage to Maratika Cave (Haleshi) via Salleri.
 - ❁ Linking with Numbur Cheese Circuit (NCC).
 - ❁ Linking with Bhairab Kunda, Helambu and Langtang trek from Lapchi.
 - ❁ Linking with Sunkoshi River Rafting.

4.9.4. *Potential Markets and Market Segments*

- ❁ Everest region is one of the destinations in the world where every global citizen dreams to be once in their lifetime. Thus, ERSBC has a huge potential to attract all forms of market segments, including domestic, Indian and international market. In 2017, a total of 45,112 visitors visited SNP whereas GSCA welcomed 2,770 visitors. The Upper Thame Valley (Nangpa La area) of Khumbu region and Lapchi Area of Rolwaling region still fall under the controlled trekking area. A total of 70 visitors also visited the controlled trekking area, especially Lapchi in Rolwaling region in 2017.
- ❁ Majority of the pilgrims visiting Lapchi are from TAR, China followed by Bhutan, Singapore, Taiwan, Russia, US, and other countries. Rolwaling and Khumbu Valley can be the attractive destination for both the pilgrims and the adventure seekers, representing all market segments of all nationality (domestic, Indian and international).

4.9.5. Approach Routes, Suggested Itineraries and Activities

a. Approach Routes

- ✿ Separate journeys can be made to Lapchi and Rolwaling from Singati, and to Khumbu Valley from Jiri, Salleri or Lukla. Only the experienced adventure travelers can make a complete circuit of both valley (Rolwaling and Khumbu) crossing the Tashi Labtsa Pass (5,755m).
- ✿ Following approach routes can be used to reach Lapchi, Rolwaling Valley and Khumbu Valley:
 - ✿ Barabise (Bhotekoshi)-Dolangsa-Bigu Gomba-Singati-Gongarkhola-Simigaon and on to Lapchi/Rolwaling.
 - ✿ Kathmandu-Banepa-Dhulikhel-Dolalghat-Khadichour-Charikot-Singati-Simigaon and on to Lapchi/Rolwaling.
 - ✿ Kathmandu-Banepa-Dhulikhel-Dolalghat-Charikot-Jiri-Shivalaya-Bamti and on to Khumbu Valley.
 - ✿ Kathmandu/Bardibas/Udayapur/Haleshi-Jayaramghat-Okhaldhunga-Salleri and on to Khumbu Valley.
 - ✿ Barun Valley-Amphu Labtsa pass-Dingboche-Khumbu Valley
 - ✿ Mera Valley-Lukla-Khumbu Valley

b. Suggested tour itinerary

- ✿ Following three itineraries can be followed by the pilgrims and visitors:
 - ✿ Option-I (Lapchi Monastery): Kathmandu-Banepa-Dhulikhel-Dolalghat-Khadichour-Charikot-Singati-Lamabagar-Lapchi.
 - ✿ Option-II (Rolwaling): Kathmandu-Banepa-Dhulikhel-Dolalghat-Khadichour-Charikot-Singati-Simigaon-Rolwaling Valley
 - ✿ Option-III (Khumbu region): Kathmandu-Banepa-Dhulikhel-Dolalghat-Charikot-Jiri-Bamti-Junbesi-Lukla-Namche, or

Ktm.-Lukla (flight)-Khumbu Valley; or Ktm.-Phaplu flight)-Kharikhola-Lukla; or Ktm.-Khurkot-Ghurmi-Sallari (by vehicle) and on to Khumbu Valley by trek.

c. Suggested pilgrimage, spiritual and leisure activities for ERSBC

- ✿ Visiting, praying and worshipping at Gombas and receiving blessings from the Monks and Nuns.
- ✿ Entering into deep meditation and spiritual retreat in one of the sacred caves of Milarepa at Lapchi and Padmasambhava's Caves at Rolwaling and Khumbu Valley.
- ✿ Meditation, yoga and retreat at sacred monasteries and retreat centers.
- ✿ Observing colorful festivals and events such as Mani Rimdu, Dumji, Lhosar etc.
- ✿ Trekking through the sacred caves, monasteries, chortens, maniwalls, stupas to the roof of the world, Everest region and Rolwaling.

4.9.6. *Efforts undertaken for heritage based tourism promotion and conservation*

- ✿ The outstanding geographical and cultural landscapes of Khumbu region has been managed under Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) since 1976 AD. SNP was enlisted as UNESCO- World Heritage Site in 1979. Likewise, Rolwaling and surrounding areas are managed under Gaurishankar Conservation Area (GCA) since 2010 AD. The management responsibility of GSCA has been entrusted to National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC).
- ✿ Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC), a NGO, has been working for the management of pollution in Khumbu region with

support from SNP, MoCTCA, and WWF Nepal (during initial years).

- ❁ Eco-Himal, a NGO, contributed to the conservation of natural and cultural landscape, and improving the livelihoods of locals in Rolwaling region during 1996 to 2008. It also supported micro-hydro projects (Khumbu Bijuli) in Khumbu region.
- ❁ The Himalayan Trust, a NGO founded by Late Sir Edmund Hillary in 1960s has been working to improve the livelihoods of the people of Khumbu while also conserving the rich indigenous cultural and natural heritages.
- ❁ Nechok Lapchi Kagyu Milarepa Association (NLKMA), Lapchi has been working for the restoration of monasteries, meditation caves, and retreat huts and promotion of Lapchi as a retreat and meditation center over the last few decades.
- ❁ Respective rural municipalities, municipalities, monastery committees, Buffer Zone User Committee etc. are also undertaking various conservation and promotional activities on a regular basis.

4.9.7. *Key Issues, Gaps and Threats*

- ❁ Lapchi, one of the internationally renowned meditation and retreat centers of 12th to 19th century has remained largely ignored with the severe lack of infrastructures, poor maintenance and restoration of sacred monuments and zero promotion. It severely lacks walking trails and basic accommodation facilities. The proposed hydro-power projects and construction of approach roads may disturb the sacredness and sanctity of this sacred site of international importance.
- ❁ Beyul Khandro Rolwaling is also constrained by the poor infrastructures and poor packaging. Not all visitors and pilgrims can cross Tashi Labtsa pass to enter into Khumbu Valley from Rolwaling. So, there must be a circuit trail within Rolwaling region so as to attract more visitors and pilgrims.

- ❁ Communities and monasteries in Khumbu Valley have made their efforts for maintaining daily and periodic rituals. However, there is a lack of adequate effort for developing mountain yoga and retreat facilities in the monasteries and retreat centers and linking them with trekking and mountaineering activities.

4.9.8. *Key Opportunities*

- ❁ Reviving the forgotten charms of Lapchi as an international meditation and spiritual retreat center. Establishing and operating retreat facilities allowing interested individuals to practice Buddhist philosophical, psychological and meditation techniques of various duration (short to multi-years). Developing basic infrastructures and preserving sacredness and sanctity of the area.
- ❁ Promoting cross-boundary pilgrimage circuit via Lapchi, connecting Lamabagar-Lapchi-Nyalam-Sakya-Lhasa in TAR China.
- ❁ Promoting Mt. Gaurishankar-Tso Rolwa and Beding Monastery similar to that of Mt. Kailash-Manasarovar and Khojarnath Monastery.
- ❁ Considering the fact that ice masses in the high altitude passes (including Tashi Labtsa pass), are melting faster than before and considering the ongoing construction of road networks leading to Khumbu Valley, develop more facilities to promote Rolwaling-Khumbu Valley trekking and pilgrimage journey via Tashi Labtsa pass.
- ❁ Developing greater circuit within Rolwaling region by connecting Lapchi and Rolwaling Valley with Jiri or Shivalaya or Gumdel via Panchpokhari Lake and Neju Kharka.
- ❁ Collaborating with monastic institutions, tourism industry associations and trekking agencies to develop and promote combined package for trekking and Himalayan Yoga, Spiritual Retreat and Peace therapy along the trekking trails in Khumbu and Rolwaling region.
- ❁ Preserving and promoting tangible and intangible heritages of the circuit.

Map-10: Beyul Khempalung -Upper Arun-Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit





Ghunsa



Ilam

To Birtamod

4.10. BEYUL KHEMPALUNG- UPPER ARUN-UPPER TAMOR BUDDHIST CIRCUIT

4.10.1. Background

- ✿ Beyul Khempalung- Upper Arun-Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit (BKUAUTBC) connects some of the least explored but significantly sacred Buddhist sites in the eastern Nepal, including sites in Beyul Khempalung, Upper Arun and Upper Tamor.
- ✿ In the present geo-political map of Nepal, the sites connected by BKUAUTBC are located in Sankhuwasabha and Taplejung districts of Province No. 1.
- ✿ The significance of the major sites connected by the BKUAUTBC stands as given below:
 - ✿ **Beyul Khempalung:** Beyul Khempalung is the least explored but the most sacred beyul valley concealed by Padmasambhava. In the words of Padmasambhava, it is as sacred as **Dewachen**, the land where Amitabha resides and **Potala**, the land where Avalokiteshvara resides. Khempalung Caves, Saisimma Monastery and Tso Karpo are the key holy pilgrimage sites within the beyul.
 - ✿ **Upper Arun Valley, Guthi Gomba and more:** One of the Buddhist pilgrimage hubs in the eastern region seasoned through the unique combination of Buddhism with the shamanistic traditions of Bonpos and animistic traditions of Kirat. **Yang Guthi Gomba** is the major religious power place of the region.
 - ✿ **Upper Tamor Valley, Diki Chhoeling Gomba and more:** Arguably Upper Tamor Valley is the far eastern gateway to Tibet of Padmasambhava during 8th century. Possibly the valley with last group of Buddhist settlers emigrated to Nepal Himalaya from Tibet. The ancient Diki Chhoeling Gomba is the major religious power place of the region.
 - ✿ **Footprint of Padmasambhava:** Khempalung, Upper Arun and

Upper Tamor Valley lie on the footprint of Padmasambhava during his spiritual journey to Tibet from India via Nepal Mandala.

4.10.2. *Significance of the Sites Contained in the BKUAUTBC*

i. **Significance for Pilgrimage, Spirituality and Peace**

✿ Sacred pilgrimage sites of great spiritual value lie in this circuit include the following:

a. ***Beyul Khempalung (Mkhan-pa-lung):***

✿ Beyul Khempalung is located in the north-west region of Sankhuwasabha district in between Mera Valley (in Solukhumbu) and Upper Arun Valley (in Sankhuwasabha). The sacred beyul constitutes the entire valley of Apsuwa Khola on the lap of Chamlang Himal and Upper Barun Valley on the far side of Amphu Labtsa. The spiritual meaning of Khempalung is “Valley replete with Artemisia or Titepati flowers”. In fact, the entire beyul area is rich in medicinal plants. The beyul was discovered by Pema Lingpa (Ven. Jamyang Wangmo, 2008) and popularized by the most important Lama Tulku Dratrul Rinpoche. As per Tibetan Buddhist texts, Guru Rinpoche himself, has ascribed the sacredness of beyul Khempalung **similar** to that of **Dewachen** (the land where Amitabha resides) and **Potala** (the land where Avalokiteshvara resides). The beyul valley has been described as the place of the gods; place of pure prayers; natural Dorje Den (Dorje Realm, the other name of Bodh Gaya). Here Padmasambhava has compared this land as so important as the place (Bodh Gaya) where Buddha gained enlightenment. The valley has also been regarded as the place of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.

✿ Amongst the five beyuls revealed so far in Nepal Himalaya, Beyul Khembalung is the **least explored and the remotest** one. Significant sites located within beyul Khempalung

include Lower Khempalung Cave (near Dobatak), Saisimma Monastery, Upper Khempalung Cave and Tso Karpo (White Lake, known as Barun Pokhari). The extremely difficult full circumambulation (Kora) path around beyul Khempalung follows Lower Khempalung Cave- Saisimma -Obapti Pokhari- Khongme Dingma- Honghu Valley- Hognkhu Basin (near Amphu Labtsa BC)- Sherpani Col (6180m)- Tso Karpo (Barun Pokhari)- Upper Khempalung Caves at Nghe Kharka- Yangle Kharka- Mumbuk-Khongma-Tashigaon-Navagaon-Nurpugaon-Upper Walung-Apsuwa Khola-Dobatak. However, as the full Kora via Sherpani Col, keeping Chamlang Himal (7321m) at the center, is pretty difficult and strenuous, most of the pilgrims prefer to follow half-kora following the Saisimma-Walung-Nurbugaon-Tashigaon-Khongma-Nghe -Khempalung Cave-Barun Pokhari route for pilgrimage.

- ✧ For generations, people have visited the two Khempalung sites and Tso Karpo as important pilgrimage sites of worship. Traditionally Lamas from the Lower Makalu area perform rituals to open the way to four ritual ceremonial sites: Khongma, Yangle Kharka, Nghe (Upper Khempalung) and Tso Karpo for pilgrim visitation during spring, and perform rituals for the closure of the sites during fall season.
- ✧ **Lower Khempalung Cave:** Located at an elevation of 2,210m, near the village of Dobatak (at the west bank of Apsuwa Khola), about 10km upstream from the confluence of the Arun and Apsuwa Khola, there lie many meditation caves of Padmasambhava, also known as Khempalung Caves (Lower). Pilgrims and monks circumambulate the large boulder outside clockwise and offer Khata on the rock.
- ✧ **Saisimma Dechen Chhoeling Monastery:** Dechen Chhoeling Monastery, Saisimma was established in 1973 AD by Nawang Thaye Lama, a Buddhist monk who was previously educated at Rongbuk Monastery in TAR China. Saisimma is located



at an elevation of 2,513m, about 3/4 km upstream from the Lower Khempalung Cave. The sacred monastery is the seat of Tulku Dzatrul Rinpoche. About two monks, 12 nuns and five families of lay Buddhist practitioners are the caretaker of the sacred caves of Khempalung. The monks and residents are believed to be the migrated Sherpas from Khumbu Valley, the descendants of either Thakto or Paldorje, or Chewa clans. Sherpa legends state that Lama Sange Paljor recalled the prophecy, “Khempalung could be opened when the world was overcome by wars”. Following the guidance of Lama Sange, his sons and disciples identified this sacred place. They established hermitages to take care of the sacred caves and eventually established a settlement of monks, nuns and laity followers.

