

History Of Nepalese Buddhism: From Mythological Tradition To The Lichhavi Period

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The history of Buddhism of Nepal is basically of two types - mythological and documentary. The mythological narration pertaining to Buddhism is also regarded as very important supporting evidence for the study of Nepalese Buddhism. Although such narration deals with mythology as well as stories of the deeds and miraculous powers of Buddhist deities and the devotees, it is deeply rooted in the practical aspect of Nepalese Buddhist culture. Thus, before presenting documentary and archaeological evidence, it is necessary to examine the accounts which have a popular basis in the society. It is obvious that the former narratives have no scientific evidence to support their descriptions and do not stand up to the challenge of scientific analysis. However, it is always helpful to make an ideal interpretation of historical contexts and the continuity of Buddhism in Nepalese society through the belief of its followers. This continuity has remained unbroken since ancient times. The mythological sources of Buddhism in Nepal include narratives such as *Svayambhu Purana*, chronicles such as *Bhasavamsavali*, *Gopalraj Vamsavali* and other *Vamsavalis*, stories and accounts of the miraculous activities of the deities, the followers and so forth. The most important sources for gaining knowledge about the history of Nepalese Buddhist thoughts are the inscriptions from ancient and medieval periods. These are readily available as there are hundreds of such inscriptions that mention Buddhism. The inscriptions of the Lichhavis and the Mallas shed light on Buddhism in Nepal. The Licchavi inscriptions opine that Buddhism was in its full-fledged form during ancient time, and was favoured by the rulers. Many Kings favoured Buddhism and played an active role in its development. The inscription of Kings Mana Deva, Shiva Deva Narendra Deva, Jaya Deva and others provide important information about the Nepalese Buddhism of that period. Basically, the subject of such inscriptions relating to Buddhism are - the arrival of Vajrayana in Nepal, the *Mahasanghika* sect, the Buddhist *Sangha*, donations made to the *Viharas*, the consecration of deities, the cult of Avalokitesvara, Vajra Bhairav, Status of *Bhikshu Sangha* and *Bhikshuni Sangha*, jurisdiction of the *Sangha* etc. are also mentioned in the ancient and medieval inscriptions.¹ In addition to these sources, there is ample documentary evidence that sheds light on Nepalese Buddhism particularly its historical development, literature, ritual activities, deities, practices, etc. These sources are mainly preserved in the Mss. and traditional book (*thyasaphu*) form in the Vajrayana *Viharas*. These sources mainly belong to the medieval period. Nonetheless, these are very important sources of Nepalese Buddhism.

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1. Various Lichhavi inscriptions cited in > Dhanavajra Vajracharya, *Lichhavigalka Abhilekh* Kathmandu: Institute for Nepal and Asian Studies, 2030 B.S., pp. 74-78, 185-186, 320-335, 370-371, 382-385, 387-388, 451-455, 490-491, 496-510 and 548-562.

Nepalese Buddhism underwent notable changes during the medieval period that had far-reaching consequences. No detailed historical account has been constructed so far for the era after the Lichhavi period until the 12th century. Due to unknown reasons, sources are not available. Nonetheless, this transitional period also had an impact on Buddhism. However, we have learned about the Buddhist history of Nepal from Tibetan sources.² Nepal also has inscriptions dealing with the period after the twelfth century.³ But there are several important Tibetan sources which are related to Nepalese Buddhist history in one way or another. These very important Tibetan sources that can help Nepalese historians to reconstruct the Buddhist history of Nepal are-

- Mani bka bum
- Chosbyung of Bu-ston (14th century) by Bu-ston Run chen grub (1290-1364)
- Hu-lan Deb ther (1346 A.D. by Tshak pa kun d'Gar rdo-rje (1309-1353)
- rGyal rabs gSal ba'I Me-long (1388) by -bSod nams rgyal-mtshan
- Debthar Ngon Po (The Blue Annals) of Gos lotsaba (1476) by-Gos gZhonu pal.
- Deb ther Karpo (the White Annals) by dGe- 'dun Chos-Phel, and
- rGya bza' baz'I rNam thar by Chintey Chodak

Regarding the indigenous sources on the period, the book entitled *Documents from Rudra Varna Mahavihara* has a little information regarding that period. Some documents of Rudravarna Mahavihara dated N.S. (Nepal *Samvat* > Newar *Samvat*) 135 to NS 500 are included in it. It gives valuable information on Buddhist history as well as other aspects of Nepalese Buddhism.⁴

The Mythological Accounts:

Documentary evidence is found in Nepal that deals with its antiquity. The oldest excavated documents are in the form of inscriptions belonging to the Lichhavi period. Those inscriptions provide valuable information the Buddhism of that time, but one of the very important aspect of Buddhism in Nepal is that the Nepalese Buddhists have faith in the mythological tradition. Although such mythology still requires some determination of historical authenticity, the belief

2. Min Bahadur Shakya, *Princess Bhrikuti Devi*, Delhi: Book Faith India, 1997, pp. 7-13.

3. Dhanavajra Vajracharya has published medieval documents in his book dealing with the Patan Section. The oldest document cited in this collection is the inscription of Guita bahi dated N.S. 635.

Dhanavajra Vajracharya (ed.). *Madhyakalin Abhilekh*, Kirtipur: Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, 2056 B.S., pp. I-IV.

4. Bernard Kolver and Hemraj Shakya, *Documents from Rudravarna - Mahavihara Patan: Sales and Mortgage*, Sankt: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1985, pp. 32-43 and 103-211.

itself has become a part of the religious practice of Nepalese Buddhists. Therefore, they venerate such kinds of beliefs as well as the texts also.

The accounts given in the *Svayambhu Purana*⁵ and *Bhasha Vamsavali*⁶ give information on the early history of Buddhism in Nepal. The origin of *Svayambhu* or the *Adi Buddha* (the primordial Buddha) is not the origin of history itself but the creation of the mind through the belief pattern of Nepalese Buddhists, which received the respect of Buddhist laity to a greater extent.

Similarly, the narrative of *Bhasha Vamsavali* in relation to the Buddhism of Nepal, particularly the section about Matsendra Nath, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, is merely a compilation of stories rather than a part of Buddhist history.

