



Astrological Practices of Newar Buddhist Community of Kathmandu Valley

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Abstract

Divination and electional astrology are long-standing practices in the Newar Buddhist community. Though most of the astrological works are ascribed to the elites of the community- the Vajracharya priests, many lay people also have basic skills in using the almanac to find auspicious dates and Newari festivals. While conducting a comprehensive literature review, I discovered that astrological traditions evolved within the Indian subcontinent primarily serve as the foundation of astrological practices of the Newar Buddhist community. Variations exist in the focus during predictions, with an emphasis on Yogini dasha and the inclusion of unique Buddhist nomenclature for planets. In essence, the foundation of these practices lies in a blend of Indic, Tantric, and Buddhist influences. Buddhists historically drew astrological insights from Mahayana texts like 'Sardulakarnavadana' and 'Mahasamnipata,' incorporating astral knowledge from Vedic and other Indian astrology systems. The 'Grahamatrika Dharani,' a key Buddhist text on astrological remedies gained widespread use in the 9th and 10th centuries in Northern India, Nepal and Tibet, sharing similarities with Hindu Navagraha Puja. My exploration also encompasses the timing of significant Newar Buddhist rituals, festivals, fasts, and life events, shedding light on the community's astrological practices.

Keywords: Buddhist astrology, Ethno-astronomy, Newar Buddhism, Vajrayana Rituals, Newar life rites.

Introduction

Gilbert and Pingree (2022) define astrology as a type of divination that forecasts earthly and human events through the observation and interpretation of the fixed stars, the Sun, the Moon, and the planets. Astrology by far is an understudied topic in Newar Buddhism.

But when we retrospect we see that astrology has always played an important role in Newar Buddhist community throughout history. Every revered and learned authority of Newar Buddhism used to have at least basic to advanced knowledge on this subject. Astrology is so intertwined with the Newar Buddhist culture and traditions that every significant activity is initiated with the use of some form of astrology.

Kotyk, J.T. (2017) used the term ‘Buddhist Astrology’ for his PhD dissertation in which he studied the transmission of astrology from India into China via the spread of Buddhism. In recent periods some notable research works have been carried out in the field of Buddhist astrology in subjects like Tibetan astrology, astrology in the Tang Dynasty, Astrology in Burmese Buddhism, Tibetan Medical astrology, Sinhalese astrology, Mongolian astrology, translation of the astrological text to Chinese, the timing of rituals in Chinese Buddhism, etc. However, despite being a prominent feature of Newar Buddhism too, there has not been enough research on the astrological practices of Newar Buddhists.

I have addressed this research gap through this paper and tried to explore the astrological practices of Newar Buddhism. I opted to find out the historical roots of the astrology practiced by the Newar Buddhist community and also to explore some prevailing astrological practices of Newar Buddhists. Thus, this paper depicts how astrology is used in the activities and lifestyles of the Newar community. The research will be a valuable insight into this long-standing practice of the Newar community of Kathmandu Valley and a reference for similar research in the future.

Research Questions and Objectives

What are the historical roots of astrological practices of the Newar Buddhist community of Kathmandu Valley?

How is astrology used in religious rites, festivals, and life rituals of the Newar Buddhist community of Kathmandu Valley?

The objectives of this article is to

Discover the historical roots of astrological practices of the Newar Buddhist community of Kathmandu Valley.

Explore the use of astrology in various cultural and life activities of Newar Buddhist people to identify their astrological practices.

Delimitations

This study focuses exclusively on the astrological practices of the Newar Buddhist community of Kathmandu Valley. The findings thus cannot be generalized to other regions or other communities. The focus is primarily on contemporary astrological practices as well as an attempt has been made to trace the historical source of astrological practices of this community. The research excludes any astrological practices of any other Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities in the region. The paper also illuminates the astrological practices involved in various festivals and life rituals of Newari Buddhist people but does not dig into religious and spiritual practices in detail. The birth chart preparation, horoscope readings, mundane astrology, etc. have not been included in this study. This study excludes the participation of lay Newar Buddhists while includes the Newar Buddhist astrologers and practitioners.

Methodology

I used the inductive method in this research. I conducted a detailed literature review on astrology and astral materials related to Buddhism that are found on the internet and in libraries. This comprised reading materials on Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and Western astrology, Newar Buddhist culture, festivals, and rituals. Furthermore, some personal interviews with Newari astrologers had been carried out. The conclusions were drawn based on the above research activities. This research is historical and ethnographic research since it's an attempt to find the historical roots of Newar Buddhist astrology and to identify the astrological practices in Newar Buddhist culture. The research has used qualitative methodology.