- ✧ **Upper Khempalung Cave and Tso Karpo:** The Upper Khempalung Cave is located in the Upper Barun Valley high in the upper cliffs above Nghe Kharka. Upper Khempalung Cave is the epicentre of sacred Shangri La surrounded by mountains, lakes, streams, caves, high passes, rocks and grasslands. There are two caves, called **Shengi Duka** and **Shenchi Duka**. The two Khempalung sites are among seven “naval” that are inter-connected with Tso Karpo (White Lake), known as Barun Pokhari. The larger cave can accommodate about 1000 people. On the rock surface there lies an **imprints of Guru Rinpoche**. A natural spring has arisen from the ceiling of the rock surface. Locals believe that the natural spring has connection with Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar. Pilgrims with higher merit are believed to get sprinkled by the holy spring on one’s head as purification. A small **gomba** has been constructed at Yangle Kharka during 1970s. Killing animals and littering are offensive in the valley.

- ✧ The beyul valley can be approached from following four routes:

- ✿ From South: Dhankuta or Haleshi/Bhojour-Tumlingtar/Khandbari-Bumlingtar-Tamku-Deurali-Gongthala-Saisimma-Dobatak-and on to Barun Valley.
- ✿ From North-west: Lukla-Mera Valley-Saisimma or Barun Valley.
- ✿ Northern-West: Namche-Dingboche to Barun Valley via Amphu Labtsa or Mera Valley and Saisimma.
- ✿ From North: Popti La/Kimathanka-Hatiya Gola-Barun Dovan-Barun Valley, or Barun Dovan-Hedangna-Seduwa-Navagaon- Nurbugaon-Upper Walung-Apsuwa Valley-Dobatak.
- ✿ From East: Thudam-Chepuwa-Hatiya-Makalu -Upper Walung-Dobatak or Thudam-Mudhe-Lower Walung-Dobatak-Saisimma.

Other significant Buddhist heritage sites located in the beyul area include Dubitar Cave (possibly lying along the Isuwa River), Chamlang Himal (the protecting deity), and rich Sherpa villages such as Upper Walung, Nurbugaon, Navagaon and Tashigaon.

b. Upper Arun Valley, Guthi Gomba and more

- ✿ Upper Arun is one of the Buddhist pilgrimage hubs in the eastern region seasoned through the unique combination of Buddhism with the shamanistic traditions of Bonpos and animistic traditions of Kirat. Key Buddhist heritage sites include Barun Dovan, Hatiya, Chepuwa, Honggong, Rudang, Chamtang, Kimathanka, Thudam and so on. Popti La and Kimathanka are two ancient traditional border points to TAR China. Whereas Hatiya **Gola** has remained the major trade center of the region, **Yang Guthi** Gomba has served as a major religious power place. The great Tantric Master Padmasambhava is believed to have spent some months in Bhotkhola Area of Upper Arun.



- ✧ Buddhism is believed to have entered into Arun Valley around 16th and 17th century with the influence of Buddhism in Gunthang Mangyul of Tibet, Sikkim/Darjeeling (beyul Demojong) and possibly also with the influence of Buddhism in Khumbu Valley. Since then, Upper Arun has remained a pilgrimage center for the people of Upper Arun, beyul Khempalung and neighboring Tibetan villages; primarily the followers of Nyingma and Bon traditions.
- ✧ The followers of Buddhism in Upper Arun Valley belong to Nyingma tradition though there is a strong influence of shamanistic and animistic traditions of Bon and Kirat. The use of Swostic and Yungdung prevail even in some Nyingma monasteries; worshipping the images of Dorje Sungden, Chhugyu, Yugrulugsum etc., performing rituals by the Buddhist monk and Bon priest at Sarpachhung Gomba (Chhumsur, Chepuwa) and performing animistic rituals such as offerings of animal sacrifice by Rai Bijuwa during **Dabla Festival** signify the strong influence of Bon and animistic traditions on Buddhism in the area.
- ✧ There are several Mani-walls, Chhortens and Monasteries in Upper Arun. A study carried out by Gomba Management and Development Committee (GMDC) together with CNAS has made the inventory of about 40 monasteries in Upper Arun (Dhungel R. 2002 in GMDC Souvenir 2002). Signature monasteries in Upper Arun Valley include **Yang Guthi Gomba** (Bhotkhola-2, Chepuwa); **Kangyur Lakhang Gomba**, (Bhotkhola-3, Hatiya, established in 1600 BS) and **Namtang Gomba**, (Bhotkhola-2, Chepuwa, Ridag).
- ✧ **Yan-Guthi Gomba** (Bhotkhola-2, Chepuwa) is the oldest and widely popular monastery in the Upper Arun Valley. Once served as Kagyu and Sakya Gomba, Yang Guthi Gomba is now a Nyingma Gomba. Presence of Karmapa statue inside the Gomba signifies that it used to be the monastery of Karma

Kagyü tradition. This gomba is famous for organizing Dabla festival and Jaiman Festival. Likewise, **Namtang Gomba** is famous for Mani and Furba Dojyog.

- ✧ Equally significant gombas include Tashichhoeling Gomba (Kimathanka), Yum Lakhang Gomba (Kimathanka), Nangsha Pemachhoeling Gomba (Hatiya), Urgen Chhoeling Gomba, Thudam (Chepuwa), Sarpachhung Gomba (Chhumsur, Chepuwa etc.).
- ✧ Other gomba in the region include Samling Gomba (Sakshila), Yaring Gomba (Honggong, Hatiya), Samling Gomba (Chepuwa), Chholing Gomba (Barun Dovan) etc.

c. Upper Tamor Valley, Diki Chhoeling Gomba and more:

- ✧ The Great Tantric Master Padmasambhava is believed to have spent some months in Upper Tamor Valley, including Walungchung Gola and entered into the Jhonkhar of Tibet possibly from Tiptala La Bhanjyang.
- ✧ Buddhism in Upper Tamor Valley is believed to have entered in two distinct periods, first during the time of early Buddhist followers, possibly the Kirat or Tibetan Herders during the 10th or 11th century AD, and second after the arrival of new settlers, current Walung people, Ukab and Dhokpyo people some 400 to 500 years ago. Arguably, these second settlers are considered to be the youngest Tibetan Buddhist communities emigrated from Tibet to the Nepal Himalaya. These communities still bears rich Buddhist culture and traditions.
- ✧ There are many chortens, maniwalls, stupas and monasteries as old as 400 to 500 years. A study carried out by the team of Dr. Dhungel has listed the at least 22 monasteries from Upper Tamor Valley (Dhungel 2002). Except those of some gombas in Lelep area, almost all gombas of Upper Tamor belong to



Nyingma tradition. King and monks of Sikkim as well as the Makwani Sen Rulers from Nepal are credited for supporting the construction and restoration of these old monasteries in Upper Tamor Valley.

- ✧ **Diki Chhoeling Gomba**: Located in Walungchung Gola, the existing Diki Chhoeling Gomba is about 400 to 500 years old and the largest monastery of the region. A small monastery was believed to have constructed even during the 10th or 11th century AD by the early settlers (herders) on the sacred site where a sacred mushroom was believed to have appeared. The existing monastery was built on the same location where old monastery was. The role of Palri Lamas (including Ghum Rinjin Chhewang) is very instrumental for the growth of monastic system and Buddhism in Walungchung Gola.
- ✧ The present day monastery is the biggest monastery of the region and stands as the major religious power place of the Upper Tamor Valley. The monastery complex is also believed to have gone through the series of restoration and expansion over the period of 400-500 years. It houses a large beautiful **statue of Padmasambhava**, a statue of **Milarepa** and other deities. The monastery also houses some of the oldest leather-coated prayer-wheels engraved with important Tibeian muntras. It also bears and outstanding Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts (including Tantric texts) and some of the finest and richest paintings. The manuscript section also bears four old mud chaityas.
- ✧ A long stone mani wall with Buddhist mantras engraved on stone connects Diki Chhoeling Gomba with the village. The fact that one of the immediate disciples of Yogi Milarepa spent some years meditating in Diki Chhoeling Gomba signifies that it could have been a meditation seat of Milarepa as well.
- ✧ **Tashi Chholing Gomba**, located in Ghunsa is another old monastery with rich artifacts. Tashi Chholing Gomba is said

to have first founded in Kangbachen. With the movement of settlement from Kangbachen to Ghunsa, the monastery was also moved here in Ghunsa some 200 years ago. The monastery houses a clay sculpture of Milarepa along with the 5ft tall statue of Dorje Chhen. It also comprises outstanding paintings and about 200 years old thanka arts, possibly brought from the monastery in Tibet. The monastery belongs to Kagyu tradition. There is a lavish Gate Chorten (Kagnis) in the village gate. In the middle of the village, there is a long stone Mani Wall with beautifully carved Buddhist mantras on stone slabs.

- ✧ Other significant monasteries of Upper Tamor Valley include Sambalhundup Gomba (Dhokpyo Gola), Tashi Chhoeling Gomba (Papung), Diki Chhoeling Gomba (Lelep), Sunga Chhoeling Gomba (Lungthung, Lelep), Tashi Chhoeling Gomba (Phale), Changmak Shamba Nyingdup Gomba (Yangma), Nyingma Chhokhoring Bouddha Gomba (Phungling), Tashi Chhoeling Gomba (Suketar) and so on.
- ✧ Tashi Chhoeling Gomba (Phale), a Gelugpa Gomba and Tharchhog Chhoeling Gomba (Lelep), a Nyingmapa gomba were brought by the Tibetan refugees from Tibet in 2027 BS and 2032 BS respectively. Both monasteries bear rich religious texts, thankas, and images of various Buddhist deities.
- ✧ Walungchung Gola and Ghunsa areas of Upper Tamor also marks the western border of Beyul Demojong. **Rumtek Monastery** is the major power place of Beyul Demojong in Sikkim, India. Beyul Demojong can be approached through the cross-country route via Khang La (5054m) linking via Ghunsha and Tseram with Yuksam in Sikkim, India.

d. Footprint of Padmasambhava

- ✧ Though there are various claims about the routes used by Padmasambhava on his spiritual journey to Tibet from India



via Nepal Mandala during 8th century AD, some historians and culture experts, including Dr. Ramesh Dhungel, argue that Padmasambhava entered into Tibet following the spiritual route that connects sites in Khempalung, Upper Arun and Upper Tamor. Considering the claims of the historians/culture experts about the route used by Padmasambhava; considering the revealing of beyul Khempalung (concealed by Padmasambhava) by tertons in Arun/Barun Valley and also realizing the fact that Padmasambhava attained the state of Vidyadhara of Immortal Life in Maratika Cave (Haleshi, Khotang), it can be inferred that Padmasambhava, while entering into Tibet, could have followed the route via Khempalung, Upper Arun and Upper Tamor. The complete spiritual footprints of Padmasambhava from Nepal Mandala to Tibet might have followed through Asura Cave in Pharping (Kathmandu) to Timal- Sailung- Dolakha- Jiri- Thodung (Ramechhap)- Pattale- Okhaldhunga- Maratika Cave (Haleshi)- Tuwachung- Majhuwagadhi- Temke- Salpa Pokhari- Tamku- Gongtala- Saisimma- Upper Walung- Narpugaon- Navagaon- Tashigaon- Khongma- Yangle Kharka- Nghe Kharka (Upper Khempalung)- Barun Pokhari (Tso Kharpo)- Barun Dovan- Hatiya- Chepuwa- Kimathanka (and on to Tibet), or back to Hedangna- Num- Mangsimma- Tin Pokhari- Sabha Pokhari - Gufa Pokhari- Dovan- Tapethowk- Lelep- Walungchung Gola- Tipta La Bhanjyang and one to Jhongkhar in Tibet.

ii. Archaeological and Historical Significance

- ✿ A study carried out by Gomba Management and Development Committee (GMDC) together with CNAS has made an inventory of at least 60 monasteries from Upper Arun and Upper Tamor. The study also suggested that these monasteries are at least 200 years old (Dhungel R. 2002 in GMDC Souvenir 2002). Both these valleys comprise several stone mani-walls, Chhortens and stupas. Yang Guthi Gomba in Upper Arun and Diki Chhoeling

Gomba in Upper Tamor are known to be the two major signature monasteries with outstanding paintings and attractive images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Mahasiddhas. Yang Guthi Gomba still possesses Royal Seal (Lal Mohar) from the Kings of both Nepal and Tibet.

- ❁ Mani walls and gate chortens in Walungchung Gola and Ghunsa are full of Buddhist mantras and mandalas carved or painted on stone and wood. The painted Buddhist mantras on the prayer wheels wrapped by leather are some of the unique Buddhist artifacts still preserved in Diki Chhoeling Gomba.
- ❁ Both valleys replete with unique building architectures with wooden/bamboo carpet roof, dry stone wall and decorated kitchen.

iii. **Buddhist Ethnicity and Intangible Cultural Heritage Value**

- ❁ The people of Upper Arun are of Tibetan origin and are broadly termed as **Bhotia people**. Major clan groups include Lhomi, Singshaw, Karbhote etc. The culture and traditions of Upper Arun Valley are largely influenced by the culture and traditions of Buddhist communities in Tibet as well as the shamanistic and animistic traditions of Rai and Limbu communities. **Dablo festival** is one of the popular Buddhist festivals in Upper Arun Valley in which Rai Bijuwa performs animistic rituals, including shaman dance and goat sacrifice. This festival is celebrated twice a year (during May and August/September) in the premises of Guthi Gomba and Chamtang Gomba area to recall the history of migration and to pay respect to the ancestors. Moreover, **Jaiman festival** is organized in Guthi Gomba for the welfare of the kings and the nation (Dhungel 2002).
- ❁ Likewise, the villages in Upper Tamor, such as Dhokpyo-Gola, Walungchung-Gola and Ghunsa are the home to many indigenous communities of Tibetan origin, including **Lhomi, Topke, Holung or Walung** etc. However, most of them use their surname as Sherpa. These communities are considered to be the last group



of Buddhist settlers to Nepal Himalaya emigrated from Tibet. The five key villages viz, Walungchung Gola, Ghunsa, Yangma, Dhokpyogola and Lelep are the prominent settlements in the region rich in Buddhist culture, tradition and rituals. The **Ghovas (Ukab Clan)** of Walungchung Gola who used to be the local chieftan of these villages are the gurdians and protectors of the monasteries still today. These people are also the best producer of finest and picturesque crafts, including woolen carpet. **Tongba** is one of the famous drinks in Upper Tamor. Visitors can enjoy drinking Tongba in a typically decorated kitchen of Walung people. Whereas the people of Walungchung Gola has a close cultural relation with the people of Tibet, the people of Ghunsa has the same with the people of Sikkim as well.