The *Svayambhu Purana* is one of the most important religious texts in Nepal, and is very sacred for Nepalese Buddhists. The text as such brought about perceptible changes in the religious life of Nepalese Buddhists. The primordial Buddha or the *Svayambhu* (the self sprouted) is highly venerated in the Buddhist society of Nepal. The concept of the seven Buddhas (*Saptatathagata*- Vipassi, Sikhi, Vishwabhu, Kakruchanda Kanakmuni, Kashyapa and Shakyamuni) is highlighted in the *Puarana*.⁷ Nepalese Buddhists not only venerate the seven Buddhas, but also the text of the *Svayambhu Purana* itself. The names of the seven Buddhas mentioned in the *Purana* are identical to the names mentioned in the *Buddhavamsha*.⁸ The existence of some of the seven Buddhas has been archaeologically proved.⁹ Huen-Tsang, a famous Chinese traveller also saw *Chaityas* erected in the memory of Kashyapa, Kanakmuni and Kakruchhanda Buddha.¹⁰ His account obviously proved the existence of the Buddhas in different epochs before that of the historical Buddha. The account is not myth but the historical fact. The Ashokan pillar of Lumbini also mentions the Kanakmuni and Kakruchhanda Buddhas. It proves the existence of the Buddhas in different epochs before the historical Buddha.

The Buddhist society of Nepal has a long oral tradition regarding the Buddha and Buddhist history. This legendary tradition has not yet been historically proved, however people have a staunch belief in it. As concerns the history of

5. Min Bahadur Shakya and Purna Harsha Vajracharya (ed.), *Svayambhu Purana*, Lalitpur: Nagarjuna Institute of Exact Methods, 2058 B.S., pp. 28-50.

6. *Bhasha Vamsavali*, Vol. 2, Kathmandu: National Library, 2023 B.S., pp. 5-17.

7. See: Badri Ratna Vajracharya (ed) *Sri Svayambhu Mahapurana*, Lalitpur: Jograj Shakyavamsha, 1116 N.S., pp. 9-20

8. Shakya, f. n. no. 2, pp. 15-18; Bhuvan Lal Pradhan (tr.), *Buddhavamsha* (Newari), Kathmandu: Jnanaratna Kamsakar, 2057 B.S., pp. 126-160.

9. Lumbini pillar inscription, Quoted from - D.C. Sircar, *Inscriptions of Ashoka*, New Delhi: Ministry of Publication and Broadcasting, 1998, p.21.

10. N. Dutta and K.D.Bajpai, *Development of Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh*, Lucknow: Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1956, p. 322.

Buddhism of Nepal, there are four very important legends which are still prevalent among the Buddhists in this country.

The story of origin of *Svayambhu Chaitya* is the starting point in the history of the origin of Buddhism in Nepal. According to the story depicted in the *Svayambhu Purana* - the *Svayambhu* is self-originated from an eternal light in a lotus flower grown in the lake in Kathmandu Valley called the *Naghrada*. Finally, the lotus flower bent and landed on the *Gosringa Parvat* situated on the west. It is said that the *Gosringa Parvat* is the present day the *Svayambhu* hill. At present, there is a *Chaitya* at the top of the hill which is a popular sacred destination for Nepalese as well as the Tibetan Buddhists.

Svayambhu literally means the self-bloomed. It is said to be the primordial Buddha or the Supreme Buddha. The first available inscription in the area is from the year N.S. 492 (1289 A.D.) which refers to the renovation of the Stupa.¹¹ Nepalese Buddhists believe that *Svayambhu* is the primordial Buddha who appeared as a lotus blooming afloat on the water. It emerged out of nothing. While Manjusri drained out the water of the lake, the lotus was found standing on a small hillock called *Gosringa* or *Gopuchha Parvat*. The *Adi Buddha* considered to be formless and omnipresent as well as the creator. *Gunakarandavyuha Sutra* mentioned the *Adi Buddha*, who is similar to *Svayambhu*.¹² Since *Gopalraj Vamsavali* has not discussed the term *Svayambhu*, D.R. Regmi, a noted historian of Nepal, is of the opinion that *Svayambhu* was associated with the *Adi Buddha* only in the early 15th century.¹³ However, Nepalese Buddhists, without a doubt regard *Svayambhu* as the primordial Buddha. It has occupied a significant place in the religion of the people, but in terms of historical interpretation, the authenticity of its origin is not supported by historical documents. It should be revealed as a reflection of religious beliefs of the people. The oldest inscription found at *Svayambhu* deals with the donation of land made to the *Vihara* and the performance of the fire sacrifice (the *Homa* or *Yajna*) rituals.¹⁴

The *Svayambhu Purana* is the oldest Nepalese Buddhist text. Its main purpose is to glorify the sacred Buddhist shrines of Kathmandu Valley and to highlight the shrine of *Svayambhu Mahachaitya*.¹⁵

In the sequence of legends pertaining to Shakyamuni Buddha, the story of his visit to Kathmandu is very popular among the Nepalese Buddhists. The *Svayambhu Purana* mentions that Shakyamuni Buddha came to Nepal Mandala from Jetavana *Vihara* at Sravasti to pay homage to the *Svayambhu jyoti* (light) with the assembly of the 500 *Bhikshus* of the *Parvatasthan* at *Gosringa Parvat*.¹⁶ This

^{11.} D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, Vol.1, Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1965, p. 565.

^{12.} Min Bahadur Shakya (ed.) *Arya Gunakarandavyuha Sutra* (Newari), Lalitpur: Nagarjuna Institute Exact Methods, 1997, p. 22.

^{13.} Regmi, f. n. no. 11, p. 568.

^{14.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp.74-76.

^{15.} Shakya, f. n. no. 5.