The research involved studying various astrological traditions of the world and their history, comparing the astrological traditions on grounds of theory and practices with Newar Buddhist astrology, and then interpreting the findings and tracing back the historical roots of astrological practices of the Newar Buddhist Community. So, the methodology that I will use in this research is descriptive, comparative, and interpretive in nature. The activities of finding facts and relevant information, dropping unnecessary ideas, comparing, describing, reasoning, analyzing then concluding show that it is the inductive methodology which is also known as the exploratory or discovery method.

Results and Discussion

Exploring the historical roots of astrological practices within the Newar Buddhist community is an engaging endeavor. Rospart (2012) says that there is archaeological evidence that proves that historical Nepal has been under the influence of Indic culture and

civilizations for at least two thousand years which has an influence on religion also including Vajrayana Buddhism. So, many of the practices of Newar Buddhism have a unique blend of Buddhist and Hindu cultures. The astrological practices in this community are also a mix of Indic, Tantric, and Buddhist practices.

Astrology had slowly crept into Buddhism in the beginning but was extensively used after the introduction of Vajrayana in India. Since Newar Buddhism is the remnant of Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhism of India that had survived after the Muslim invasion, Newar people have adopted the Indian system of astrological practices that have been practiced by Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions of India. Vajrayana Buddhism has peculiar features like the use of mantra, dharani, mandala, deity, meditation, and a lot of rituals to be conducted which need guidance from an astrologer.

Pal and Bhattacharyya (1969) infer that the Rigveda contains numerous hymns devoted to both the Sun and the Moon. However, in later periods in India and Nepal, additional sidereal deities emerged and were revered, expanding the scope of worship beyond just the Sun and the Moon. The concepts of Dwadasaditya (12 forms of the Sun) and the Navagrahas (Nine planets) along with 28 nakshatras (Constellations) were envisioned and meticulously elucidated.

Marichi, regarded as the Buddhist equivalent of Surya, is mentioned in Sadhanamala where she is described as stepping on Pragma and Upaya, both of which are Buddhist concepts. Similarly, the representation of Chandra depicts him riding in a chariot drawn by geese, a tradition not found in Brahmanical practices. Consequently, the depictions of Chandra in Nepal adhere to Buddhist conventions. This highlights the significant impact of astrological concepts, distinct from Brahmanical ideas, on Newar Buddhism.

The Dharmadhatuvagiswara mandala within Nispannayogavali incorporates the 28 nakshatras in the Buddhist tradition, emphasizing the comprehensive integration of these astrological concepts within tantric Buddhism. Yagyavalkyasutra is the earliest text in India to enumerate nine planets which are collectively known as Navagraha. The Navagrahas enjoyed a special position in the Buddhist pantheon is evident from the large number of texts that include their rites and instructions for their propitiation. The most important texts that include their description are 'Nispannayogavali', Kriyasangrahapanjika by Kuldatta (12th century A.D.), Pujavidhi (16th century AD), and Dharmakoshasangraha of Amritananda. These texts have also given the description of color of Navagrahas and their seats and mounts and other attributes, Pal and Bhattacharyya (1969)

Some important Buddhist texts on astrology and astronomy like Sardulkarnavadana, Mahasannipata, Grahamatrikadharani, and Kalachakra are found in the archives of Newari Buddhist literature thus confirming that Newar Buddhists have noticeably derived their astrological materials from Indian Buddhism. The Kalacakra Tantra introduced from India in Mahayana/ Vajrayana Buddhism in the late century C.E. deals with a lot of astronomical information. (Gyatso *et al.*, 2016).

Newar Buddhist Community

Lewis (1989) claims that Newar Buddhism represents a unique yet continual survival of later Indian Mahayana- Vajrayana Buddhism. A distinct feature of the Newar Buddhist community is the total absence of celibate monasticism. The householder monks of Vajracharya castes some of whom still live in Viharas (monasteries) of Kathmandu Valley serve the priestly role in the community. They are revered as Guru or masters by other lay groups in the community as they serve as ritual guides, and experts of religious texts, astrology, medicine, and meditation for centuries.

According to Mishra (2019), the Newar Buddhist community comprises two groups: The Bare and the Upasakas. Bare denotes highly respected elite which consists of Vajracharyas and Shakyas from the priest family. Uray is another high caste and the patrons. Vajracharya, Shakya, and Urayare the top castes who can have access to esoteric initiations whereas Upasakas are the layman group such as Jyapu, and other service and unclean can only perform the exoteric practices like offerings and devotion to chaityas and Avalokiteshwar.