- ✿ Both Upper Arun and Upper Tamor lie on the ancient trade route to Tibet via Kimathaka (2248m) in Upper Arun and Tipta La (5095m) in Upper Tamor. **Gola**, such as Hatiya Gola, Dhokpyo Gola, Walungchung Gola etc. were the trade centers during the ancient period.
- ✿ Buddhist communities residing in the territory of beyul Khempalung, however are believed to be the **descendants of Sherpas** in Khumbu Valley and share the similar culture and traditions of Sherpas of Khumbu Valley.

iv. Other Added Attractions and Activities

a. *Other (Non-Buddhist) cultural attractions*

- ✿ Upper Arun and Upper Tamor valleys are also the home to many ethnic groups, including Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Lepcha etc. Kirat communities, the dominant group of the region, follow many mountain deities, worship nature and perform many other animistic and shamanistic rituals. Dhan Nach and Chabrung Nach are popular dances of Limbu/Rai people whereas Udhoul and Ubhoul are two major festivals.

- ✧ Popular pilgrimage sites include Manakamana, Siddha Pokhari and Sabhapokhari in Sankhuwasabha and Pathivara in Taplejung district.

b. Outstanding natural landscapes and rich biodiversity

- ✧ Upper Arun Valley and Upper Tamor Valley are very rich and have comparatively least spoiled geography in terms of biodiversity, natural landscape and cultural heritages. These two valleys comprise beautiful mountain peaks, large river system and wetlands, diverse ecosystem and biodiversity hot-spot areas, scenic valleys and mountain terrains, lakes and waterfalls etc. Upper Tamor and Upper Arun Valley are currently managed as Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) and Makalu Barun National Park (MBNP) respectively.
- ✧ It is endowed with two out of eight mountain peaks of more than 8000m elevation, namely Mt. Kanchenjunga (8586m) and Mt. Makalu (8481m). Two out of ten sections of Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) fall in this circuit, namely Kanchenjunga section and Makalu section. Popular adventure passes include Nango La (4776m, between Ghunsa and Walungchung Gola), Lumbha Sambha pass (5159m, between Walungchung Gola and Thudam), Sherpani Col (6180m), West Col (6190m), Amphu Labtsa pass (5845m)- all three passes between Barun Valley and Khumbu Valley and Mera La (5415m).
- ✧ Other interesting touristic features include Tinjure-Milke Jaljale (TMJ, the Capital of Rhododendron Forest), Pathivara Temple in Taplejung and Tea State in Ilam. The range is also the home to beautiful Red Panda.
- ✧ Lakes of religious and biodiversity value include Barun Pokhari, Sabha Pokhari, Gufa Pokhari, Sinjema Pokhari etc.

4.10.3. *Other Satellite Tourism Destinations and Product Linkage Opportunities*

- ❁ Other satellite sites in the circuit include Ilam Tea Garden, Pathivara Temple, TMJ (Tinjure, Milke and Jaljale), and Mundhum Trail (up to Salpa Pokhari and Silicho Danda).
- ❁ The proposed world's tallest Buddha Statue at Damak, Jhapa and the proposed 60 ft tall Buddha Statue in the proposed Buddhist Garden in Aurabani, Sunsari would also be the added attractions in the eastern region, enhancing the image of the area as an eastern gateway to the birth-land of Buddha.
- ❁ Linkage opportunities with this circuit include the following:
 - ❁ Linking with Everest trek via famous Amphu Labtsa pass.
 - ❁ Linking with Ilam Tea Gardens.
 - ❁ Linking with Mundhum Trek.
 - ❁ Linking with TMJ Trek.
 - ❁ Linking with Arun River and Tamor River rafting.
 - ❁ This circuit can also be linked with Buddhist heritage sites in Sikkim (India), including Rumtek Monastery and sites in TAR China.

4.10.4. *Potential Markets and Market Segments*

- ❁ BKUAUTBC has a potential to attract all forms of market segments, including domestic, Indian and international market. In 2017, a total of 1,537 visitors visited MBNP whereas KCA welcomed 1,008 visitors. The entire area of KCA and Hatiya-Kimathanka-Chepuwa area of Upper Arun fall under controlled trekking area. A total of 136 visitors also visited controlled trekking area in Upper Arun in 2017.
- ❁ Domestic Markets: Beyul Khempalung can attract pilgrims (primarily Nyingma followers) from around the Nepalese Himalaya and Kathmandu Valley. Other Buddhist sites could be

the additional attractions for trekking and leisure segments.

- ✿ Indian Markets: Many Indian pilgrims and visitors can be attracted in Pathivara and Upper Tamor area particularly from Sikkim, Darjeeling and neighboring cities of West Bengal and Bihar.
- ✿ Other International Market: Beyul area and Buddhist monasteries could be the additional attractions for the international visitors who visit these areas primarily for trekking and other adventure purposes, including white water rafting.

4.10.5. Approach Routes, Suggested Itineraries and Activities

a. Approach Routes

- ✿ Pilgrims and visitors may complete the circuit in more than one visit as it comprises difficult and larger geographical territory. Following approach routes can be used to reach beyul Khempalung, Upper Arun Valley and Upper Tamor Valley.
- ✿ Kathmandu-Dhulikhel-Bhakundebesi-Nepalthowk-Khurkot-Ghurmi-Jayaramghat-Haleshi (Maratika)-Temke-Bhojpur-Bumlingtar-Saisimma and on to Barun valley of Upper Arun Valley.
- ✿ Itahari-Dharan-Dhankuta-Hile-Basantpur-Khandbari-Khempalung Cave-Saisimma.
- ✿ Itahari-Dharan-Dhankuta-Hile-Basantpur-Gufapokhari-Dovan/Phungling-Tapethok-Lelep-Walungchung Gola-Nago La-Ghunsa.
- ✿ Itahari-Dharan-Dhankuta-Hile-Basantpur-Tinjure-Gufapokhari-Milke-Jaljale-Thudam-Kimathanka or Walungchung Gola.
- ✿ Birtamod-Ilam-Panchthar-Phungling-Lelep-Walungchung Gola-Ghunsa
- ✿ Route following the GHT: Ghunsa-Walungchung Gola-

Lumba Samhba-Thudam- Chamtang -Kimathanka/Hongon-Chepuwa-Hatiya-Barun Dovan-Barun Pokhari and on to Khumbu Valley or back to Khongma-Tashigaon-Nabhagaon-Nurpugaon-Walung-Dotatak-Saisimma. One can reach Thudam from Gufapokhari via Jaljala and Topke Gola via Papung and Thang La pass (4826m).

- ✧ Cross-Boudtary Trail to Sikkim: Via Khang La (5054m) connecting Tseram of KCA with Yuksam of Kangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve of India.

b. Suggested tour itinerary

- ✧ Following two itineraries can be followed by the pilgrims and visitors:
 - ✧ Option I (Beyul Khempalung and Upper Arun): Itahari or Haleshi-Tumlingtar-Saisimma-Upper Walung-Nurbugaon-Navagoan-Tashigoan-Khongma and on to Barun Valley or, Tashigaon-Hedangna-Barun Dovan-Hatiya-Chepuwa-Kimathanka.
 - ✧ Option II (Upper Tamor): Birtamod-Ilam-Phungling-Lelep-Walungchung Gola-Nagola-Ghunsa-Lelep-Dovan-Gufapokhari-Basantapur.

c. Suggested pilgrimage, spiritual and leisure activities for BKUAUTBC

- ✧ Visiting, praying and worshipping at Gombas and receiving blessings from the Monks/Nuns.
- ✧ Collecting holy water from the sacred caves at Lower and Upper Khempalung.
- ✧ Entering into deep meditation at Lower and Upper Khempalung Caves, monasteries, mountains, lakes.
- ✧ Observing colorful festivals celebrated by the Buddhist and Kirat communities, including shaman dance.
- ✧ Enjoying indigenous food and drinks including Tongba of

Walungchung Gola and Ghunsa.

- ✿ Buying crafts, especially Carpet, from Walungchung Gola.
- ✿ Trekking through the Capital of Rhododendron (TMJ), Tea Gardens and mountain meadows.
- ✿ Cycling and driving through the scenic landscape full of tea gardens and blooming rhododendron.
- ✿ Rafting experiences.

4.10.6. *Efforts undertaken for heritage based tourism promotion and conservation*

- ✿ Government of Nepal opened Kanchenjunga region for organized group tourists only in 1988. Both Upper Tamor and Upper Arun (Hatiya, Kimathanka, Chepuwa) still fall under controlled trekking area zone
- ✿ In 1991, Government of Nepal declared Makalu Barun National Park and Conservation Area (MBNP/CA) covering almost all areas of Upper Arun Valley and beyul Khempalung. The area was managed as Makalu Barun National Park and Conservation Area Project (MBNP/CA) with support from The Mountain Institute (TMI) for about 10 years period and is now fully managed by the Government of Nepal. Many heritage conservation and ecotourism promotion activities are being carried out by MBNP. A tourism management plan prepared for the Upper Barun Valley in 1995 also highlighted the sacred sites of Beyul Khempalung.
- ✿ Likewise, Government of Nepal declared Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) in 1997 covering Yamphudin, Ghunsa, Walungchung Gola and Lelep areas of Upper Tamor. In the same year, KCA was declared “A Gift to the Earth” by the people of Nepal to the global community. KCA was managed as Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Project (KCAP) by DNPWC and WWF Nepal until 2006 before it become the first protected area in Nepal to be managed by local community. Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Tourism Plan 2001-2006 (draft) has recommended Lelep- Walungchung Gola -Ghunsa Monastery

Circuit Trail within KCA connecting at least seven Gombas at Lelep, Lungthung, Walungchung Gola, Yangma, Ghunsa and Phale.

- ❁ In 2002, The Great Himalaya Trail: A Pictorial Guide Book was published by Himalayan Map House and authored by Robin Boustead. The book explored the opportunity for connecting Ghunsa, Walungchung Gola, Dhokpyo Gola, Thudam, Hatiya/Kimathanka, Barun Valley, etc. under the signature adventure trail- Great Himalaya Trail (GHT). Since 2012, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) has been promoting the entire northern Himalayan range as Great Himalaya Trail under 10 different sections, including two sections from this circuit.

4.10.7. *Key Issues, Gaps and Threats*

- ❁ Beyul Khempalung is still in low profile due to poor publicity and poor infrastructure conditions. The entire circuit currently has a poor image in the domestic and international market, especially for Buddhist pilgrimage and spirituality.
- ❁ The Buddhist heritage monuments and sacred sites lying in this circuit are least researched and documented. Many gombas have already lost their legendary history and cultural artifacts. Many significant artifacts were already sold or rubbed. Many Buddhist monuments are in dilapidated state.
- ❁ Key heritage sites such as Khempalung Caves, Saisimma Monastery and sites in Upper Arun and Upper Tamor still lack suitable trekking trails and accommodation facilities.
- ❁ Due to the remoteness of the area majority of the monument as of now are in existence with poor maintenance and restoration. With the construction of road, there is a high risk of these monuments being encroached and destroyed.

4.10.8. Key Opportunities

- ❁ The improved access, particularly the construction of North-south road corridors may enhance the potential of these sites for Buddhist pilgrimage and spirituality. The **shortest north-south road** Biratnagar-Tumlingtar-Kimathanka will boost the tourism and pilgrimage potential of beyul Khempalung and Upper Arun.
- ❁ Likewise, the Birtamod/Itahari-Dovan/Phungling-Lelep-Walungchung Gola-Tipta La road would boost the **tourism** and pilgrimage in Upper Tamor Valley including **cross-boundary tourism and pilgrimage** with TAR China via Tipta La and with Sikkim, India via Khang La (5054m).
- ❁ Promotion of this **circuit** will also boost the opportunity for promoting Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari and Ilam districts in Province No. 1 as an **Eastern Gateway** to the land of Buddha, Nepal.
- ❁ The completion of Midhill Highway will create opportunity to link Maratika Cave (Haleshi) with beyul Khempalung and other Buddhist heritage sites in this circuit.
- ❁ There is a huge opportunity to link Buddhist culture and spirituality with nature based adventure tourism in this circuit.



CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

5.1. Implementation Arrangement for the National Document on BCN

- ✿ **MoCTCA** will take an overall lead in the implementation of National Document on Buddhist Circuits of Nepal (BCN).
- ✿ Besides mobilizing resources directly and through its own institutional arms such as LDT, BPPGDC, DoA, NTB, DoT etc., MoCTCA will closely work with the relevant federal ministries and departments, respective provincial governments, local governments, private sector organizations, universities, Buddhist organizations, development partners, and local civil society organizations. MoCTCA will also work with the relevant governments, especially India, China and other countries with significant Buddhist population as well as international organizations and networks for the promotion of BCN in the global market. MoCTCA will ensure the adequate investment on BCN, especially on infrastructure development and conservation through its own funding and funding from other relevant ministries, departments and development partners.

- ✿ **Lumbini Development Trust (LDT)** will be entrusted to work as a focal institution for the promotion of Buddhist pilgrimage, making Greater Lumbini Area (GLA) as a national and international gateway hub for Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage.
- ✿ Buddhist Philosophy Promotion and Gomba Development Committee (**BPPGDC**) will be working as a focal institution for the promotion of Buddhist philosophy, especially in the Himalayan region.
- ✿ As per its mandate, **Department of Archaeology (DoA)** will be looking after the conservation of Buddhist heritage sites, including preservation, restoration, maintenance, documentation of tangible and intangible Buddhist heritages. DoA will also give high priority for the excavation of still unexposed significant Buddhist heritage sites.
- ✿ **Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)** will be working with tourism industry associations and operators for packaging, promoting and marketing the selected Buddhist Circuits as a premier pilgrimage, spiritual and cultural tourism product of Nepal. Besides promoting BCN through appropriate channels and networks, NTB will also be working to strengthen the capacity of relevant travel/tour operators, associations, provincial governments and local governments for the promotion of BCN.
- ✿ **Lumbini Buddhist University (LBU)** will be entrusted as a focal university for undertaking research, studies, publications, seminars/conferences, and Human Resource development on subjects related to BCN together with LDT, BPPGDC, NTB, tourism industry associations and other academic institutions. LBU may work closely with other universities such as Tribhuvan University (TU), Kathmandu University (KU) ext. and other international Universities such as Nalanda University in India.
- ✿ All relevant Provincial Governments, especially the **Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment (MoITFE)** will act as a leading agency for the development, promotion and conservation of the selected Buddhist Circuits in the respective province.