^{16.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 7, pp. 3-5

event is recorded by Daniel Wright in his *Vamsavali*. The Wright *Vamsavali* states that:¹⁷

During his reign (King Jitedasti) Shakya Singh Buddha came to Nepal from a city named Kapilvastu, and having visited Swayambhu Chaitya and Manjusri Chaitya, fixed his abode at Puchhagra Chaitya. While there, he accepted the worship and offerings of Chuda¹⁸, a female Bhikshu, and made 1350 proselytes, viz. Saliputra, ahamaudgalyayana, Ananda and others from Brahman and Chhetry castes. To several Bodhisattvas such as Maitreya, and gods such as Brahma, who came to Nepal expressly to see him. Shakya described the glory of Svayambhu. He then visited Gujesvari, and after that the Namu Buddha mountain. Here he discovered and showed to his disciples certain ornaments belonging to himself, buried under a Chaitya. When he formerly existed as a prince named Mahasattva (the son of Maharath of Panauti formerly called Panchaba), he had buried there ornaments, after destroying himself by giving his flesh to a tiger to eat. He replaced them as they were and repaired the Chaitya. He next ascended into heaven and returned after his birth. Then, after preaching his doctrines to the people, he saw that the time of his death was approaching and went to a city called Kusi. Here while he was preaching to an assembly of gods (such a Brahma) and Bhiksus (such as Ananda) he disappeared. Some of his followers remained in Nepal and professed his religion.

This statement further attests the fact that Shakyamuni Buddha visited Kathmandu and preached Buddhism at *Puchhagra Chaitya* in *Svayambhu*. A very interesting factor mentioned so far in the *Vamsavali* is that the Buddha gave *Prabajya Sambar* to 1350 people including Chuda and also gave teachings.¹⁹ The *Yama Niyama Shuchishantiparivarta* in the *Lalitvistara Sutra* stated that the Buddha resided at *Gopuchha Parvat* for a certain period of time in order to pay homage to *Svayambhu* and delivered teachings to his disciples. From there, he went to *Panchaladesha*.²⁰ Here the Buddha is said to have explained *Nepal Mahatmya* (Glorification of Nepal), and paid homage to *Svayambhu*. He also paid homage to *Guhyesvari* and received consecration, which he explained to *Bhikshu Ananda*.²¹ According to all Buddhist traditions, it is normally believed that the Buddha visited that place. The Sri Lankan as well as Myanmar Buddhists also believe that Buddha

17. Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal Translated from Parbatiya*, Calcutta: Sushil Gupta and Company, 1958, p.65.

18. This name is mentioned as *Chunda* by Badri Ratna Vajracharya. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 7, p. 4.

19. Shakya, f. n. no. 2, pp. 18-19.

20. Nisthananda Vajracharya (tr.), *Lalitvistara Sutra*, Lalitpur: Young Men Buddhist Association, 1978, p. 577,

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 577-586.

visited Sri Lanka and Myanmar several times. There are testimonial narratives depicted in the classical Buddhist texts to support these types of popular belief.²² Buddha's visit to the Himalayan region is also narrated in *Avadana* literature as well as *Pali* texts.²³ Taking into consideration all such narratives and Buddha's so-called visits to Sri Lanka all the way from Mansarovara in Tibet, which adjoins present day Nepal's western Himalayas, as well as his visit to Yangoon, some Nepalese scholars hypothesised the possibility of his visit to Kathmandu. Those who supported these views say that the possibility that Buddha visited Kathmandu Valley is very likely.²⁴ But there is no historical evidence to support this statement, so this historical narrative can not be considered to be authentic. It is merely a speculation or popular belief. This statement as such has no historical value in terms of authenticity. On the paradigm of historical methodology, this statement can not be confirmed as a historical fact. However, there is no doubt that Buddhist people believe Buddha's arrival in Kathmandu.

Emperor Ashoka's Visits

The other important step in Nepal's Buddhist history is the visit of Mouryan Emperor Ashoka to Kapilvastu and Kathmandu. He was a great Buddhist, and practiced Buddhism during his rule. He made pilgrimages to the popular Buddhist shrines and Buddhist sites. He visited Lumbini which is proven by the pillar inscriptions found there and in Niglisagar in the Western Tarai of Nepal. These Ashokan pillars commemorate Ashoka's pilgrimage to these places. Both places are sacred for the Buddhists. Lumbini is a holy place because Buddha was born there, whereas Niglisagar contained a Stupa enshrining relics of Kanakmuni Buddha. He is regarded by the Buddhists as one of the former Buddhas.²⁵ Ashoka's visit to these places has already been verified. The pillar inscriptions attest to the fact that Emperor Ashoka visited Niglihawa. He paid homage to Kanakmuni Buddha, enlarged his Stupa, and erected a stone pillar there. He also visited the Lumbini garden and worshipped the Buddha there. He set-up another stone pillar to declare that the Buddha was born there.²⁶ The Nepalese Buddhist tradition also believe that Emperor Ashoka visited Kathmandu Valley as well, but his unconfirmed visit to Kathmandu as described in Wright's chronicle and other sources, is without evidences to support it.

Regarding his visit to Kathmandu, Wright's chronicle states-

In the reign of Raja Asika (Ashoka), the Raja of Pataliputra having heard the fame of Nepal as a sacred place, and having obtained the permission of his Spiritual guide, Upagupta Bhikshu, came on a

^{22.} Wilhelm Geiger (Eng.tr.), *The Mahavamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1986, pp. 1-9; Also see: *Bhikshu Sudarshan, Nepalya Bouddha Dharma*, Vol. 1, Kathmandu, 1982, p. 20.

^{23.} For details see: Vajracharya, f. n. no. 20, pp. 587-596.

^{24.} Shakya, f. n. no. 2, p.18.

^{25.} Sircar, f. n. no. 9, p.21.

^{26.} Niglisagar and Lumbini Ashokan pillars describe it. See: *Ibid.*, p. 54.

*pilgrimage to Nepal accompanied by his family and followed by a large number of his subjects. He visited every holy place and bathed in every sacred water, and went to Svayambhu, Guhjeswari and eight Bouddha bitaragas or Chaityas. He also built several Chaityas. His daughter Charumati, while playing one day saw an iron arrow head turned into stone by a god; and determined to remain in Nepal, having concluded from this that it was a land of miracles wrought by the gods. The Raja, therefore gave her in marriage to a descendant of a Chhetri named Devapala ... becoming aged Devapala and Charumati determined to pass the rest of their lives in retirement. They therefore resolved each to build a Vihara. That of Charumati was first completed, and she died in it after living a life of Bhikshuni. All this happened in the reign of Kiranti Raja Sthunko."*²⁷

This description of the chronicle tries to explain that Ashoka came to Nepal for a pilgrimage along with a large retinue of family and successors. He visited holy places in Kathmandu. He also built several *Chaityas* there. The four ancient style *Chaityas* in Patan (Imadol, Lagankhel, Pulchowk and Pimbahal) are said to have been established by him during his visit.