Introduced of Astrology in Newar Buddhism

Before knowing the roots of Newar Buddhist astrology, it is interesting to know how astrology came to be adopted in Buddhism despite the strict prohibition against astrological practices in early Vinaya literature. Astrology goes against the Buddhist rules as well as the Buddhist foundation which discards the existence of fate or destiny. However, if we investigate, we can find that Buddhist monks have used certain astrological concepts like 28 Nakshatra (constellations) and lunar cycles from Vedanga Jyotisha to schedule Uposadha meetings from the time of Buddha. Kotyk (2018) states that astrology was a significant feature of Indian Buddhism. He further exposes that a diverse array of materials from the extant corpus of Buddhist literature indicates that astrology was regarded as an inappropriate practice for monks by some early Buddhists, although passive belief in astrology and basic knowledge of this art is still consistently observed throughout the first millennium CE.

Indian astrology went through gradual development throughout the early and mid-centuries C.E. and Hellenistic concepts of 12 zodiacs and seven weekdays were incorporated in Indian Astrology during the 4th and 5th century C.E. (MAK, 2015). The Mahayana Buddhists have gradually adopted these practices. But after the popularization of Vajrayana Buddhism, astrology became an integral component required to determine auspicious times for practicing rituals. Additionally, the Kalacakra Tantra introduced from India in Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhism in late centuries C.E. deals with a lot of astronomical information.

It is not very clear when exactly was astrology introduced in Newar Buddhism. As discussed above, the early Buddhist texts, the Vinaya have regarded astrology as a base art not to be practiced by monks. Despite this, the Mahayana/Vajrayana schools of Buddhism seem to have embraced astrology as an essential constituent. We might link this to the widespread practice of astrology in India throughout history. The Indian Brahmins were the principal authority to any form of knowledge including astrology (Jyotish Vidya). Earlier sources indicate that many Brahmins had adopted Buddhism. As a result, astrology must have made its way tacitly into Buddhism. Moreover, the Mahayana followers disregarded the early Vinaya. A big schism among the early Buddhist schools had occurred due to the dispute regarding the Vinaya rules in the second Buddhist council. So, these prohibitions seem to have little effect on the Mahayana followers. With the introduction of Mantrayana Buddhism, the use of astrology seems to have intensified as it was widely used to determine auspicious times for rituals. Newar Buddhism being the remnants of Vajrayana Buddhism from India must have adopted many of its practices including astrology. This inference is partly made on the basis of a study made by Kotykon astrology in Chinese Buddhism. In Chinese Buddhism also despite the practice of astrology contradicting the earlier monastic regulations, the Chinese practitioners during the Tang period disregarded Vinaya understanding them to be Hinayana in favor of Mahayana considered to be a superior path. (Kotyky, 2017).

MAK (2015) states that in the Sardulakarnavadana and the Mahasamnipata, two of the important early sources of Buddhist astral science, the astral materials therein were attributed to the Chandala King Trisanku and the sage Jyotrasa respectively, both non-Buddhists. The descriptions of the twenty-eight nakshatras and their associated lunar astrology and astral worship, the description of the demon Rahu and the Indian reckoning of seasons and time, naturally find their correspondences in the oldest Indian astral lore as described in the Taittiriyaśamhita and the Atharvaveda. Much of the astrological influence in Buddhism can thus be sourced to their Vedic and Indian origins. However, Indian astrology has itself faced continuous transformation due to interactions with multiple cultures from around the world and at different times in history. Newar Buddhist astrological practices are not much different from the Indian astrological practices but there are certain unique features

like the extensive use of Tantric Dashas, Tantric deities, and Tantric methods of pacification and remedies.

Astrological Practices

Astrology is a common practice in Newar Buddhist Community. Every traditional Newar Buddhist households keep an almanac (Panchanga) for finding auspicious dates of ritual, rites, and festivals. The astrological practices have been ascribed mainly to the Buddhist healers and priests- 'Vajracharya' in the community (Dietrich, 1996). The Vajracharyas provide specialized astrological services to the lay people of this community such as casting a birth chart, making predictions on the basis of Dashas (planetary period) and planetary configurations in an individual's birth chart, suggesting remedies for evil planets, propitiation of astral deities, etc. The Vajracaryas conform to most of the ritual procedures derived from ancient Brahmanical tradition. This is also a similar case for astrology where most of the astrological practices are derived from the Indian Hindu culture. Astrology is also used to fix auspicious dates of various religious practices like:

Vratas

Vratas are examples of an Indian religious practice adopted into later Mahayana Buddhism. The stories recounted in the texts *vratakatha* provides important source materials for understanding Newar Buddhism and the layman's religious ethos characteristic of later Indian Buddhism" (Lewis T. L., 1989, p. 110). The almanac (based on the sidereal system) is used in finding out dates of important vratas that are observed in Newar Buddhism. Some of the popular vratas are:

Dhalan Danegu

This is one of the most popular Buddhist rites observed for worshipping 'Karunamaya' or Amoghpusha Lokeshwara popularly known as Janabahdya in Newar Buddhist community. The vrata can be a long-term or a brief one. A year-long vrata should be initiated on Mukha Ashtami or Poush Shukla Ashtami (i.e. 8th day of bright lunar fortnight of the lunar month of Poush) while short vratas are performed on any Ashtamaitithi (8th day of either of lunar fortnight) of any month. This vrata is usually observed keeping some specific religious goal in mind.

Dharmadhatu Vrata

This vrata is to be conducted on a day when there is conjunction of Sankranti (Sanhu in Newari language) and Full moon. Sankranti is the first day of solar month. It is believed that one who performs this rite awakens in him the desire for final enlightenment.

Basundhara Vrata

Basundhara is goddess of wealth and fertility. This rite is observed on the Bhadra Krishna Trayodashi (13th day of Dark fortnight of month of Bhadra). Since the goddess is linked with prosperity all the ritual accessories are to be golden in color which is also the goddess's favorite color.

Tara Vrata

Tara is regarded as embodiment of Avalokiteshwor's compassion and performing Tara Vrat is believed to save oneself from premature death and recover from seriously illnesses. Tara vrat is most commonly observed during the month of Gunla (a month starting from Shrawan Shukla Pratipada to Bhadra Shukla Pratipada). At other times of the year, this vrata is performed on Shankranti or Ashtami or Thursday or their combinations.

Mahakala Vrata

This vrata is observed on the Krishna Chaturdashi or fourteenth day of dark lunar fortnight. In this vrata, Buddhist deity Mahankal is worshipped. Worshipping the deity is believed to help conquer the enemies of the worshipper. There are large offerings made on full moon, no moon, and eighth lunar days and especially on Saturdays when lord Mahankal is believed to be present in the temple.

Festivals and Religious Activities

Panjara: the festival is conducted on Bhadra Krishna Trayodashi (13th day of Dark Lunar Fortnight on Lunar month of Bhadra). This is the festival in which house holder's makes donations directly to members of sangha. This donation is believed to give the donor birth in Sukhvati heaven.

Stupa Veneration: the ritual is the most important activity that has unified various sects of Buddhist communities from Mahayana, Vajrayana to Theravada practitioners. The veneration is especially done on the full moon and the eighth lunar day.

Religious Pilgrimages: on the three lunar days of each month, Newar Buddhists visit major stupas and the bodhisattva temple. The days are the full moon and the eighth lunar day (Purnima and Astami, respectively). Vajracaryas can be found sitting in adjacent rest houses chanting their Pancharaksa texts (Lewis T. T., 2000)

Mhapuja (Worshipping one's own body): this ritual is performed at the night after the Laxmi Puja (on 1st day of the Bright lunar fortnight in the month of Kartika). The ritual

consists of purifying the body through extensive mandala pujas and an explanation of the five elements (earth, air, fire, water, and space) in one's being is carried out on this day.

Astrology in Life Rituals:

Life rituals are cultural practices done from birth to death. In Newar Buddhist community Vajracharyas (Gurjus) are consulted by the lay people as guides to the rituals. The Vajracharyas calculate auspicious times through an almanac for the rituals to be performed which is very similar to determining 'Muhurta' by Hindu astrologers.

Rice Feeding Ceremony: the newborn baby is fed rice in the 6th or 8th month for the son and the 5th or 7th month for the daughter. The auspicious days are conjunction of any Mondays, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday with the *nakshatras* of Aswini, Rohini, Mrigasira, Punarvasu, Tishya, Three Uttaras, Chitra, Swati, Anuradha, Shrawana, Dhanistha, Shatabhisha, and Revati. The auspicious *lagna* (ascendant) would be those with good planets in cardinal and trinal houses and malefic planets in the 3rd, 6th and 11th houses.