- ✿ Respective **Municipalities and Rural Municipalities** will be responsible for the small-scale infrastructure development, institutional and human capacity strengthening, promotion and conservation of individual Buddhist heritage site (s) located within the circuit.
- ✿ Collaboration will be made with the **protected area (PA), national forest, protected forest and community forest** area conservation and management authorities such as Ministry of Forest and Environment (MoFE), Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), respective National Park (NP) and Conservation Area (CA) management authorities, Buffer Zone Management Committees, Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) etc. to conserve the respective Buddhist heritage sites and its surrounding landscape as well as promoting heritage based pilgrimage and eco-tourism.
- ✿ **Tourism Industry Associations (TIAs)**, such as Nepal Association of Tours and Travel Agents (NATTA), Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), Restaurants and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN), Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal (TAAN), Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA), Homestay Association of Nepal (HOSAN), Village Tourism Promotion Forum, Nepal (ViTOF), Tourist Guide Association of Nepal (TUGAN), Nepal Tourists Vehicles Association (NTVA), Airlines Operators Association of Nepal (AOAN); PATA (Nepal Chapter) and other relevant tourism networks will be facilitated with easy access to information, markets and capacity building support programs for the promotion and marketing of BCN in domestic and international markets. TIAs and selected tour operators will also be facilitated to foster networking with the regional Buddhist heritage based tourism promotion networks such as International Association of Buddhist Tour Operators (IABTO), Kailash Manasarovar Tour Agents Association (KMTAA) and so on.
- ✿ **Buddhism and Buddhist heritage related Organizations** such as Bouddhanath Area Development Committee, Haleshi Mahadevsthan Development Committee, Dharmodaya Sabha Nepal, Vihara Sanghas,

Guthis, Monastic associations, Retreat centers and individual monastery/vihara members will also be facilitated in preserving their respective heritage monuments, organizing Buddhist rituals and festivals, promoting their sites through their networks in domestic and international markets.

- ✿ The contribution of **conservation and development related development partners** such as UNDP, UNESCO, IUCN, ICIMOD, WWF Nepal, JICA, KOICA etc. will be maximized particularly in the conservation of heritage sites and promotion of heritage based cultural and eco-tourism.
- ✿ The contribution of national, provincial and local level **NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, Clubs** etc. will be optimised particularly in undertaking heritage conservation awareness programs, local capacity strengthening and heritage based income generation and employment creation activities.

5.2. *Overall Actions and Activities*

5.2.1. *Policy and Institutional and Human Resource Development*

- ✿ Endorse the report as a national document. Authorize mandate to the concerned authorities for its implementation.
- ✿ Publish National Report on BCN and share it with all relevant stakeholders and actors.
- ✿ Organize BCN Implementation Orientation workshops with all relevant stakeholders and actors at center and province level.
- ✿ Organize series of orientation workshops for the relevant stakeholders, actors, tour operators, and tour guides.
- ✿ Share the national document with relevant international agencies for better cooperation for the promotion of Buddhist Circuits at regional and sub-regional level. Key agencies to be informed may include

SAARC -Regional Secretariat and Cultural Centre (Sri Lanka), BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), Embassy of the Government of India and its Culture Center (in Kathmandu), Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Embassy of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Republic of South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Bhutan etc.

- ❁ Sign bilateral cooperation agreements, if necessary, especially with the Government of India and the the People's Republic of China for the promotion of transboundary Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage and tourism.
- ❁ Make efforts for opening additional immigration points in due course of time for the promotion of transboundary Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage and tourism. Proposed new immigration points include Kakrahawa immigration in Rupandehi (only for Nepalese and Indian pilgrims/visitors), Khunuwa or Krishnanagar in Kapilvastu, Marim La in Dolpa, Kora La in Mustang, Lapchi in Dolakha, Kimathanka in Sankhuwasabha and Tipta la in Taplejung.
- ❁ Lifting areas from Controlled Area Trekking category: Exclude Simkot (Humla), Lower Dolpa, Tsum and Nubri Valley (Gorkha) and Walungchung Gola (Taplejung) from the list of Controlled Area Trekking list.

5.2.2. *Upgrading and Strengthening the Products and Sites*

Improve Connectivity and Access

- ❁ Improve external air connectivity. Promote Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA) as a gateway for GLBC and other circuits in the western Nepal.
- ❁ Improve regional air connectivity. Connect the mountain airports with Pokhara Airport, Bhairahawa Airport, Nepalgunj Airport and Surkhet Airport.
- ❁ Promote North-South Corridor Roads (Karnali, Bheri, Kali Gandaki,

Arun and Tamor river corridor) as instrumental road networks for promoting Buddhist Circuits and transboundary Buddhist pilgrimage.

- ❁ Ensure high-end, comfortable and safe transport facilities (Airplane, Helicopter, Bus, Jeep, Car, Cycle etc.)
- ❁ Upgrade trekking trails. Develop alternative trails where the existing trails are destroyed due to the construction of road networks.

Improve Accommodation Facilities

- ❁ Upgrade and expand accommodation facilities (Resorts, hotels, homestays, campsites) in the respective circuit and trails.
- ❁ Establish pilgrims accommodation (Dharmashala) in needy places such as Chhayanath, Damodarkund etc.
- ❁ Promote monastery and temple-stay only at the places where there are no private hotels/lodges and the purpose of visit is too religious. Shey Phoksundo could be a good example of this.

Improve Communication and Information Facilities

- ❁ Avail dedicated and strong communication facilities (Landline and mobile facility).
- ❁ Avail strong internet and WiFi facility in the sites contained in the circuit.
- ❁ Erect high quality information boards, signages, arrow posts in the circuit.
- ❁ Establish high quality tourist information and interpretation centers with updated information and trained guides.
- ❁ Ensure safety and security of pilgrims/visitors with prompt communication and rescue facilities.

Product linkage and integration

- ❁ Develop Halesi (Maratika), Nepal Mandala (Kathmandu) and Lumbini as major gateway hubs for promoting other Buddhist circuits.



- ❁ Integrate Buddhist pilgrimage, spirituality and meditation related package and activities with other tourist packages and activities, such as wildlife safari, trekking, sightseeing etc.

Product strengthening, packaging and diversification

- ❁ Enhance religious syncretism: Promote sites for every possible market segments such as Buddhists, Bon, Hindu, Kirat etc. Promote Haleshi (Maratika), Rikeshwor (Daman), Karuna temples, Vajrayogini Temples, Manjushree temples/sites, Muktinath, Damodar Kund, Goshaikunda, Nath Temples (Chandannath, Chhayanath, Kharpunath) etc. for both Buddhists and Hindus.
- ❁ Promote selected festivals and events as signature festival and events for particular circuit. Some good examples could be Tiji Festival in Lo Kingdom and Red Mtsyendranath festival in Patan.
- ❁ Promote selected handicraft as signature crafts for the particular circuit.
- ❁ Create more events and activities, such as worshiping, chanting, reciting mantras, light offering, meditation, retreats, dharma studies, temple/ vihara visit, village tours/walking, visiting craft centers etc.
- ❁ Create stories for each circuit and sites. Train the heritage tour guides on the circuit. Create the relevant stories for each circuit and heritage site.
- ❁ Create experiences and experiences based on its background of the circuit/its sites and the perspective target markets, such as Bouddha Mahachaitya to be targeting for the followers of Mahayana Buddhism.
- ❁ Develop site trails and link with other compelling products, such as visiting Rara Lake while travelling to Limi Valley and Kailash Manasarovar.
- ❁ Collaborate with relevant universities, research institutions and Buddhist organizations to carry our research on Buddhist heritage sites and Buddhist heritage based tourism.

5.2.3. *Promotion and Marketing of BCN*

- ❁ Publish promotional collaterals on BCN: This may include (i) BCN Guide Book, (ii) BCN Promotional brochure, (iii) Circuit based promotional brochures, (iv) BCN Travel Map-combined and separate, (v) Calendar of Festivals and Events in the selected Buddhist Circuits of Nepal.
- ❁ Orient Tourism Industry Associations (TIAs), relevant tour operators, tour guides, Hotels about BCN.
- ❁ Disseminate information on BCN among travel and tourism sector including tour operators; tourism guides; travel trade medias; hotels, concerned embassies, cultural centers, development partners and funding agencies (UNESCO, IUCN, ICIMOD, WB, ADB, IFC, UNDP, WWF Nepal, KOICA, JICA etc.).
- ❁ Promote BCN through digital platforms: High quality website, Social media, U-tubes etc.
- ❁ Organize familiarization tours for the national and international tour operators, travel medias, blog writers and promoters.
- ❁ Collaborate with International Association of Buddhist Tour Operators (IABTO), Kailash Manasarovar Tour Agents Association (KMTAA) and similar platforms for the promotion of Buddhist Circuits and Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage and tourism.
- ❁ Support and facilitate to organize various events and activities such as festivals, fairs, prayers, recitation programmes and other related events.
- ❁ Link and integrate the Buddhist circuits of the Himalayan region with the selected Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) sections and other trekking trails.
- ❁ Support and facilitate Annual Buddhist International Travel Mart (BITM)
- ❁ Organize international symposiums and conferences on the theme of Buddhism, Spirituality and Peace, bringing together the international scholars and researchers from around the world.



- ❁ Organize International Buddhist Arts and Exhibitions showcasing the ancient Buddhist arts, artefacts and crafts to promote cultural exchanges and understanding between the countries of Buddhist origin.
- ❁ Closely work with India and other relevant countries to promote Trans-national pilgrimage and spiritual products following the Foot-Steps of Shakyamuni Buddha, Emperor Ashoka, Chinese Travellers (Fa-shian and Huan Tsang) and so on.
- ❁ Closely work with the Government of China, India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan etc. especially to promote Trans-national pilgrimage and spiritual products following the Foot-Steps of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche), Great Tibeta Yogi Milarepa, Great Buddhist master Atisha etc. with particular reference to the ancient Silk Routes connecting Lumbini and Nepal Mandala with the Buddhist heritage sites of India, China and other countries.
- ❁ Support for better packaging of all possible Buddhist heritage sites within the selected sub-circuits.
- ❁ Carry out promotion of selected Buddhist circuits and trails within the domestic markets.
- ❁ Collaborate with the Buddhist Heritage Site Managers in India and China.
- ❁ Collaborate with other Asian Buddhist Cultural trails and circuits.
- ❁ Establish International Buddhist Information center at Kathmandu and Lumbini (upgrading the existing VIC in Lumbini).
- ❁ Improve access to Indian Buddhist sites and Chinese Buddhist sites through easy visa procedures.
- ❁ Produce joint promotional collaterals with India and China.
- ❁ Put hoarding board at various national and international airports depicting places of interest on Buddhist pilgrimage sites.

- ✿ Start Buddhist video channel in youtube with immediate effect depicting Buddha's life story and Jatak mala.
- ✿ Encourage Buddhist Pilgrims Group to share their experience world-wide.
- ✿ Undertake exclusive events like Photography and short-video video contest online and offline with prize money in co-operation with Nepalese tourism organizations and Nepal Tourism Board on Buddhist heritage based pilgrimage and tourism.

5.2.4. *Community Participation in Buddhist Heritage Based Tourism Promotion*

- ✿ Make necessary arrangements to engage communities of the Buddhist Heritage sites and the entire circuits in conservation of heritage sites and promotion of pilgrimage and cultural tourism.
- ✿ Facilitate Local Governments (municipalities and Rural Municipalities) and Protected Area management related stakeholders to carry out conservation awareness raising programme, capacity building programme, skill development training programme, and site management programme together with the local community members.
- ✿ Capacitate local governments and stakeholders to establish forward linkages with the provincial government agencies, federal government agencies and other relevant stakeholders and actors.
- ✿ Organize capacity building programmes for better site management in heritage sites located in the priority sub-circuits.
- ✿ Provide incentive (fiscal and monetary), capital and skills to locals for preserving heritage sites and establishing heritage based enterprises.
- ✿ Provide Tangible Benefits:
 - ✿ Link the needs and interests of the communities with the heritage management by providing tangible cultural, social and economical benefits through heritage conservation and programs.

- ✿ Identify and develop range of activities that bring long-lasting benefits to the communities so that these work as catalyst to increase their willingness to safeguard heritage.
- ✿ Promote Participatory Planning and Management:
 - ✿ Engage communities all all phases of Buddhist Circuits and Sub-Circuit planning and development.
 - ✿ Encourage members of a stakeholder to identify representatives to engage in planning process.
 - ✿ Explore best management options that maximize benefits to communities but does not compromise sustainability of heritage properties. Some good models of management option include co-management and public-private-people partnership or private and public partnership.
- ✿ Build Community Skills and Capacities:
 - ✿ Build community skills and long-term capacity to work with multiple stakeholders to manage and influence the development of ‘their’ heritage sites.
 - ✿ Avoid ‘elite capture’ by developing mechanisms that promote social inclusion, and where necessary with affirmative actions, as well as distribution of benefits of heritage programs to wider communities.
 - ✿ Identify risks, risk reduction measures, potential economic/ livelihood opportunities and skills required to reap benefits from managing heritage sites.
- ✿ Promote Adoptive Management:
 - ✿ Develop a participatory monitoring system with measurable objectives related to heritage site management and community benefits and also by linking it to heritage management plans.
 - ✿ Use multiple feedback loops to promote adaptive management

practice to strengthen community stewardship in the heritage management, safeguarding of heritage sites as well as community benefits.

5.2.5. *Conservation and Safeguarding of Buddhist Heritage Sites*

- ✿ Undertake heritage conservation and promotion activities by strictly adopting and integrating the following three strategic interventions:
 - (i) Integrated management System (IMS) for heritage circuits, routes and sites. IMS should consist of at least the following sections:
 - ✿ Interpretation Value.
 - ✿ Vision and Guiding Principles.
 - ✿ Issues and Management Objectives.
 - ✿ Management Framework.
 - ✿ Inter-Sector Coordination.
 - ✿ Institutionalization.
 - (ii) Guidelines for tourism management at cultural heritage sites. The guidelines should address the following concerns:
 - ✿ Concerns for tourism accommodation.
 - ✿ Concerns for tourism infrastructures.
 - ✿ Concerns for tourism transportation and accessibility.
 - ✿ Concerns for tourist activities.
 - ✿ Concerns for tourist during post-disaster rehabilitation.
 - (iii) Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA)
 - ✿ Complete the detailed exploration work of heritage sites (including excavation) wherever necessary, such as sites in Kapilavastu, Sainamaina, Devadaha, Sinja Valley, Dullu/Dailekh etc.