Some historians believe there is a strong possibility that Ashoka visited to Kathmandu. However, it is impossible to speak in the absence of historical evidence. David Snellgrove and John K. Locke did not refute this idea. Snellgrove opines that Khotan had preserved the Buddhist tradition started by an imaginary son of Ashoka known as Kustana. If the activities of Ashoka could reach a remote place like Khotan, with Nepal in his political domain, one should not be surprised that Ashoka visited Kathmandu and established the city of Patan. It is likely in this context that he built four great Stupas in the four cardinal directions.²⁸ But Babu Ram Acharya, an eminent historian of Nepal is of the opinion that the *Kiranta* Kings adapted Buddhism and built Ashokan Stupas at the four corners of Patan.²⁹ Thus, he believed it is highly possible that Ashoka visited Kathmandu. John K. Locke agrees with this.³⁰ Nonetheless, it is only a historical probability. Unless we find evidence to prove that Ashoka visited Kathmandu, it can not be confirmed as a historical fact. Even so, Ashoka's contribution to the development of Buddhism in Nepal can not be downplayed in any way. Regarding the story of his daughter Charumati, who came to Kathmandu and married a Nepalese Prince, historians doubt her existence. References to Charumati are not found in any of the Ashokan inscriptions, edicts or Pali canons. This situation created further ambiguity and

²⁷. A *Vihara* named Chabahil near Deopatan is said to have been built by Charumati.

²⁸. David L. Snellgrove, *Tibetan Buddhism*, Vol. II, Boston: Sambhala Publications, 1987, p. 365; Also see: Shakya, f. n. no. 12, pp. 20-21.

²⁹. Devi Prasad Bhandari, 'Itihas Shiromani Babu Ram Acharyaley Tayar garnubhayeko Nepalko Sankshipta Itihas', *Purnima*, Vol. 47, Year 12, No. 3, 2037 B.S., pp. 1-5.

³⁰. For more information see: John K. Locke, *Unique features of Buddhism*, in Tadeus Skoropski (ed.), *The Buddhist Heritage*, Tring,: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1989, p. 97.

confusion in terms of historical description of Charumati in the history of Buddhism in Nepal.

As concerns the introduction of Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley, we have to depend on legends. There is no clear idea about how Buddhism came to Nepal, but according to legends, Buddhism came to Kathmandu even before the time of Gautam Buddha.³¹ However, history refutes this kind of idea. Although *Svayambhu* is said to have originated as the primordial Buddha in the distant past, modern historians confirmed that *Svayambhu Chaitya* was established by Vishwa (Vrishha) Deva, a Lichhavi King.³² If it became a place of Buddhist pilgrimage when it was established by Vishwa Deva, this contradicts the idea that Buddhism was introduced in Nepal before the time of Gautam Buddha. At any rate, the tradition and legends of *Svayambhu* can not be equated with history and it is thereby impossible to establish the historical authenticity of such accounts.

Since Nepal is located within close proximity to India, the Buddhist creed could have come to Nepal at anytime in ancient history. There are some references to Nepal in certain Indian classical texts. The *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya* mentions Nepal in a section relating to wool trading. It mentions that a group of *Bhikshu* stayed at Sravasti *en route* to Nepal.³³ This text also mentions Ven. Anand as the resident of Kathmandu who visited his birth place to see the neighbours. As he returned from Kathmandu Sravasti with frost bitten toes, the Buddha permitted the monks to wear shoes in order to be protected from such accidents.

The account of *Mulasarvastivad Vinaya* supports the claim that Nepal was already exposed to Buddhism or to Buddhist communities.³⁴ If this is the case, then Buddhism could have had an impact on Nepal, and if so, people probably would have been acquainted with Buddhist creeds also.

Without historical evidence, historians have no choice except to guess how Buddhism was introduced in Nepal. The mythology regarding the introduction of Buddhism in Nepal is very popular among the Buddhist laity even until the present time. As a result, they strongly believe in the truth of the historical Buddha's visit, as well as that of the other Buddhas, including Manjusri. This belief is strongly tied to the religious beliefs of ordinary followers.

The Lichhavi inscriptions attest to the fact that Buddhism was fully developed in Nepal by the later part of the ancient period,³⁵ but no dependable historical sources have been found so far to authenticate the historical imagination

³¹. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 7, pp. X-XI.

³². Dhanavajra Vajracharya and Kamal Prakash Malla (eds.), *The Gopalraj Vamsavali*, Kathmandu: Franz Steiner and Nepal Research Center, 1985, Folio 20 *Kha* 3, pp. 28 and 76.

³³. Sylvan Levi, 'Le Nepal', *Kailas*, Vol. 3, No.1, 1975, p. 12; Shakya, f. n. no. 2, p. 19.

³⁴. Mulasarvastivada Vinaya Vastu, Shakya, f. n. no. 2, pp. 16-19.

³⁵. Hari Ram Joshi, *Nepalko Prachin Abhilekh*, Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 2030 B.S., pp. 66-70 and 293-297.

that Buddhism was introduced to Nepal even before the time of the historical Buddha. It is merely an oral tradition of the Buddhists of Nepal. The visit of Shakyamuni Buddha and Emperor Ashoka to Kathmandu are over emphasized and exaggerated in legendary accounts of Nepalese Buddhism, although no historical evidence supports this hearsay and accounts. They have historical bearings whatsoever.

Gum *Vihara*, on the other hand, is the oldest form of evidence of Buddhism in Nepal. It was a *Vihara* which was established in ancient times and it is said to be the oldest *Vihara* in Nepal. This *Vihara* was very popular during the ancient times. Historians suggest that the term *Gum* belongs to the Kirant language.³⁶ With a lack of other evidence, the existing sources support the notion that Buddhism entered Nepal during the *Kiranti* rule, when Gum *Vihara* was established. Dhanavajra Vajracharya, a noted native historian, believes that Hinayana Buddhism came to Nepal around the end of *Kiranti* rule.³⁷ The ancient inscription found in Sankhu near the *Vihara* confirms the existence of the *Mahasanghika Bhikshu Sangha*. This is very important historical evidence for piecing together the history of Buddhism in Nepal.