Barechhuigu: this ceremony is performed on boys from Vajracharya and Shakya clan who are initiated for a temporary monkhood in Viharas for up to three days. The Barechhuigu ceremony is conducted for a group of boys, which is started on an auspicious day for the eldest boy calculated on the basis of Hindu *panchanga muhurtas*. This rite is equivalent to the Chudakarma of Hindu boys.

Ihi (Bel Bibaha): the ceremony is a tradition where the young pre-adolescent girls are married to a Bel fruit (wood apple). The Bel fruit has a peculiar quality of remaining fresh forever and healthy and long-lasting. It is due to getting married to the Bel, Newari girls are not considered as widow even after the death of their husbands and they are exempt from the general rules to be followed by widows in other societies. Ihi is to be conducted on odd years of the girl child, like 5, 7, 9, and 11, years of age.

Bahra Tayegu: the ceremony, the girl is married to Sun God after hiding them in a dark room away from sunlight and male contact for 11 days. The first day of the ceremony starts with a usual puja conducted either by the eldest woman of the lineage or the priest. A doll representing the *Bahra Khya*, the cave ghost, is prepared and put in one corner of the room. Auspicious dates are found on the basis of the birth chart of the girl. The time when Jupiter and Venus combustion is inappropriate for any auspicious functions and hence skipped and the auspicious time is calculated on the basis of favorable positions of Sun, Moon, and Jupiter from the Girl's birth sign.

Marriage Ceremony: Marriage proposals are initiated with astrological matchmaking. The marriage compatibility is derived from the traditional Indian astrology system where the bride's and groom's nakshatras are matched and a score below 18 points is rejected. While matching, the *Nadidosha* and *Ganamilan* are specially considered. Other aspects like *mangalik doshas* and *paapgraha doshas* are considered as per Indian astrology. On the day of marriage, the marriage functions are carried out at the auspicious time predetermined by the Gurju or astrologer.

Old Age Ritual Buda Budhi Janko (Bhima-Ratharahana Puja)

The Budha-Budhi Janko ceremony is held when a man or woman turns 77 years, 7 months, and 7 days. The celebration may be held for a couple when either the husband or wife reaches that age. The planetary deities (Navagrahas) are appeased together with the nakshatra deity under which the elder was born. To appease the harm from planets and bring blessings three mandālas are drawn Grahamatrka, Vasundhara, and Usṇiṣavijaya. The Janko is observed on completion of the thousand full moons. A full span of time defined as 1,000 months is near to its close so the propitiation of the moon is done to protect the elders and continuation of happy and still longer life.

Elements of Newar Buddhist Astrology

Nakshatra

Newar Buddhist astrology uses the Vedic system of 28 nakshatras. Nakshatras are the constellations or stars through which the moon transits in the celestial space. There are 27 main nakshatras namely Ashwini, Bharani, Kritika, Rohini, Mrigasira, Aradra, Punarvasu, Tishya, Ashlesha, Magha, PurvaPhalguni, Uttara Phalguni, Hasta, Chitra, Swati, Visakha, Anuradha, Jyestha, Moola, Purvasadha, Uttarasadha, Shrawan, Dhanistha, Shatbhisha, Purvabhadra, Uttara Bhadra and Revati (Trivedi, 2009). Another nakshatra called Abhijit is imagined in between Uttarasadha and Shrawan nakshatras making 28 nakshatras. Newar Buddhist astrology extensively uses the knowledge of nakshatras on determining the auspicious timing of events, in marriage matchmaking, to know the basic characteristics of a person, and calculate Dasha periods.

Rashis and Their Lords

There is a disagreement on whether the twelve signs and twelve houses have been adopted in Indian astrology from Western Hellenistic astrology. This system seemingly entered India in the 4th or 5th century from the West. From then till now this system has been fully incorporated and integrated in the astrological practices in the Indian subcontinent. The

predictions in astrology are made based on the planetary positions in the Rashi and houses in individual birth charts. The twelve *rashis* with their lords are:

S.N.	Rashi	Lord
1	Mesha	Mars
2	Vrishava	Venus
3	Mithuna	Mercury
4	Karkata	Moon
5	Simha	Sun
6	Kanya	Mercury
7	Tula	Venus
8	Vrishchika	Mars
9	Dhanu	Jupiter
10	Makara	Saturn
11	Kumbha	Saturn
12	Meena	Jupiter

Planets: the concept of planets is not well defined in Vedas. They are indicated as demons. Especially the shadow planets Rahu and Ketu are depicted as demons. The seven weekday systems based on planets seemingly have been introduced in Hellenistic astrology which later was adopted in the astrological texts of India. The major system of prediction in Indian astrology is based on various combinations and configurations of planets in various rashis and houses of the birth chart of a person. Seven heavenly bodies namely the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn together with the North and South nodes of Moon or the Rahu and Ketu are the Nine planets or the Navagrahas which are adopted from Indian astrology.