- ✿ Prepare a comprehensive inventory of tangible and intangible heritages of the selected Buddhist circuits and sites. Prepare a full documentation of all heritage sites contained in the selected Buddhist Circuits.
- ✿ Carry out heritage conservation awareness programmes at various levels. Include Heritage Conservation and Buddhism related course in the school curricula wherever applicable.
- ✿ Encourage youth to involve in practicing traditional Buddhist rituals.
- ✿ Prepare and implement Heritage Friendly Road and Trekking Trail Construction and Maintenance Guidelines, so as to ensure that Buddhist heritage sites are not damaged and they remain protected.
- ✿ Complete the soonest possible the reconstruction and maintenance work of heritage sites damaged by the Earthquake 2015.
- ✿ Give high priority to the restoration and maintenance of ruined ancient monuments such as viharas, stupas, chaityas, monasteries etc. especially in Nepal Mandala, Upper Tamor, Upper Arun, Sainamaina, Kakre Vihara, Dullu/Dailekh, Sinja, Jumla, Limi Valley, Dho Tarap (Dolpa), Saldang Valley, Vijer, Tsharka Bhot etc. without damaging the traditional architecture, attributes and quality.
- ✿ Integrate the Buddhist architecture in tourism sector, especially in hotels and restaurants, Visitor Information Centers, and in landscaping sites. Promote the use of ancient designs, traditional arts, signature paintings, chaityas, stupas, Vajra, Mane Wheel etc. in tourism industry architect.
- ✿ Adopt the New Minimalist Approach (NMA) to heritage and tourism infrastructure development.
- ✿ Comply with all prescribed relevant conservation tools and

measures, such as IEE, EIA, HIA, SIA etc. during the construction of tourism and pilgrimage related infrastructures.

- ✿ Prepare and implement potential tourism impact prevention and mitigation plan where the number of visitors is relatively higher.
- ✿ Prepare master plan, site plan and zoning plan for sensitive heritage sites such as Devadaha, Ramagrama, Maratika (Halesi), Sinja Valley, Limi Valley etc.
- ✿ Adapt appropriate strategy and actions to protect Buddhist heritage monuments from the possible impacts of climate change, especially in the trans-Himalayan region, such as Tsum Valley, Manang, Mustang, Dolpo, Humla etc.

Nominate the outstanding heritage sites, such as Limi Valley, Upper Dolpa, Upper Mustang (or Lo Mangthang), Tsum Valley, Lapchi Monastery, Kapilavastu, Ramagrama etc. for listing.

5.3. Circuit based Actions and Activities

5.3.1. Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit

- ✿ Celebrate three major purnimas (Full Moon days) with various events and activities: Baishakha Purnima (Birth, enlightenment and mahaparinirvana day of the Buddha), Ashad Purnima (Dharma Day, First Sermon at Sarnath), Kathina Dana Kartika Purnima to one month (Shangha day). Theravad Vikchhus enter into three months Varsa basa.
- ✿ Promote Chaitra Purnima to commemorate Queen Mayadevi. Promote routes used by Mayadevi (Mother Mayadevi Maternity Trail-Sutkeri Marga).
- ✿ Explore and promote Prince Siddhartha Renunciation Footprints (Western Gate of Kapilvastu palace to Lumbini-Ramagrama-Lauriya-Nandanghad-... Anoma River? lying in Nepal and India).
- ✿ Promote Trails following the footprints of Huan Tsang and Fa-hsion.

- ❁ Encourage to establish more monasteries and stupas in the Siwalik and foothills (Daunne Hill, Marthagadhi, Nuwakot, Baldyanggadi, Padini, Narapani, Dang/Deukhuri).
- ❁ Open additional immigration offices at Khunwa or Krishnanagar (Kapilavastu).
- ❁ Establish Mayadevi, Prajapati Gautami and Yasodhara Park with statue in Devadaha.
- ❁ Upgrade the existing Lumbini Visitor Information Center (VIC) as an International Buddhist Information Center (IBIC).
- ❁ Upgrade the existing Lumbini Museum as an International Buddhist Museum adding museum materials on Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, including Newar Buddhism.
- ❁ Create more activities to attract Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist followers in Lumbini.
- ❁ Promote International Monastic Zone as Mini Buddhist World with high-level information, and activities. Strengthen the capacity of international monasteries with additional information, added monastic activities. Support international monasteries to organize international events.
- ❁ Promote GLBC both as a global pilgrimage/tourism hub as well as an international gateway for Buddhist pilgrimage, spirituality and peace.
- ❁ Carry out promotion of Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA), to develop it as a vibrant international gateway for the Buddhist pilgrims as well as other market segments.
- ❁ Promote Tansen as a Theravada Buddhist Learning and Practicing Center. Establish Theravada Buddhist Museum and information center in Tansen, Palpa.
- ❁ Collaborate with Lumbini Buddhist University for promoting Buddhist philosophy and teachings through joint research, conferences/

conclaves, trainings, publications and community outreach activities.

- ❁ Collaborate with International Buddhist Organizations and Universities to organize international conferences and seminars on Buddhism, spirituality and peace.
- ❁ Collaborate with meditation and wellness related organizations to promote meditation, yoga and retreat related activities in and around the GLA.
- ❁ Promote meditation, yoga and retreat facilities in the Siwalik and foothills of Mahabharat range. Establish and promote Mayadevi Meditation Center at Daunne Hill.
- ❁ Promote agriculture crops, food, trees, animals and birds linked with the life of Buddha.
- ❁ Promote Lumbini as a Fountain of Peace. Promote and support peace related events. Work with peace related various international organizations, such as International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) and organize Interational Peace Conferences.
- ❁ Organize Tripitaka Chanting/Recitation ceremony and Kanguer and Tenguer Chanting/Recitation ceremony on a regular basis at least once a year. Kanguer and Tenguer recitation cenemony can be organized during Falgun Purnima to attract Mahayana and Vajrayana followers from the Himalayan region.
- ❁ Organize regular morning prayers and evening lighting/Chanting at Mayadevi Temple.
- ❁ Organize Aspiration chanting (Monlam), Kathinadana, Kalachakra Puja etc. every year at Lumbini, Kudan and Ramagrama by inviting various famous Rinpoches.
- ❁ Initiate Light and Sound System (digital) at Lumbini with the theme on 'Life of Shakyamuni Buddha'.
- ❁ Establish Global Peace Dialogue Center at Lumbini. Collaborate with

various national and international organizations to create and organize more peace related activities.

- ❁ Name and rename local street trails and places with the name related to Shakyamuni Buddha (and his family members, disciples), major travelers/pilgrims, explorers, planners etc. such as Chinese travelers, Emperor Ashoka, AA Fuhrer, Khadga Samsher JBR, U Thant, Kenjo Tange and so on.
- ❁ Diversify pilgrimage and visitor activities in Lumbini to increase the stay period of visitors. Create more spiritual and cultural activities.
- ❁ Encourage to establish more monasteries at Kapilavastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama areas as well.
- ❁ Support locals to promote heritage and culture based rural tourism in the surrounding villages. Support locals to strengthen and expand Buddhist arts, crafts, rituals and through supporting school education; establishment of meditation, yoga and retreat facilities; construction of stupas, chaityas; strengthening supply chains focusing on Buddhist traditions and the life of Buddha.
- ❁ Establish handicraft and cultural center, promoting traditional arts.
- ❁ Ensure supply of dedicated electricity facility in the GLA.
- ❁ Establish and/or upgrade high-end accommodation facilities along the GLBC and especially in Kapilvastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama.
- ❁ Promote community based rural tourism in and around the Buddhist heritage sites in GLA. Develop community homestays in the suitable villages in the GLA.
- ❁ Develop more luxurious accommodation and retreat facilities in the Siwalik and foothills of Mahabharat areas to cope with the high seasonality and hot temperature.
- ❁ Develop and strengthen gateway facilities:
 - ❁ Improve air connectivity: Direct flights to GBIA from the major

Buddhist source market countries; regional flight connectivity with Biratnagar, Simara, Pokhara, Nepalgunj, Surkhet, Dolpa, Jumla, Jomsom etc.

- ✿ Circuit road: Develop GLBC road as special heritage road with sufficient space for pedestrians (including pilgrims, monks, nuns) and plant Bodhi trees on both sides of the road.
- ✿ Rail Ways (In the long run): Lumbini-Kushinagar; Lumbini-Kathmandu-Kerung-Sigatse.
- ✿ Develop environmental friendly and high-end transport facilities along the GLBC.
- ✿ Strengthen the immigration and entry facilities: Strengthen the facility of Belahiya, Bhairahawa immigration point; establish additional immigration facility at Krishnanagar (Kapilvastu) to connect Shravasti with Ancient Kapilvastu; Promote Kakrahawa border for Indian visitors only.
- ✿ Develop and/upgrade road connections to Surkhet Kakre Vihara via Dang (Tulsipur); Dhorpatan (for Dolpa) via Saljhandi, Mustang via Tansen and Ridi; Pokhara via Tansen; Tsum Valley via Gorkha/Arughat.
- ✿ Facilitate and support private sector to establish and upgrade facilities such as airlines, transport, travel, trekking, safari, rafting etc. to make Greater Lumbini area a gateway and a hub for all forms of tourism activities in the western Nepal, including pilgrimage to other Buddhist circuits.
- ✿ Establish visitor information center at Kapilvastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama. Upgrade VIC at Belahiya, Bhairahawa.
- ✿ Prepare Master Plans and Site plans
- ✿ Prepare site specific master plans for Ancient Kapilavastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama.

- ✿ Prepare GLA Master Plan covering all Buddhist heritage sites, cultural sites, natural sites and economic hubs located in Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Nawalparasi districts while mainstreaming the GLBC as a core pilgrimage and cultural product of GLA.
- ✿ Prepare GLA-Buffer District Master Plan connecting key cultural and natural heritage sites of Palpa, Gulmi, Arghakhanchi, Dang districts so as to strengthen linkage development and spreading visitors into other sites of tourist interest.
- ✿ Complete the detail excavation, documentation and restoration work of all remaining sites (Kapilavastu, Sainamaina, Devadaha, panditpur, Ramagrama and so on).
- ✿ Introduce Heritage Buffer Zone concept in the heritage site. Form Heritage Buffer Zone User Groups around the heritage sites. Certain percentage of income through tourism can be ploughed back for the benefit of these groups involved in heritage conservation and heritage based tourism promotion.
- ✿ Prevent/Minimise pollution (air pollution, sewage problem, sound pollution) in the GLA.
- ✿ Implement, with modifications, if necessary, the World Peace City Plan prepared by Dr. KWAAK.
- ✿ Collaborate with Indian tour operators and government agencies for the joint promotion of Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal and India.
- ✿ Carry out digital promotion using mobile apps, social media and webpages.
- ✿ Support/facilitate to organize International Buddhist Travel Mart (IBTM) in GLBC every year.
- ✿ Link GLBC with Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal Mandala, Tsum Valley, Mustang, Dolpa, Kakre Vihara and Kailash Manasarovara.
- ✿ Link GLBC with Buddhist heritage sites of India, mainly Kushinagara, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Sravasti, Nalanda, Rajgir.

- ❁ Establish and strengthen the Greater Lumbini Area Buddhist Tour Operators Association.
- ❁ Organize heritage tour guide training for local youth in Kapilvastu, Devdaha, Ramgrama and Lumbini.
- ❁ More skill development training to new tourism entrepreneurs in Kapilvastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama.
- ❁ Involve and engage Muslim community in safeguarding the Buddhist heritage sites. Can be engaged in arts, craft and transport related enterprises.
- ❁ On arrival, multiple entry visa provision for visitors and pilgrims visiting Buddhist heritage sites of Nepal and India.
- ❁ Establish Greater Lumbini Buddhist Council or Authority.

5.3.2. *Om Mane Padme Hum Circuit to Mt. Kailash*

- ❁ Improve regional air connectivity: Establish a regional airport in Surkhet with flights from Kathmandu, Pokhara and Lumbini; flight provisions to Simkot (Humla) from Surkhet, Dhangadi and Jumla.
- ❁ Connect Lumbini, Kakre Vihara and Kailash Manasarovar through a Fast Track Road. Connect Lamahi (Dang) with Surkhet Kakre Vihara Road directly via Tulsipur/Dang Valley. Complete Karnali Corridor Road. Develop site road connecting key tourism hubs, such as Dullu Pancha Koshi Dham Heritage Circuit road, Jugala-Murma Village-Rara Lake road, Simkot-Burouse-Raling Gomba road, Hilsa-Limi Valley road.
- ❁ Develop high-end accommodation facilities along the Karnali Road corridor. Promote chain community homestay along the Karnali River corridor (Tharu, Majhi, Raji, Magar, Sonaha etc.).
- ❁ Restore and preserve Khasha era heritage sites and monuments in Dullu, Dailekh, Manma, Sinja etc.

- ❁ Prepare a complete documentation of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritages of Karnali, including Buddhist heritages.
- ❁ Promote high-end Jeep Safari pilgrimage tour package through the ongoing Karnali Road corridor, targeting Indian and Nepalese markets. Link key site tourist hubs located around the periphery of the corridor such as Bardia NP (wildlife safari), Dullu, Sinja and Jumla, Rara Lake, Chandannath, Chhayanath, Kharpunath, Raling Gomba, Limi Valley, Khojarnath (in TAR China) etc.
- ❁ Promote Four Naths Tirtha Circuit (Chandannath, Chhayanath, Kharpunath in Nepal and Khojarnath in TAR China).
- ❁ Attract Indian visitors (leisure and pilgrimage segments) in Kakre Vihara, Dailekh Panchakoshi Circuit, Chandannath, Chhayanath, Rara Lake and Kharpunath.
- ❁ Promote Kakre Vihara as regional pilgrimage hub. Revitalize the ancient glory of Kakre Vihara as a Transit Pilgrimage Hub between Bodhgaya (India), Lumbini and Kailash Mansarovar lying on the ancient Silk Road Trade and Pilgrimage Route. Develop and implement Masterplan for Kakre Vihara in a Lumbini Development Master Plan Model connecting Bulbul Tal and Kakre Vihara forest with Central Canal and spiritual Garden.
- ❁ Linking Pilgrimage activity with rafting activity in Karnali River and wildlife Safari in Bardia NP.
- ❁ Promote Lapcha Pass for domestic visitors and foreigners those who are not visiting Mt. Kailash and Mansarovar. It offers a chance to distantly observe and worship Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar.
- ❁ Establish Cultural Museum and Visitor Information Center at Limi.
- ❁ Promote Deuda Dance and Raling Purni Festival and Limi Cultural Festival as Signature Dances and Festivals in the circuit.
- ❁ Establish pilgrim accommodation facilities at Raling Gomba and Lapcha Pass.