The Lichhavi Period:

The attitude of Lichhavi rulers towards Buddhism and their policies continued to play a prominent role in the development of Buddhism. It is supposedly called the golden age in the growth of Buddhist history in Nepal. The cooperative attitude of the Lichhavi rulers finally provided a basis for the overall development of Buddhism in ancient Nepal.

While writing about the history of Buddhism in Nepal, emphasis should be given to the policies adopted by ancient Kings like Mana Deva, Shiva Deva, Narendra Deva, Amshuvarma, Vrisha Deva and others. Even before them, there was already a *Vihara* which was very famous during that time. The *Vihara* was called Gum *Vihara*, and is a pre-Lichhavi historical *Vihara* of Nepal which is mentioned in various historical documents, including the *Gopalraj Vamsavali* as well as other inscriptions. The *Vamsavali* mentions-³⁸

*"Manadeva...mahaghorapapa kritena maharodamana bhramitva
Gum Vihara Sikhare tapa kritan. Tapu
prabhavanmahachetamutpaddyate pratisthitasca."*

(Due to the sin committed by Mana Deva, he sat meditating in Gum *Vihara*. As a result a great *Chaitya* was created and consecrated).

^{36.} Dhanavajra Vajracharya, 'Gum *Vihara*', *Madhuparka*, Year 4, No. 12, 2028 B.S., pp. 22-25; Bhadra Ratna Vajracharya (ed.), *Dhanavajra Vajracharyaka Aitihāsik Lekh Sangraha*, Lalitpur: Hera Devi Shakya, 2056 B. S., pp. 8-10.

^{37.} Vajracharya and Malla, f. n. no. 32, p.9.

^{38.} Sri Gopalraj Vamsavali folio no. 206, *Ibid*.

This proves the fact that it had already become popular monastery by the time of Mana Deva, and was considered to be the most distinguished *Vihara*. It was established during *Kiranti* rule.³⁹ It was the first Buddhist *Vihara* to be established in the Kathmandu Valley, and was very famous during Amsuvarma's time.⁴⁰

It is also said that the term *Gubhaju* refers to those who were ordained at Gum *Vihara*. They were called *Gum bahalju*. This terminology was later changed to *Gubhaju*, which literally means a respected person from Gum *Vihara*. Gum *Vihara* has also played a significant role in the development of Vajrayana Buddhism in Nepal,⁴¹ as mentioned earlier, it is a *Vihara* from the *Kiranti* period. Some historians, however, have mistakenly believed it to have been built by King Vrisha Deva of Lichhavi dynasty.⁴²

It is obvious that Buddhism entered Nepal sometime before the establishment of Gum *Vihara*. In fact, as mentioned in the *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya*, Nepal was known to some *Bhikkhus* living outside of Nepal at the time of Gautam Buddha knew about Nepal, but we have no supporting evidence to prove that Buddhism was introduced to Nepal during Buddha's life time. It can only be assumed that it entered Nepal before the time of the historical Buddha in the light of relevant events and mythological traditions, which lack historical evidence.

History can not be based on religious sentiment. All the prevailing myths and legends of Nepalese tradition relating to the Buddha and Buddhism in Nepal are the products of Nepalese people's religious beliefs. Certainly it has religious value which is ingrained in the belief system of the Buddhist people of Nepal. Nevertheless, it can not be regarded as historical fact.

Dhanavajra Vajracharya, a noted historian of Nepal, is of the opinion that Buddhism came to Nepal during the *Kirant* period, but historically, Buddhism was well developed and accepted in Nepal under the Lichhavis. Available documentary evidence mentions that a large number of Viharas, *Bhikkshuni* and *Bhikshu Sangha* and the Mahasanghika and Vajrayana faiths have existed in Nepal ever since the Lichhavi period. In fact, Buddhism became so popular during the period that a large number of devotees made lavish donations in the name of Buddhism.

The Lichhavi rulers played a very significant role in the development of Buddhism in Nepal. Some of the rulers, especially Vrisha Deva, Narendra Deva, Amshuvarma and Shiva Deva were very prominent in this respect. They made a great contribution to the development of Buddhism in one way or another. A chronicle of Nepal entitled *Gopalraj Vamsavali* mentions several Lichhavi Kings, such as Vrisha Deva, Amshuvarma, Dharma Deva, Shiva Deva and Mana Deva, in

³⁹. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, p. 510.

⁴⁰. Shankar Lal Joshi, *Nepal Under Amshuvarma*, New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1993, p. 157.

⁴¹. *Ibid.*

⁴². *Ibid.*, p. 158; Dhanavajra is of opinion that this is the Kiranta period *Vihara*. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 32, pp. 22-25.

connection with the development of Buddhism. King Vrisha Deva has been praised as the *Sugata shashana pakshyapati* (the patron of Buddha's rule) in Licchavi inscriptions, and is referred to as one who favoured Buddhism. The Pashupati inscription of Jaya Deva II dated Samvat 157 mentions-⁴³

*Ekadasa Kshitipatinaparancha bhupam hitvantare vijayino
Jayadeva Vamna Srimanbabhuvu Vrishadeva eti pratito rajottama
sugatahashana Pakshyapati*

(After twelve Kings from the reign of victorious Jaya Deva II there arose the best king, Vrisha Deva, who is devoted to Buddhism).