Sadha System

In astrology, Dasha is the term used to denote the major period of planets. In Indian astrology, various systems of Dasha are used. Like Vimshottari Dasha (a dasha system which assumes a complete human life span of 120 years), Tribhagi Dasha, Ashtotari Dasha, Karaka Dasha, Kalachakra Dasha, Yogini Dasha, etc. (Mishra S. C., 2007). However, among these Dasha systems, Newar Buddhist astrology mainly uses the Yogini Dasha system. As per Brihat Parashar Hora Shastra, yogini dasha is created by Shankar. This system believes that yoginis named Mangala, Pingala, Dhanya, Bhramari, Bhadraka, Ulka, Siddha, and Sankata have created Moon, Sun, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Saturn, Venus, and Rahu respectively. This Dasha system is picked up from the Rudrayamala tantra which shows the extent to which the tantras have affected various aspects of Newar Buddhism. The planets become especially effective in their own Dasha and Antardasha (Period and Sub-period) on the basis of various

combinations and configurations called 'Yoga' and Rajyoga in a birth chart. Raj yogas give success *and status* like a king. Some of the Raj yogas are PanchaMaha purusha, GajaKesari, Adhi yoga, Basumati, Bramhanda, Parijat, etc. (Ojha, 2001)

Astrological Remedies

Nava Graha Puja

Worshipping the nine planets is a common practice in the Newar Buddhist community. This is specially done on birthdays. The worship has some rites and rules to follow which is conducted by Vajracharyas or Brahmins. The planets are believed to affect various aspects of life such as relationships, health, business, careers, finance, and marriage. Certain planetary configurations can be malefic and create obstacles in life which are believed to be minimized by doing the Nava Graha Puja

Pancharakshya: the Pancharaksa text is recited on birthdays or on the recommendation of a Buddhist astrologer to mitigate inauspicious influences concerning special occasions like weddings, the beginning of the journey, laying house foundations, old age rituals, and serious illness. Newar astrologers may also offer *dana or donations* to each of the five deities during eclipses or intercalary months. There is an astrological death belief that if someone dies during the moon's transit in last five nakshatras, 'evil stars', four more people will die and so the Pancharaksa text must be read to save those in danger.

The Deities associated are Mahasahasrapramardini (Earth), Mahamayuri (Space), Mahapratishara (Water), Mahashitavati (Wind), Mahamantranusarini (Fire). The puja offerings are used for all ceremonies involving the Pañcaraksa (Lewis, 1989).

Grahamatrika Dharani

The Grahamatrikadharani is a Buddhist text which is closely connected and similar to the Hindu *navagraha puja* described in the Smarta Literature. It is popular in Central Asia in the ninth and tenth centuries and in Tibet and Nepal subsequently points to its northern origin. (Mak, 2018) Despite the Buddhist anti-astrological norms, later Buddhists gradually adopted such knowledge and practice, giving them a Buddhist guise as a form of Buddhist *upaya*. The practice can still be found in the Newar Buddhist community.

Conclusion

The astrological knowledge within the Newar Buddhist community of the Kathmandu Valley finds its roots in Mahayana Buddhist texts such as 'Sardulakarnavadana,' 'Mahasamnipata,' Grahamatrika Dharani, and Kalachakra Tantra. Over the centuries, these texts incorporated astral materials from Indian Hindu astrology. Despite this, certain

later Vajrayana texts like 'Nispannayogavali,' Kriyasangrahanpanjika, Pujavidhi, and Dharmakoshasangraha, some of which are originally Nepali—emerged as significant sources for rites and instructions related to alleviating planetary afflictions. These texts also provide details about the colors, seats, mounts, and other attributes of Navagrahas.

Moreover, many practices observed by Newar Buddhist astrologers have been influenced by Hindu astrology practiced by Nepali Hindus. Consequently, the astrological calculations and methodologies employed in Newar Buddhist astrology closely resemble those of Indian astrology. However, distinctive features such as the worship of Vajrayana deities, the extensive use of tantric Yogini *dashas*, and the incorporation of Vajrayana rituals for remedies and pacification set Newar Buddhist astrology apart.

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