5.3.3. *Dolpo Buddhist and Bon Heritage Circuit*

- ❁ Promote Dolpa as a Capital of Bon Buddhism and Ancient Tibetan Buddhism. Establish Bon International Information and Retreat Center at Vijer or Tsharkha Bhot.
- ❁ Establish some pilgrim accommodation (monastic accommodation) facilities at Shey Gomba.
- ❁ Link Dolpa with Lumbini via Dhorpatan, Jufal/Majhfal and Surkhet Kakre Vihara.
- ❁ Link Dolpa with Mustang via Tsharkha Pass.
- ❁ Promote Lumbini- Kakre Vihara- Dullu-Sinja-Raling Gomba-Limi Valley- **Hilsa Immigration**- Kailash Manasarovar (TAR China) -**Kora La Immigration**- Dho Tarap (and on to Tripurasundari for Indian pilgrims)-Saldang-Shey Gomba-Phoksundo Lake-Tripurasundari-Surkhet circuit pilgrimage route connecting Dolpa with Lumbini and Kailash Manasarovar.
- ❁ Give high priority to Dunai-Dho Tarap-Marim La (border with TAR China) road. Establish Immigration Office and provide associated facilities at Marim La up on completion of Dunai-Marim La road.
- ❁ Promote Buddhist and Bon tradition based Himalayan Amchy Healing and Medication. Establish International Amchy Medicine and Natural Healing Center at Saldang Valley, Dolpa.
- ❁ Complete the pending work of Mashinachour Airport and run it.
- ❁ Improve trekking trails and accommodation facilities (teahouse lodges and homestays, camping sites etc.) in Lower and Upper Dolpa.
- ❁ Increase awareness amongst the locals and government agencies about the significant Buddhist and Bon heritage sites of Dolpa.
- ❁ Preserve and maintain the ancient monasteries and stupas, some of which are in dilapidated condition for the last several areas, including Taksi areas of Dho Tarap, Saldang Valley, Vijer etc.

- ❁ Strengthen the security condition, especially in Saldang Valley, Vijer areas and Shey Gomba area through addition of Police Posts in significant heritage sites to prevent the important artifacts and statues from being stolen and robbed.
- ❁ Prepare and implement heritage friendly road construction guideline and alternative trekking trail report for Dolpa.
- ❁ Lift the Lower Dolpo region from the provision of controlled area trekking zone.
- ❁ Improve regional air connectivity: flights to Dolpa (Jufal and Mashinachour) from Lumbini, Pokhara, Surkhet. Explore possibility of new airport in Dho Tarap.
- ❁ Promote historical festivals and events such as Shey Festival and Tarap festival as signature festivals.

5.3.4. *Lumbini-Lo Kingdom (Mustang) Buddhist Circuit*

- ❁ Promote Tansen as a Theravada Buddhist Center and a gateway hub to Lo Kingdom.
- ❁ Promote Kali-Gandaki – Kora La Road Corridor as a sacred pilgrimage corridor as well as a modern-form of Silk Road Trade and Pilgrimage Route connecting Lumbini, Tansen, Ridi, Myagdi, Kagbeni, Lomangthang and Kora La with Western Tibet (including Kailash Manasarovar) in TAR China. Promote Tansen, Ridi, Galeshwor and other sites lying en-route to Mustang. Connect Lumbini, Muktinath, Kailash Manasarovar.
- ❁ Establish immigration office and associated facilities at Kora La (border with TAR China).
- ❁ Nominate Lo Mangthang Palace and surrounding area for UNESCO-WHS (Cultural) list.

- ❁ Improve regional air connectivity with the provision of Bhairahawa-Jomsom flight.
- ❁ Link Mustang with Upper Dolpo via Tsharka Pass, especially for promoting ancient Buddhist sites and Bon Buddhism.
- ❁ Promote Lo Gekar (first terma center) as International Terma (Treasure Text) Center.
- ❁ Develop facilities for visiting caves and cave monasteries (trails, lighting facilities).
- ❁ Promote Jhampa Lhakhang Monastery and Thubchen Lakhang Monastery (in Lo Mangthang) as Himalayan Buddhist Study and Information Center.
- ❁ Carry out preventive and remedial measures to protect built architecture and natural landscape from the possible threats of climate change.
- ❁ Improve trail and accommodation facilities in Lomangthang-Luri Gomba-Damodar Kund-Tsarang section.
- ❁ Establish Dharmashala (Pilgrims Accommodation Center) near Dharmashala.
- ❁ In long run, promote Lo Mangthang-Luri Gomba- Damodar Kund-Narphu-Nyishang (Milarepa Cave) as an extended Buddhist Circuits in the Kingdom of Lo.
- ❁ Construction of motorable bridge over Kali Gandaki near Chhusang.
- ❁ Upgrade and expand mobile communication tower and internet facility.
- ❁ Preserve and safeguard all tangible and intangible heritages. The ruined monuments must be preserved and safeguarded by adapting proper bio-engineering and civil-engineering methods.
- ❁ Promote traditional Tiji and Yartung festival as signature festivals.



5.3.5. *Tsum -Nubri Valley Sacred Kyimolung Circuit*

- ✿ Establish International Non-Violence and Peace and Buddha's Panchasheel Practice and Learning Center at Tsum Valley.
- ✿ Promote Mu Gomba, Shringi Gomba, Kal Tal and Pungen Gomba as solitary meditation and spiritual meditation hubs.
- ✿ Promote Phurgon Phug (Cave) and Naljor Phug (Cave) as Milarepa Meditation Centers.
- ✿ Establish Buddhist Iconographic Museum at Rajen Gomba, Tsum Valley.
- ✿ Link Tsum Valley with Lumbini highlighting the practice of Non-Violence.
- ✿ Celebrate Annual Shakaya Tradition Festival (focusing on Non-Violence) as a signature festival. Organize a peace and non-violence rally from Lumbini to Tsum Valley inviting the high-ranking Lamas, Vikchhus, Monks, Nuns, Scholars to Tsum Valley and Serang Gomba during the annual festival.
- ✿ Promote trans-boundary pilgrimage by connecting Naljor Phug and Phurgon Phug with Dragkar Taso in Kyirong as **Yogi Milarepa Chorten Memorial Spiritul Trail** along the historical route of mani-walls and Chortens.
- ✿ Open immigration point at Nayalu pass to connect Tsum valley with Dakar Taso in Kerung.
- ✿ Establish environmental and culture friendly pilgrims accommodation (Dharmashala) at Shringi Gomba (the epicenter of the beyul Kyimolung).
- ✿ Apply multiple-protected area entry permit fee system, especially to address the double entry permit system for MCA and ACA.
- ✿ Lift Tsum Valley and Manaslu area from Controlled Trekking Area zone.
- ✿ Protect the historical monuments especially from the ongoing

construction of the roads. Make efforts to ensure that the road alignment doesn't overlap the historical routes of chortens and mani-walls.

- ❁ Carry out activities to conserve intangible and tangible cultural heritages, including traditional architectures and monuments such as chortens, mani-walls, monasteries and stupas of Tsum and Nubri Valley.
- ❁ Develop Rainjam Dobhan- Chumchet-Chhunger-Dorjan Kharka-Rana-Bihi-Serang Gomba- Syarang-Kwak-Lau-Chhak-Namrung Trail as alternative trail.
- ❁ Develop Ajirkot/Barpak-Narad Pokhari-Mircha-Rupina La (4720m)-Buddha Himal BC (3600m)-Jarang-Zhong Khola-Gomma-Nayapul (Nyak) Trail as alternative trail.
- ❁ Develop following site trails to promote Buddhist heritage sites:
 - ❁ Namrung-Hinang Gomba-Himalchuli Base Camp trail
 - ❁ Shyala-Hongsanbu-Pungen Gomba trail
 - ❁ Samagaon-Birendratal-Naljor Phug-Samdo trail
 - ❁ Sarphu Kang Himal Trail, above Rainjam Khola (Guru Rinpoche Gomba)

5.3.6. *Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit-Kathmandu Valley*

- ❁ Prepare a detailed travel map of Nepal Mandala Buddhist Circuit.
- ❁ Link the Buddhist heritage site of Nepal Mandala with Lumbini, Mustang, Tsum/Nubri Valley, Nuwakot/Langtang, Helambu, Sailung, Lapchi/Rolwaling, Khumbu Valley, Maratika (Halesi).
- ❁ Promote Nepal Mandala as an international gateway hub to other international Buddhist heritage sites, especially the Buddhist heritage sites of TAR China (Lhasha, Sakya monastery, Dakar Tasho, Kailash Mansarovar).



- ❁ Promote Swoyambhu Mahachaitya as an International Vajrayana Buddhism Center.
- ❁ Promote Boudha Mahachaitya as an International Mahayana Buddhism Center or Himalayan Buddhist Center.
- ❁ Promote Asura Cave (Pharping) as Padmasambhava International Meditation and Retreat Center.
- ❁ Promote Triten Norbuche Gomba, Nagarjuna as an International Bon Buddhism Center.
- ❁ Promote Hirandyavarna Mahavihara as Vajrayana/Mahayana Buddhist Tradition and Ritual Study and Practice Center.
- ❁ Upgrade and promote Rudravarna Mahavihara as a Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhist Iconographic Center.
- ❁ Promote Gold-written Astrasahastrika Prajnaparmita Recitation observation package at Hirandyavarna Mahavihara and Vikramasheela Mahavihara as high-value paid sightseeing package.
- ❁ Promote traditional festivals and rituals such as Chariot festival of Matsyendranath, Chariot festival of Living Goddess Kumari, Samyaka Dana Jatra, Mataya Jatra, Dipankara Buddha Yatra, Bisket Jatra, Charya Nach, Mask dance, Lakhe Nach etc. as signature festivals and events.
- ❁ Promote Patan Mangal Bazaar as International Open Buddhist Craft Museum (metal, wooden, cloth, paper).
- ❁ Promote Aksheshwor Mahavihar (Pulchowk, Patan) as an international Buddhist museum and information center.
- ❁ Develop and promote Nepal Mandala Rims and Kathmandu Valley Foothills as Buddhist Dharma Study, meditation and Spiritual Retreat Centers.
- ❁ Establish Nepal Mandala as an International Education, Research and Study Center on Buddhism offering world-class educational degrees

and research on Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist Architecture, Buddhist Tradition and Practices, Buddhist Ethnicity, Newar Buddhism, Himalayan Buddhism, Lumbini, and so on.

- ❁ Organize international conventions, seminars, workshops, symposiums etc. jointly with the stakeholders in Lumbini and Himalayan region highlighting the Buddhist religion, philosophy, archaeology, tradition, culture, rituals of Nepal mandala and other sites of Nepal.
- ❁ Promote Newar Buddhism as a living Buddhist heritage museum.
- ❁ Promote Heritage by Night Activities in all three Durbar Squares (Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur) and surrounding areas. Key interventions may include GIS based digital map, street lighting, evening Buddhist rituals, music/cultural events, heritage tour guides, night shops (restaurants and cafes), security provisions etc.
- ❁ Promote highly interpreted tour package on Visiting Buddhist Viharas and Monasteries: This could involve observing the monuments, interacting with the Vikchhus/Monks and attending the rituals etc.
- ❁ Promote some signature crafts (related to Buddhist traditions and practices) with outstanding brand name (such as Vajra, Mandala, Tara, Dakinis, Beyul etc.) and standard packaging.
- ❁ Linking Vikramasheela Mahavihara with the Buddhist communities in Bangladesh and West Bengal (India) with reference to Atisha Dipankara and Tibet (Lasha) with reference to Singha Sartha Bahu.
- ❁ Promote Four Ashokan Stupa pilgrimage Circuit in Patan.
- ❁ Promote hiking and walking trail through Nepal Mandala Rims as Manjushree Trail.
- ❁ Engage youth (especially Newar youth) in practicing traditional Buddhist rituals and preserving the Buddhist monuments.
- ❁ Preserve the ancient Buddhist monuments (Viharas, Chaityas, Stupas, Monasteries etc.) and rituals. Provisions be made for allocation in the



national budget.

- ✿ Develop and or upgrade infrastructures and facilities to promote heritage trails such as:
 - ✿ Kathmandu Durbar Square to Swoyambhu Mahachaitya as Heritage Trail.
 - ✿ Bouddha Mahachaitya to Guheshwori/Pashupatinath.
 - ✿ Bouddha Mahachaitya-Arubari-Kapan Monastery.
 - ✿ Patan Dhoka to Yempi Mahavihara and Shankhamul.
 - ✿ Patan Dhoka-Silimha Tole-Pim Bahal-Naka Bahil-Nag Bahal-Kwalkhu-Khumbheshwor-Swotha-Patan Durbar Square.
 - ✿ Bungamati-Khokana-Asura Cave (Pharping).
 - ✿ Haugal-Saugal-Sundhara-MahaBouddha-Yokubahal- Ikhalabu-Purna Chandi.
 - ✿ Thathu Bahi (Jayakirti Mahavihara)-Kamalvinayak-Prasannasheel Mahavihara- other viharas and end at Khutu Bahi (near mini buspark).
- ✿ Establish a huge Buddha's statue at Tinkune (with Garden) to give international pilgrims/visitors message that they have arrived at the land of Buddha.
- ✿ Recommendation for Sankhu/Vajrayogini/Manichud: (i) Bhrikuti and Shrong Tsrong Gampo Park in Sankhu, (ii) Upgrading road from Sankhu to Manichud Daha, (ii) Establishment of meditation and retreat center at Manichud area (NP or Private land), (iii) Accommodation facilities at Manichud.
- ✿ Recommendations for Namu Buddha: (i) Kavre Bhanjyang -Namo Buddha (7km) road black-topping, (ii) Hiking trail to Dhulikhel Buddha Statue Park to Kavre Bhanjyang, (iii) Drinking water facility at Namobuddha, (iv) Master plan for Namu Buddha.
- ✿ Recommendation for Pharping: (i) Pilgrims/Visitor Parking and Information Center, (ii) Complete documentation of heritage sites,

(iii) High-end Retreat and Accommodation facilities, (iv) Reliable and comfortable transport facilities from Kathmandu (Car, Jeep, taxi), (v) Visitor/Pilgrim security, (vi) Master Plan.

- ❁ Promote Nepal Mandala-Changkhala-Nuwakot Mahamandal-Sing La-Dha La (Kispang), Phikuri- Sing La-Gatlang- Bonjho Mane Durbar-Goljung- Chilime- Brimdang -Nagthali Gomba- Thuman- Timure-Briddim- Langtang- Kyanjin Gomba as Padmasambhava and Milarepa Spiritual Trail.
- ❁ Promote the proposed Padmasambhava Great Himalayan Spiritual Trail in Helambu-Panchpokhari.
- ❁ Promote Pharping-Chitlang-Rikheswor (Daman) as Ashoka-Padmasambhava Memorial Trail.