The Changunarayan pillar inscription of Mana Deva also mentions the deeds of King Vrisha Deva. He is referred as a King less interested in wars. He is also mentioned as a man of destiny who was faithful in his words. The text mentions-

*(Srima) ccaru (a) yaptatapabibha (vairabhya) amasangleshepakrit
(raja) bhud vrishadeva ityanu (Pama sa) tyapratijno daya.*⁴⁴

The Pashupati inscription of Jaya Deva II proves that he favoured Buddhism very much. He also constructed Svayambhu *Chaitya*.⁴⁵ *Bhasa Vamsavali* further mentions that King Vrisha Deva constructed Manjubahal which is known as *Dhando Chaitya*.⁴⁶ Chabahil *Chaitya* was popularly known as Dhando during the medieval period.⁴⁷ The inscription placed in this *Chaitya* is dated older than the Changu Narayan inscription of Mana Deva.⁴⁸

Wright's *Vamsavali* also mentions King Vrisha Deva.⁴⁹ It states -

"He was a pious king. He daily fed Vajrayogini, before taking his own meals. He repaired the Chaitya built by Dharmadatta (Dhanadev Chaitya), and built several Viharas for Bhikkhus to live in. He was one day to visit one of the four large Chaityas which were built on the anniversary of the commencement of the Satya Yuga and being struck by severe illness, he died there. The servants of Yama took him to their master's kingdom; but Yama, when he saw him chided them for having brought such a virtuous man to hell. He was therefore released, and restored to life again. He then compared what he had seen in Hell with what was written about it in the Karandavyuha, and finding that they agreed, he was

43. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, p. 549; and Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 577-589.

44. Changunarayan Inscription dated 386; *Ibid.*, p.10, Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 6-12.

45. *Raja Vrishvadeva... Tenakrita Sinaguvihara Chaitya Bhattarika pratishthita Sampurna krita*. Vajracharya et al, f. n. no. 27, folio 20, p. 28.

46. *Bhasa Vamsavali*, Vol. 1, Kathmandu : Dept. of Archaeology, 1963, p.56.

47. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, p. 3; Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 66-70.

48. Hariram Joshi, *Himjvala*, Lalitpur: The author, 2028 B.S., pp. 1-9.

49. Wright, f. n. no. 17, pp. 69-70.

pleased... he placed an image of Pancha Buddha near Godavari, calling the place by the name of Bandy gaon."

After Vrisha Deva, there were some other Lichhavi Kings who were also connected with Buddhism in ancient times in one way or another.

During the Lichhavi period, the most important aspect of Buddhism was that it was organized around the *Bhikshu* and *Bhikshuni Sangha*. The Lichhavi inscriptions mention different *Sanghas* such as- the *Arya Bhikshu Sangha* and *Arya Bhikshuni Sangha*. The rulers constructed *Vihara* and granted land and gave donations to the *Sangha* for its survival. In fact, it had been a pious act to make donations to the *Sangha*.⁵⁰ The Hadigaon inscription of Amsuvarma listed several *Viharas* as recipients of donations provided by the king.⁵¹ Similarly, some of the *Bhikshu Sangha* were given significant rights as well. The Pashupati Vajraghar and Yagabahal inscriptions of the Lichhavis mention the rights delegated to the *Sangha* of *Sri Sivadeva Vihara*.⁵² The rights granted until that time were very significant, and made the *Sangha* very powerful as well as popular among the people.

The term *Sangha* is referred in the following Lichhavi inscriptions-
Chabahil inscription⁵³ -

Sanghasya bhaktyartha Pujarthanca Mahamune...

This inscription explains an endowment for the purpose of providing food to the *Bhikshu Sangha*. This inscription is thought to be from Vrisha Deva's time. The *Bhikshu Sangha* already became popular and well organized in Nepal by this time.

The Hadigaon Inscription of Amshuvarma is very important regarding the history of Buddhist *Vihara* in Nepal. It describes the donations granted by the ruler to the prominent *Viharas*. The *Viharas* were given grants of 6 *Purana 2 pana* which is equivalent to the grant amount designated to Pashupati Nath. The amount given to the *Viharas* is as follows-

Gum <i>Vihara</i>	_____	6 <i>Purana 2 Pana</i>
Sriman <i>Vihara</i>	_____	6 <i>Purana 2 Pana</i>

^{50.} Some famous ancient *Vihara* are Gum *Vihara*, Sriman *Vihara*, Sivadev *Vihara*, Kharjunika *Vihara* and Ajika *Vihara*. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, p. 320; Also see Rajendra Ram, *History of Buddhism in Nepal 704-1396*, Patna: Jana Bharati Prakashan, 1977, pp. 21-31.

^{51.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 320-322; Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 293-297; 'Hadigaonko Amshuvarmako Shilalekh', *Purnima*, Vol. 14, Year 4, No. 2, 2024 B.S., p. 123.

^{52.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 496-506; Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 508-510, 513-515; 'Patan Yagbahalko Narendra Devako Abhilekh', *Purnima*, Vol. 14, Year 4, No. 2, 2024 B.S., pp. 117-119; 'Pashupati Vajragharko Narendra Devako Abhilekh', *Purnima*, Vol. 14, Year 4, No. 2, 2024 B.S., pp. 119-121.

^{53.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 1-2; Also see: Ramji Tewari *et.al*, *Abhilekh Sangraha*, Kathmandu: Itihas Samsodhan Mandal, 2020 B.S., and Joshi, f. n. no. 35, p.66.

Sri Raj Vihara	—	6 Purana 2 Pana
Kharjurika Vihara	—	6 Purana 2 Pana
Madhyama Vihara	—	6 Purana 2 Pana
Ordinary Viharas	—	3 Purana 1 Pana ⁵⁴

Chapatatole Inscription mentions -

"Gandhakuti pratisanskaranya tadprayojane ca caturbiwsha Mahayana Pratipannarya Bhikshuni Sangha paribhogayakshyanibi pratipadita..."

This inscription is about an endowment which was dedicated for the renovation of the main shrine and for feeding the *Bhikshuni Sangha*. It was a Mahayana *Bhikshuni Sangha*.⁵⁵

The Bandahiti inscription also mentioned -

Bhagabatasavalokitesvarasya dhupa dipina ma 2 Aryasanghasya ca ma 5.

(2 *manika* to offer lights to Aryavalokitesvara, and 5 *manika* for *Aryasangha*). It helps to know that Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara had already become very popular by Amshuvarma's time.

This inscription explains that the Avalokitesvara cult already became very popular in Nepal during the Lichhavi period, so, generous devotees donated land for the management of the *Pujas* and to provide food to the *Aryabhikshu Sangha*.⁵⁶ The Brahmatole inscription also attests to the popularity of the Avalokitesvara cult around Nepal Samvat 479.⁵⁷ This inscription also mentions Aryavalokitesvara. The worship of Avalokitesvara became popular in ancient Nepal.