5.3.7. *Maratika(Halesi)-Sailung-Timal Padmasambhava Meditation Cave Circuit*

- ❁ Promote Haleshi (Maratika) as an Eastern Buddhist Hub linking it with Lapchi/Rolwaling, Khumbu Valley, Mera/Honghu Valley, Khempalung/Saisimma, Barun Valley, Upper Arun, Upper Tamor, Kakadbhitta and Janakpur (Hindu Temple).
- ❁ Promote Maratika, Sailung and Timal as Padmasambhava meditation and spiritual retreat centers. Develop meditation and associated facilities around the siddhi caves of Padmasambhava (Maratika, Sailung, Timal).
- ❁ Promote Timal as an international Boddhi Chitta Sacred Garden and Shamanism Center.
- ❁ Promote drive pilgrimage circuit tour by connecting Timal, Khaireni (at Sunkoshi), Sailung, Charikot, Jiri, Thodung Monastery (near Deurali in Ramechhap)-Pattale Danda, and Halesi with road network.
- ❁ Improve accommodation facilities at Sailung and Timal area.
- ❁ Develop community (public) pilgrimage facilities (Dharmashala) in



Haleshi (Maratika).

- ❁ Link Maratika (Halesi) with beyul Khempalung (Saisimma in Sankhuwasabha) via Mundhum Trail and Silichung Hill (Salpa Pokhari).
- ❁ Link Maratika (Halesi) with Janakpurdham and Baraha Chhetra through high-end tourist road networks and high-end accommodation facilities targeting Terai market (Nepal), Indian market (Bihar, West Bengal, Darjeeling, Sikkim) and Bhutanese pilgrims.
- ❁ Prepare a long-term master plan for Halesi (Maratika). The plan must include zoning plan: Pilgrimage zone, Meditation/retreat zone, Accommodation zone, Facility zone, Agriculture zone and Forest/natural landscape zone.
- ❁ Promote Tamang's Jhankri Dance (Shaman dance) and Rai's Sakela Dance as signature dance events.

5.3.8. *Everest-Rolwaling Sacred Beyul Circuit*

- ❁ Promote Lapchi as Milarepa International Meditation and Spiritual Retreat Center. Revive the forgotten charms of Lapchi as an international meditation and spiritual retreat center. Develop basic infrastructures (trail and accommodation) while maintaining the sanctity and sacredness of the area.
- ❁ Promoting cross-boundary pilgrimage circuit via Lapchi, connecting Lamabagar-Lapchi-Nyalam-Sakya-Lhasa in TAR China.
- ❁ Promote high end adventure trekking and spiritual package to Khumbu Valley via Rolwaling and Tashi Labtsa pass. Develop required facilities (trail, camping sites, pilgrimage, spiritual retreat facilities etc.).
- ❁ Develop circuit trail within Rolwaling region by connecting Lapchi and Rolwaling Valley with Jiri or Thodung Monastery via Panchpokhari Lake and Ngeju Kharka.
- ❁ Promote Khumbu region as world's highest meditation and spiritual

retreat center. Prepare and implement special tour packages to integrate Monastic visit, Himalayan Yoga, Spiritual Retreat and Peace therapy along the trekking trails in Everest and Rolwaling region.

- ❁ Promote Bigu Nunnery as Buddhist study and meditation center.
- ❁ Promote Mt. Gaurishankar and Tso Rolpa Lake similar to that of Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar Lake.
- ❁ Promote Mani Rimdu and Dumji festivals as signature festivals.

5.3.9. *Beyul Khempalung – Upper Arun - Upper Tamor Buddhist Circuit*

- ❁ Promote monastic tour package to Walungchung Gola-Ghunsa and Lelep.
- ❁ Promote monastic tour package to Hatiya-Chepuwa-Rudam.
- ❁ Promote Gufa Pokhari - Milke - Jaljala - Rudam - Hatiya Gola/ Walungchung Gola trail as an alternative trail to explore more Buddhist monasteries.
- ❁ Carry out more study and promotion work on Beyul Khempalung (Saisimma and Barun Valley).
- ❁ Improve trail and accommodation facilities in Saisimma, Dobato.
- ❁ Explore and promote spiritual trail to Hongu Valley and Barun Valley from Saisimma.
- ❁ Preserve ancient gombas, monuments and manuscripts especially in Bhot Khola area of Upper Arun and Walungchung Gola, Ghunsa, Tokpyo Gola area of Upper Tamor.
- ❁ Link Maratika (Halesi) with beyul Khempalung via Silichung peak (Salpa Pokhari).
- ❁ Link Buddhist heritage based activities with nature-based trekking and



other tourism activities.

- ❁ Upgrade trekking trail, camp-sites and porter shelter facilities at Yamphudin- Ghunsa section; Ghunsa- Walungchung Gola section; Walungchung Gola- Lumbasumba- Thudam - Hatiya Gola section.
- ❁ Promote Cross-boundary pilgrimage and tourism with TAR China via Tipta La or Kimathanka pass and with Sikkim, India via Khang La (5054m).
- ❁ Promote Kakadbhitta-Birtamod-Damak-Itahari corridor as an Eastern Gateway to the land of Buddha, Nepal. Link the proposed Buddha's statues and Buddhha Parks at Damak and Sunsari with the Buddhist sites of Upper Tamor, Upper Arun and Khempalung.



REFERENCES

1. ADB (2011), Regional: Improving Connectivity and Destination Management of Cultural and Natural Resources in the South Asia Subregion Technical Assistance 6504-REG December 2011
2. Aris Michael (1975); Report on the University of California Expedition to Kutang and Nubri in Northern Nepal, Autumn 1973. Contribution to Nepalese Studies. Special Coronation, Issue 2031, Vol.2, No.2.
3. Archaeology of Buddhism in Asia - Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History <http://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/view>
4. Arthur Pedersen A. (2002); Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites: A Practical Manual for World Heritage Site Managers, UNESCO, 2002.
5. Bajracharya R. (2018); Mahaviharas & Viharas of Kantipur, Published by Association of Vajrayan Buddhist & Mahaviharas-Nepal.
6. Bangdel L. S. (1995); Inventory of Stone Sculptures of The Kathmandu Valley, Published by the Royal Nepal Academy, Kathmandu, Nepal.
7. Basu R. (2007); Buddhist Literary Heritage in India: Text and Context, Published by National Mission for Manuscripts, 5 Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi 110001.
8. Bajracharya N. M. (2011), Buddhist Practices in Nepal Mandala (Kathmandu Valley) today with Special Reference to Nepalese Buddhism, a paper presented to International Conference on Buddhism-Past and Present (27th to 29th January 2011), DoH, Abasaheb Garware College, Pune, India.
9. Beck M. Tibet-Guge, The Cultural Relics of Ancient Western Tibet
10. Berry S. (2008); A Stranger in Nepal and Tibet, The Adventure of a Wandering Zen Monk, first published in India by Flamingo, distributed in Nepal, with permission of Kodansha International Ltd., by Vajra Book Shop, Kathmandu, Nepal.
11. Bidari B. (2012); Lumbini Beckons, third edition, The Sacred Garden, Lumbini, Nepal.

12. Bidari B. (2002); Lumbini: A Heaven of Sacred Refuse (2002), The Sacred Garden, Lumbini, Nepal.
13. Bidari B. (2012); Lumbini Beckons: A Glimpse of the Sacred Birthplace of the Buddha and Its Master Plan and The Ashok Pillar Inscription and the Marker-Stone 'The Exact Birth Sport of the Buddha', Colors Print & Production Pvt. Ltd. Bhotahity, Kathmandu, Nepal.
14. Bidari B. (2013); Kapilvastu: The World of Siddhartha, Colors Print & Production Pvt. Ltd., Kathmandu, Nepal.
15. Bidari B. (2003); Lumbini: A Haven of Sacred Refuge, Hill Side Press (P) Ltd. Kalimati, Kathmandu, Nepal.
16. Beck M. (2014); Mustang: The Culture and Landscape of Lo, Published by Vajra Books, Kathmandu Nepal.
17. Beguin G. (2009); Buddhist Art: An Historical and Cultural Journey, River Books Co. Ltd., Bangkok.
18. Bhandari B. (1997); Prospects for Tourism in Chhekampar, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, IUCN Nepal.
19. Bhattacharya S. (ed.) (2003); State of Buddhism In Ceylon (Srilanka) As Depicted In The Pall Chronicles, Published by Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi, India.
20. Blezer H., Vitali R., Templeman D., Ehrhard F.K., Sperling E., Horlemann B., Mullllard S., T ravers A., Engelhardt I. (2012); Studies on the History and Literature of Tibet and the Himalaya, ed. Vitali, R., Vajra Publications, Jyatha, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal.
21. Bodhisattva N. M. (2013); Dipankha Yatra, Dipankha Journey Management Committee 1133, Itilanhe, Nagbaha, Yal, Kathmandu, Nepal.
22. Boudha C. (2011); Boudhau Ke Atha Mahatirtha, Samyak Prakashan, 32/3, Paschim Puri, New Delhi-110 063.

23. Chang G.C.C. (1999); The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa (Shambhala).
24. Chogyel T. (2015), The Life of the Buddha, Penguin Books, New York.
25. Cowell E. B. (2014); The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births, Vol. I-II, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi.
26. Cowell E. B. (2014); The Jatak or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births, Vol. III-IV, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi.
27. Cowell E.B. (20014); The Jatak or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births, Volume V-VI, Translated from the Pali by Various Hands, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi.
28. Cunningham R. and Acharya K.P. (2013); Identifying, Evaluating and Interpreting the Physical Signature of Lumbini for Presentation, Management and long term Protection: Interim Report of the Third, Season of Field Activities, 2013.
29. Darnal P., ed. (2073 B.S.); Our Cultural Heritages, Printed Koshi Printing Press, Babarmahal, Kathmandu, Nepal.
30. DDC Bhaktapur and NTB, 2010, Tourism Development and Management Plan of Bhaktapur
31. DDC Gorkha (2012); Strategic Tourism Action Plan (STAP- 2012-2015), Gorkha, District Development Committee, Gorkha, Nepal.
32. DDC Taplejung, 2012, Strategic Tourism Action Plan (STAP- 2012-2015), Taplejung, District Development Committee, Taplejung, Nepal.
33. Deeg M. (2016); Miscellanae Nepalicae: Early Chinese Reports on Nepal, The Foundation Legend of Nepal in its Trans-Himalayan Context, Lumbini International Research Institute, Bhairahawa, Dist. Rupandehi, Nepal.
34. Dhungel R.K. PhD (2002); The Kingdom of Lo (Mustang) A Historical Study, Tashi Gephel Foundation, Kathmandu, Nepal, First edition.

35. Dhungel R.K. PhD (2002); Brief Introduction of Buddhist Monasteries of Sankhuwasabha and Taplejung districts in Upper Arun and Upper Tamor- 2058; Souvenir of Gumba Management and Development Committee 2059 BS.
36. Diemberger H. (1997), Beyul Khempalung, the Hidden Valley of the Artemisia: On Himalayan Communities and their Sacred Landscape. In A. W. Macdonald (ed.) *Mandala and Landscape*. Printworld, New Delhi 1997.
37. Dondrup N. (2010); *Guide to the Hidden Land of the Yolmo Snow Enclosure and its History*, Vajra Publication, Kathmandu Nepal.
38. Dowman, K. (2014); *Legends of The Mahasiddhas: Lives of the Tantric Masters*, (translated), Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont, Toronto, Canada.
39. Dowman K. (2018); *A Buddhist Guide To The Power Places of The Kathmandu Valley*, Published by Vajra Books, Jyatha, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal.
40. Dowman K. (2008); *The Power-Places of Central Tibet, The Pilgrim's Guide*, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu, Nepal.
41. Dowman K. (1995); *Power Places of Kathmandu: Hindu and Buddhist Holy Sites in the Sacred Valley of Nepal*, Great Britain, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London.
42. DTIDC/DDC Dailekh (2070 BS), *Tourism Development Plan (2070-2075 BS)*, District Tourism Infrastructure Development Committee, District Development Committee, Dailekh.
43. Dunham C. (2006); *Humla: The Hidden Himalayas, A Visual Journey....* Published by Nepal Trust, Kathmandu, Nepal.
44. Dwivedi S. (2006); *Buddhist Heritage Sites of India*, Published by Rupa Co, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi.
45. Eberhard Berg (1994), *Sherpa Buddhists on a Regional Pilgrimage: The Case of Maratika Cave in Halase*.

46. Elverskog J. (2010); Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road, Published by University of Pennsylvania Press.
47. Fowler M. (2000); Buddhism Religious Practices & Beliefs, Adarsh Books, An Imprint of Kusum Publishing, E-22-C, Jawahar Park, Laxmi Nagar, Vikas Marg, New Delhi-110092.
48. Giri G. PhD. (2014); Lumbini Tourism, Adroit Publishers, 4675/21, Ganpati Bhawan, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110 002.
49. Giri G. PhD (2008); Sacred Complex of Lumbini, Adroit Publishers, New Delhi, India.
50. Giri S. (2074); Haleshi Serophero (Around Haleshi), Omshree Upset Press, Kathmandu, Nepal.
51. Good Earth, (2009); Walking With The Buddha: Buddhist Pilgrimages in India, A Goodearth Publication, Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
52. HMH (2008), Great Himalayan Trail: Route Planner (Map), Himalayan map House, Kathmandu, Nepal.
53. GoN/MoCTCA (2016); National Tourism Strategic Plan (2016-2025), Government of Nepal/Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.
54. Gordon A. K. (1998); The Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism, Printed and Published by Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.
55. Grocer P (1993), A History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to early Mahayana. Translated by Paul Groner, Delhi India.
56. Hansen V. (2016); The Silk Road A New History, Published in India by Oxford university Press, YMCA Library Building, New Delhi, India, Printed in India by Replika press Pvt. Ltd.
57. Hazra K. L. (2009); The Rise and Decline of Buddhism in India, Published by Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. India.
58. Heimbel J. (2017); Vajradhara in Human Form, The Life and Times of Ngor Chen Kun dga'bzang po, Lumbini International Research Institute, Printed in Nepal by Dongol Printers, Kathmandu.