The ancient inscriptions found at Yagabahal and Pashupati Vajraghara, are very important in the analysis of the Buddhist history of Nepal. These inscriptions are identical in content. According to these inscriptions -

1. The amount collected in fines for different crimes (100 Pana to remove deceased fetus from the womb of a deceased pregnant woman, 3 Purana 3 Pana penalty to those who did not take care of cattle, confiscated property of those involved in five big crimes (*Pancha Mahapapa*). The confiscated properties were given to the *Arya Bhikshu Sangha* of Sri Shiva Deva

^{54.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 320-322, Also See: Joshi, f. n. no. 35, p. 293-297; *Purnima*, f. n. no. 51.

^{55.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 382-383, Tiwari, f. n. no. 53, Vol. V; Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 113-115.

^{56.} Dhanavajra Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, p. 386; Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 322-324.

^{57.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 185-186, Tewari, f. n. no. 53, Vo l I, Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 146-147.

Vihara.⁵⁸ Similarly, Shiva Deva *Vihara Sangha* was entrusted with managing the water tap in the Pashupati temple area.

2. This *Sangha* was granted with *Birta* (tax exempt privileged land tenure) land.
3. *Bhikshu Sangha* was also given limited judicial rights in order to settle minor disputes.⁵⁹

These inscriptions also mention a large number of *Viharas* including very famous *Viharas* such as *Madhyama Vihara*, *Raj Vihara*, *Abhayaruci Vihara*, *Caturbhalasan Vartakalyanagupta Vihara* and so on.⁶⁰

The Lichhavi inscription found at Musum *bahal* mentioned -

*Sarvasattva hitaya...tasya sanskara punyartham Bhikshuni Sangha
Samarpita pana purana sahita ... prakalpya tat..*

(for renovation and worship *Purana* and *Pana* are donated to the *Bhikshuni Sangha*).

It has already been proven that *Bhikshuni Sangha* was a well established institution in the ancient times, but no references to the *Bhikshuni Sangha* have been found among the historical descriptions and evidence of the medieval period.⁶¹ Thus, it may be assumed that the well developed and patronized *Bhikshuni Sangha* did not exist in the medieval times, but the reason is still unknown.

The Sankhu inscription of Lichhavi period is regarded as very important historical evidence for the study of history of Nepalese Buddhism. Although it is in a fragmented state, it provides information about the Mahasanghika monks of Nepal. Therefore, it has enormous historical value.⁶² The text of the fragmented Sankhu inscription is as follows -

deyadharmoyam Sridharmarajikamatya

... .. *Sanghikabhikshu Sanghasya*

It mentions the existence of the *Sangha* that belonged to the Mahasanghika sect of Buddhism, and proves the antiquity of Buddhism in this area. Not only the *Bhikshu* lineage, but also a lineage of Mahasanghika *Bhikshuni* lineage functioned well. An inscription discovered in Bhaktapur also mentioned a Mahasanghika *Bhikshuni* lineage, which existed in the area. In fact, various inscriptions found in

⁵⁸. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 496-506, and Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 508-510 / 513-515.

⁵⁹. Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 508-519, and Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 501-506; *Purnima*, f. n. no. 52, pp. 117-121.

⁶⁰. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 320, 496-497, 505 and 540, Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 293-296, 479-480, 513-515, 558 and 561.

⁶¹. Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, p. 507.

⁶². *Ibid*, p. 508, and Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 523-525.

Patan referred to the *Arya Bhikshuni Sangha*, and a newly discovered ancient inscription at Chyamasingha in Bhaktapur also mentioned the *Mahasanghika Bhikshuni Sangha*. It has been considered to be very important because it identified Nepal's ancient *Bhikshuni Sangha*, which was organized according to the *Mahasanghika Vinaya* lineage.⁶³

These citations prove that the *Sangha* was very popular in ancient Nepal. It was a place for women to take refuge for their spiritual quest against worldly sufferings. An aspirant usually renounced the worldly society for spiritual purposes. The *Sangha* provided leadership to the entire movement. From the date of the Chabahil inscription, the word *Sangha* is referred to repeatedly in various other Lichhavi inscriptions. The *Sangha* community remained so popular and sacred that they were occasionally entrusted with minor judicial rights also. All such descriptions found in ancient inscriptions prove that the Buddhist *Vihara* were very active centers of Buddhist activities in ancient Nepal.⁶⁴

Both the *Bhikshu* and *Bhikshuni Sangha* operated side by side. We have ample evidence to support this fact.⁶⁵ Most of the prominent ancient Viharas were located in and around the Patan area. The inscription of Yagabahal mentions famous Viharas such as Sri Raj *Vihara*, Madhyama *Vihara*, Abhayaruchi *Vihara*, Chaturbhalatasana *Vihara*, Vartakalyana *Vihara* while describing areas of *Gullatanga grama* (present *Guita* in Patan). All these *Vihara* were located in what was then the South-east area of Patan.⁶⁶

The Lichhavi period is regarded as the golden period in the Buddhist history of Nepal, that made it possible for Buddhism to flourish. The most important fact to be noted here is that religious syncretism was an important feature of the society of that time. Many religions and religious cults had an equal opportunity to flourish side by side.

Therefore, Buddhism became a very popular and well established religion in Nepal, and available inscriptions attest this fact. Many rulers had faith in Buddhism which is why some of them favoured Buddhism and provided opportunities as well as material support in order for it to flourish.

A large number of *Vihara* existed during the Lichhavi period, when the *Bhikshu* and *Bhikshuni Sangha* were formed. In fact, there were two kinds of followers; those who renounced worldly desire and became monks, and the

^{63.} *Pasuka*, Vol. 2, No. 11, N.S. 1118. Also see - Min Bahadur Shakya, 'A Historical Analysis of Monasticism in Newar Buddhism', *Voice of History*, Vol. XV, No. 1, June 2000, pp. 65-80.

^{64.} Rajendra Ram, f. n. no. 50, pp. 91-150.

^{65.} Tewari, f. n. no. 53, Vol. V, p.8; Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 505-10, 382 and 383; Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 113, 293, 479 and 508.

^{66.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 499-501 and 505; Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 513-515.

community of household *Acharyas* or the lay *upasaka*. The following description of Wright's Chronicle further proves this fact. It states that-⁶⁷

Bhaskar Varma entrusted daily worship, and the ceremonies accompanying it (of Pashupati), to Buddhamargi householder Acharyas. The rules and ceremonies to be observed he caused to be engraved on a copper plate, which he lodged with the Bhikshus of Carumiti Vihara.

The available inscriptions do not mention specific Buddhist sects that remained dominant in Nepal. The Sankhu inscription alone mentioned the *Mahasanghika Bhikshu Sangha* and Amshuvarma's Gokarna inscription mentions the term Vajrayana. The names of deities, such as Dharmaraja Lokeshvara, Yamantaka, Pancha Buddha etc. are mentioned in different inscriptions. This proves that Buddhism in ancient Nepal largely followed the Mahayana tradition.⁶⁸

The prevalence of Avalokitesvara images in many places in Nepal and tradition of placing their images in public places by individual donors as an act of merit is proof of the development of Mahayana Buddhism in ancient Nepal. The huge image of Avalokitesvara which was placed in Samvat 180 by Dharmajiva is considered to be very important in the Buddhist history of Nepal. This is mentioned in the Yangabahi inscription,⁶⁹ and proves that the cult of Avalokitesvara became very popular among the Buddhist laity. During the first half of the seventh century, Vajrayana deities became popular among Nepalese Buddhists. Deities such as Svayambhu Vajrayogini, and Shakyamuni Buddha, are repeatedly referred to in ancient inscriptions. Similarly, *Pancha Buddha* (five celestial Buddhas) Manjusri, Vimalakirti, Samantabhadra, and Samantakusum are frequently referred to in the Lichhavi inscriptions. Those inscriptions are evidence of sufficient to prove the root of Vajrayana Buddhism in ancient Nepal.⁷⁰ It is said that King Shiva Deva was also given the *acaluyegu abhisekha*, a tantric initiation in the Vajrayana tradition.⁷¹

Before this time, Shankaracharya, a devout Hindu monastic of one of the four *Pithas* in India came to Nepal. It is said that Buddhists were persecuted by him and he compelled the *Bhikshunis* to get married. He also destroyed 84,000 texts of different kinds written about Buddhism in order to popularize the Shaivite sect of Hindu religion.⁷²

^{67.} Wright, f. n. no. 17, p. 67.

^{68.} Naresh M. Vajracharya, *Buddhism in Nepal*, Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1998, pp. 57-61.

^{69.} See: Yangabahal Inscription, Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, p. 591; Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 622-623.

^{70.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 387-388.

^{71.} Wright, f. n. no. 17, pp. 76-77.

^{72.} *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

There is a legend about the Shankaracharya in Nepal, according to which the Buddhists defeated six incarnations of him in religious debate. While he was being reborn for the seventh time, the sixteen Bodhisattvas who had been in India fled to the north, possibly into Nepal. Later on, he also came to Nepal and defeated them in a debate. After that, some were put to death and others fled from there. At that time there were three types of Buddhists- *Bhikshus*, *Sravakas*, and the householder *Upasakas*. A historical source mentions that no *Bhikshus* and *Sravakas* were able to debate with Shankaracharya, but some of the lay Buddhists prepared to debate. Finally, they were defeated and some of them were put to death.⁷³ He is said to have ordered the *Bhikshunis* to marry and forced the laymen to shave off the knot of hair on the crown of their heads while performing the *chuda karma*. It is also said that he put an end to many of their religious ceremonies. He also persecuted Buddhists at Manichuda mountain,⁷⁴ which was Shankaracharya's triumph over the Buddhists of Nepal.

During that time, Pashupati shrine was under the control of the Buddhists. They considered Pashupati Nath to be *Avalokitesvara*,⁷⁵ and also celebrated Buddha's birth day (*Buddha Jayanti*) right at the shrine. He retook the shrine from the Buddhists and brought Nambudari Brahmins to serve as priests of Pashupati Nath from Kerala in India.

Then he turned his attention towards the Buddhist monastic centers which were considered to be corrupt and whose practitioners engaged in sexo-yogic tantric practices. It is also said that the Buddhists had sex lives.⁷⁶ Finally, they were compelled to give up false monkhood and those who had been celibate were forced to abandon celibacy.⁷⁷ Nepal, being on weak in the knowledge of Buddhism, lacked the ability to face the philosophical and intellectual onslaughts of Sankaracharya, but there is no epigraphic or other documentary evidence to support his visit, nor the claims that he persecuted the Buddhists of Nepal. Only traditional beliefs support this view. Rajendra Ram opines that Buddhism remained free from adversity in the Kathmandu Valley, but the Buddhists of Nepal could not make any significant progress during this period nonetheless.⁷⁸

Although Buddhists were said to have undergone persecution by Sankaracharya, Buddhist thinkers in India were well prepared to encounter Hindu ideologues and ideologies. They were aware of these forces, which is made evident in *Doha* and *Charya* songs.⁷⁹ During Sankaracharya's life time, the parallel currents of thoughts of the Buddhist *Siddhas* were flowing in eastern India and

^{73.} *Ibid.*, p.70.

^{74.} *Ibid.*, p.71.

^{75.} Rajendra Ram, f. n. no. 50, pp. 65-66.

^{76.} *Ibid.*, p.66.

^{77.} Wright, f. n. no. 17, p.71 and Rajendra Ram, f. n. no. 50, pp. 66-67.

^{78.} Rajendra Ram, f. n. no. 50, pp. 70-71.

^{79.} *Ibid.*

Nepal. There were eighty-four *Siddhas*, who had an enormous impact on Vajrayana Buddhism.

Buddhism flourished in ancient Nepal under these circumstances which were very favourable for its progress.

At present, Nepalese Buddhism is predominantly of the Vajrayana lineage. Traces of Vajrayana are found in the Gokarna inscription of Amshuvarma.⁸⁰ The Tyagal tole inscription also provides information on its arrival.⁸¹ These two inscriptions are invaluable in the study of Newar Vajrayana Buddhism of Nepal. The Tyagal tole inscription mentions the names of several Vajrayana deities, and similar are found in several other inscriptions as well.

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^{80.} Vajracharya, f. n. no. 1, pp. 370-71; Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 340-342.

^{81.} Joshi, f. n. no. 35, pp. 322-324; Vajracharya, f. n. no 1, pp. 387-388.