59. Held S. (1988); *The Monasteries of The Himalayas: Tibet, Bhutan, Ladakh, Sikkim*, Edita S. A. Lausanne, Italy.
60. Hoivik S. (2007); *Born In Nepal: A Miscellany Of Buddhist Stories, Legends And Traditions*, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu, Nepal.
61. ICOMOS Nepal, (2013); *Heritage Impact Assessment of Tourism on Lumbini World Heritage Property*, UNESCO/Japanese Funds-in-Trust, August, 2013.
62. IFC (2014); *Investing in The Buddhist Circuits (2014-2018)*, International Finance Corporation; Incredible India.
63. IFC/World Bank Group (2014); *Investing in The Buddhist Circuits: Enhancing the Spiritual, Environmental, Social and Economic Value of the Places Visited by the Buddha (2014-2018)*.
64. IUCN Nepal (1997); *Prospects for Tourism in Chhekampar*, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, Kathmandu, Nepal.
65. Jefferies M. ed. (2006); *Highest Heritage The Mount Everest Region and Sagarmatha National Park, A Difinitive Guide to the Sagarmatha National Park*, Published by Pilgrims Publishing, B27/98 A-8, Nawabganj Road Durga Kund, Varanasi-221010, India.
66. Jinpa N.G.G. (2013); *Bon In Nepal: Traces of the Great Zhang Zhung Ancestors in the Himalayas, The Light of The History of Existence*; Edited by Carol.
67. Jones, S. P. & Gibbons B. (2014); *Trekking Around Upper & Lower Dolpo*,
68. Karki B. & Shrestha, S. Y. (2016); *The Great Bouddha Stupa*, Published by Nepal Government, Ministry of Culture, Tourism And Civil Aviation, Shree Bouddhanath Area Development Committee, Bouddha-6, Kathmandu, Nepal.
69. Karl Ehrhard, F. (2013); *Buddhism in Tibet & the Himalayas Texts and Traditions*, Published by Vajra Publications, Kathmandu, Nepal.

70. Kawaguchi E. (2005); *Three Years In Tibet: Bibliotheca Himalayica*, Orchid Press, Bangkok, Thailand, Printed in Nepal, Published in South Asia by Ratna Pustak Bhandar and Mandela Publications, Kathmandu, Nepal,
71. Kenzo Tange and URTEC (1978); *Master Plan for the Development of Lumbini-Phase II Final Report*, Kenzo Tange and URTEC, March 1978.
72. KOICA, Kwaak E.S.P.R.I. (2013); *Master Plan for Lumbini World Peace City, Lumbini Vishow Shanti Nagrama, Preservation and Development*, Final Report, KOICA, KWAAK Educational/Environmental/Economic Studies and Polity research Institute, 2013.
73. Korn W. (2015); *The Traditional Newar Architecture of The Kathmandu Valley, The Stupas and the Chaityas*, Published by Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, Nepal, Layout at Dongol Printers, Printed in Nepal.
74. Kwaak Y.H., Brenes A. (1999); *Report for Vision and Scoping Mission Lumbini: The Fountain of World Peace*.
75. Lay U.K. (2014); *Essence of Tripitaka*, Published by Vipassana Research Institute, Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri 422 403, Maharashtra, India.
76. Lewis Todd T. (2000), *Popular Buddhist Texts from Nepal: Narratives and Rituals of Newar Buddhism*, State University of New York Press, State University of New York.
77. Lhalungpa L.P. (1979); *The Life of Milarepa*, translated, Book Faith India, Delhi, Pilgrims Books House (New Delhi).
78. Lama, Tsewang. *Kailash Mandala*
79. Lhama J. (2015); *Buddhist Masters NAROPA, The Indian Buddhist Mystic*, Heritage Publishers (2nd reprint, 2018).
80. Lhundrup T. (2011); *Summer Splendour Kathmandu Pilgrimage Guidebook*, Vajra Publications, Jyatha, Thamel, Kathmandu.
81. Locke J. K. (1985); *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Published by Sahayogi Press Pvt. Ltd. Tripureswar, Kathmandu, Nepal.



82. Maharjan B. (2016); Kash Samrajyama Bouddha Dharmako Utthan ra Patan, Insight Publication Pvt. Ltd., Kathmandu, Nepal.
83. Maharjan R. (2075 B.S.); Hiking Kathmandu, Himalayan Map House Pvt. Ltd. Basantapur, Kathmandu, Nepal.
84. MC J. T. (2017), A Guide to Buddhist Holy Places of India and Nepal, Vajra Books, Kathmandu, Nepal.
85. Mishra A. K. (2010); Vajrayana Buddhism, by MD Publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.
86. MoFSC (2010); Sacred Himalayan landscape: Interim Implementation Plan, Nepal, Government of Nepal/Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2010.
87. MoTCA (2018); Nepal Tourism Statistics: 2017, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Kathmandu, Nepal.
88. MoTCA (2017); Nepal Tourism Statistics: 2016, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Kathmandu, Nepal.
89. MoCTCA/LDT (2017); Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit: Visitor Guide Book, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation/Lumbini Development Trust, Lumbini, Nepal.
90. MoCTCA (2015); Greater Lumbini Tourism Promotion Plan (GLTPP), Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project.
91. MoCTCA (2009); Tourism Vision 2020, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal.
92. MoFSC/DNPWC (2007); Sagarmatha National Park Management and Tourism Plan, (2007-2012), Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation/Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal.
93. Neupane G.P., Timothy D.J. and Poudel S. (2014); Understanding tourists in religious destinations: A social distance perspective, Tourism management, ELSEVIER, 2014.

94. Niels Gutschow (1997), *The Nepalese Chaitya - 1500 Years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley*, Stuttgart & London: Ed. Axel Menges (Lumbini International Research Institute, Monograph Series, vol. I).
95. NGAA (1999); *Wonders of The Ancient World*, National Geographic Atlas of Archaeology (edited), U.S.A., National Geographic Society.
96. NMA (2016); *Nepal Parbat: Diamond Jubilee Mt. Kanchenjunga & Mt. Makalu*, (2016: vol 18), Nepal Mountaineering Association Publication and Publicity Committee, Naxal, Kathmandu.
97. NTB (2011); *Calender of Events (2011/12)*, Nepal Tourism Board, Kathmandu.
98. NTB (2011); *Tourism products of Nepal*, Nepal Tourism Board, 2011.
99. *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology*, Volume 4, 1994.
100. Norbu, Chogyal Namkhai. *A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet*, Volume One, *The Early Period*
101. Namgyal Rinpoche, *Dolpo Amchi*. Dolpo
102. Panta P.K. (2010); *Buddhism The Icon of Cultural Linkage with China*, Published by Nepal China Society, Putali Sadak, Kathmandu.
103. PCCI (2010); *Tansen: A Promotional Guide Book*, Tourism Promotion Committee, Palpa Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bhagawati Tole, Tansen 8, Palpa, Nepal.
104. Peissel M. (2009); *Mustang: A Lost Tibetan Kingdom*, Published by Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi, India.
105. Powers J. (1995); *Introduction To Tibetan Buddhism*, Snow Lion Publications, New York, USA.
106. Pritchard-Jones, Sian and Gibbons, Bon. *Dolpo*
107. Pokharel (KC) B. (2070 B.S.); *Kirtikhamba*, Abhanta Ko-Bhencharsa, Kathmandu, Nepal.

108. Pradhan B. L. (2005); Shakyamuni, The Buddha and Shakya Heritage, Published by The Shakya Foundation, Nepal Teku, Kathmandu, Nepal.
109. Prebish C.S. (2014), The A To Z of Buddhism, Vision Books, India.
110. Puri B. N. (2007); Buddhism in Central Asia, Volume 4, Motilal Banarsidass publishers Private Limited, Delhi.
111. Rai R. K. (1994); The Thakalis Bon Kar and Lamaist Monasteries, Along The Kali Gandaki: The Ancient Salt Route in Western Nepal, Book Faith India, 416, Express Tower, Azadpur Commercial Complex, Delhi-110033.
112. Regmi D. R. (2007); Ancien Nepal, Rupa. Co, 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi.
113. Regmi, D. R. (2007); Medieval Nepal, Volume I: Early Medieval Period 750-1530 A.D., Published by Rupa. Co, 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi.
114. Regmi, D. R. (2007); Medieval Nepal, Vol. II, Rupa . Co, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi.
115. Reinhard John (1978). "Khembalung: The Hidden Valley". Kailash, A Journal of Himalayan Studies 6 (1), Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu.
116. Rinpoche N. C. (2016); Padmasambhava: The Great Indian Pandit, Published by Wisdom Tree, New Delhi.
117. Rinpoche N. PhD. (2005); Dolpo: The Hidden Land (edited) SNV/Nepal,
118. Richon M. (2015); The Cultural Heritage of Nepal, before, during and after the 2015 Earthquakes Current and Future Challenges, Vajra Books, Kathmandu, Nepal.
119. Robin Boustead (2009); The Great Himalaya Trail: A Pictorial Guide, printed and distributed by Himalayan Map House, Kathmandu Nepal.
120. Rai H. D. (2010); Lumbini: The Supreme Pilgrimage, Published by Holy Ashoka Tour & Travels Pvt. Ltd. Lazimpat-2, Kathmandu, Nepal.
121. Sagharakshit V. (2012); Shil-Panchashil, Spiritual Preaching Publication, Kathmandu, Nepal.

122. Sangharakshita (2006); A Survey of Buddhism, Its Doctrines and Methods Through The Ages, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi.
123. SEDF, IFC, UK aid, Norad (2012); Lumbini Tourism Scoping Mission Report; South Asia Enterprise Development Facility (SEDF) managed by International Finance Corporation in partnership with UKaid and Norad, April 2012.
124. SEDF, IFC, UK aid, Norad (2012); Identifying Investment Opportunities for Cultural Tourism-Final Report and Supporting Annexes; South Asia Enterprise Development facility (SEDF) managed by International Finance Corporation in partnership with UKAaid and Norad, September 2012.
125. Shakya C.B. (2014); Golden Faces of Dipankara Buddha: Samyak Mahadana Festival of Nepal, Excellence in Newari Arts & Crafts, Subash Printing Press, Nakabahil, Lalitpur, Nepal.
126. Shakya R. (2008); Buddhist Religious Practice and Life Style of Nepal Mandala, Buddhist Study Workshop, Kanakmuni Resident, Lagan Tole, Kathmandu, Nepal.
127. Shakya M.B. (2004); Hiranyavarna Mahavihara: A Unique Newar Buddhist Monastery, Published by Nagarjun Publication Pvt. Ltd. Kathmandu, Nepal.
128. Shakya M.B. (1997); The Life and Contribution of the Nepalese Princess Bhrikuti Devi to Tibetan History, Published by Book Faith India, Delhi, India.
129. Shakya M. R. (2017); Mandala of Nepal Mandala: Buddhist Arts and Cultural Traditions of Kathmandu Valley, Published by Adarsh Books, New Delhi.
130. Shakya T.R. (2073 B.S.); Introduction to Buddhist Religion and Philosophy, Buddha Dharma Adhyayan Tatha Bhajan Mandala, Lagan Tole, Kathmandu, Nepal.

131. Sherpa L.N. PhD. (2008); Through A Sherpa Window: Illustrated Guide to Traditional Sherpa Culture, First Edition, Published by Vajra Publications, Jyatha, Thamel, Kathmandu.
132. Sherpa Sangya (2016); An Analytical Study of Religious and Cultural Significance of Lapchi, Lumbini College of Buddhism and Himalayan Studies, Lumbini Buddhist University, Kathmandu, Nepal.
133. Shingha M.P. (2011); Dash Paramitaya, Samyak Prakashan, 32/3, Paschim Puri, New Delhi-110063-08.
134. Silk Roads Cultural Heritage Resource Information System (CHRIS) www.silkroad-infosystem.org
135. Slusser, Mary Shepherd. Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley, Princeton University Press 1982.
136. Snellgrove D. (2004), Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, revised edition, Orchid Press, Thailand.
137. SNV Nepal & ICIMOD (2006); Great Himalayan Trail: Preparatory Study, SNV Netherlands Development Organization and International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, 2006.
138. TAAN, (2012); Discovering Tourism Destinations & Trekking Trails in Nepal, TAAN, NTB, SNV & The Great Himalayan Trail Development Program.
139. Tchekhoff G. and Comolli, Y. (1987); Buddhist Sanctuaries of Ladakh, Published by White Orchid Press, Bangkok.
140. Thapa S. (2008); Northern Buddhism in History, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu, Edited by Shankar Thapa, Nepal.
141. TRPAP (2006); Tourism Resource Mapping Profile: Dolpa District, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, UNDP, TRPAP, 2006.
142. Trungpa C. (2017); Milarepa Lessons from the Life & Songs of Tibet's Great Yogi, Edited by Lief, J.L., Shambhala South Asia Editions, 4720 Walnut Street, Boulder, Colorado 80301.

143. Tucci G. (2003); *Journey To Mustang*, Second Edition, Translated from the Italian by Diana Fussell, Published by Ratna Pustak Bhandar Kathmandu, Nepal.
144. UNESCO (2013); *The Sacred Garden of Lumbini: Perceptions of Buddha's birthplace*, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
145. UNDP/UNESCO (2013); *Lumbini- The birthplace of Lord Buddha in Nepal: Completing the Kenzo Tange Master Plan*, UNESCO Office, Kathmandu, Nepal.
146. UNESCO (2013); *Lumbini, Birthplace of the Lord Buddha, a World Heritage Property: Integrated Management Framework*, Final Draft, 30 May 2013, Lumbini Development Trust in collaboration with MOCTCA, DoA, World Heritage Centre, UNESCO Office in Kathmandu.
147. UNESCO (2012); *Strengthening conservation and management of Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, World Heritage Property*, UNESCO project FIT/536NEP4001 funded by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation of the World Cultural Heritage, Final Report.
148. Wangmo Jamyang Ven. (2008), *Dancing in the Clouds, The Mani Rimdu, Dumche and Tsogchen Festivals of the Khumbu Sherpas*; Vajra Publications, Jyatha, Thamel, Kathmandu.
149. Weise K. (2014); *Tilaurakot, the archaeological remains of ancient Shakya Kingdom*, World Heritage Tentative List, Heritage Impact Assessment HIA, Department of Archaeology/MoCTCA, Final amendments submitted on 5 February 2014.
150. WEF (2016); *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness, Report*, World Economic Forum 2017.
151. Wolfgang Wollmer (2014), *The Inner and Outer Paths of Mt. Kailash: Pilgrimage to the Abode of Chakrasamvara*, Vajra Books, Kathmandu, Nepal.

152. WTTC (2016); Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2016, World Travel and Tourism Council UK London.
153. Vitali R. (2012), A Short History of Mustang (10th - 15th Century), AMI Books, India.
154. Zurcher Erik, 2007, The Buddhist Conquest of China. The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early medieval China. Original edition. Leiden: Brill.
155. Various websites on Buddhism, Buddhist philosophy, Buddhist pilgrimage, tourism etc.



*Sacred pilgrimage and
cultural trails connecting
the outstanding Buddhist sites
associated with
the birth, foot-steps and
perfected meditation sites of
Lord Buddha, other previous
Buddhas, Buddhist Mahasiddhas
and Masters.*

Lumbini

