



Cultural Activities of Jagatpal Mahavihar and its Impact on Devotees of Kirtipur

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Abstract

Jagatpal Mahavihar is a traditional Buddhist monastery of Kirtipur, situated at ChilancvoVihar, Kirtipur Municipality, Ward 10. There stands a complex area covered by five main Caityas in the central part of the monastery. The main aim of this study is to explore the cultural activities of the monastery, to assess the previous trend of renovation culture, and to find out the devotees the past renovation about the Caitya. There live 160 male members Vajracharyas among whom I selected fifteen as Ajus in the monastery as data for my study. I have applied the ethnographic method and entertained observation, and open interviews with the concerned members of the Guthi during the course of data collection. Photographies, inscriptions, books, and artifacts have been used for description. I started my research during Nepal earthquake 2015 and completed it in two years. My study revealed the series of events as the renovation acts. During renovation of the Caitya, the Ajus completed the amnesty worship; pulled the pinnacle by using a cow; removed nyasa and kept it in a secret place; installed the soul of the god by Pranpratistha pooja; and during the renovation of the center, devotees kept religious valuable things for merit. While building and renovating the Caitya in past it was revealed that ancestors used crystal, Fudan, images of Buddha, copper plate, gold, and silver and other valuable ornaments. Some archaeological artifacts have also proved that the last renovation had been done during the period of late King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Dev.

Keywords: monastery, cult house, Caitya, meditation, acharya Guthi, nhikan.

Introduction

Jagatpal monastery is the traditional Buddhists' residence where Vajrachryas practice Buddhist cultural activities. The monastery is situated at *Chilancvo Vihar*. The term *Vihar* is derived from the Pali word *Viharati* meaning resting place. In the period of Shakyamuni Buddha, Monks travelled for delivering Buddhas teaching to lay people in

the mid-day and then took rest in the place. The place in that sense *Viharti* word has been used. It became today *Vihar* (Dahal & Khatiwada, 2003, p. 283). Similarly, Jagatpal monastery is also the resting place of Vajracharyas. The monastery is believed to build in 635 NS (1515 AD.) by Jagatpal Verma. His name has been mentioned in the stone inscription of the complex in front of the main *Caitya*. In the monastery, Vajracharyas of Kirtipur gather for the promotion of Buddhism and its culture. They worship Gods and goddesses, recite Mantras, practice yoga and meditation. They are household priests. They use their ritual activities in Jajamans' (clients) houses as per jajaman's necessity. This is one of the Vajracharyas direct cultural activities that impress devotees. The senior Vajracharya teaches Buddhist philosophy and cultural activities to neophyte Vajracharya. The members of the monastery practice Buddhism, observe the culture and participate in every cultural function.

There is a big *Caitya* with four small *Caityas* in the cardinal point. It is the Buddhist heritage site of Kirtipur and a major shrine of the monastery. Its construction is still unknown; there is no evidence found yet. Local Vajracharyas and foreign scholars have the belief that Emperor Ashok had built it (Shrestha, 2000, p. 59). The Last renovation (after the earthquake of 2072, Baishakh (April, 2015 A.D.) of the *Caitya* was completed in 2018. with the support of the Department of Archaeology. According to the rule of the religious method, forgiveness (*kshema*) pooja is completed by the officiating priest. The *nyasa* (Pran or jiva) of the *Caitya* is transferred into a vessel (*Nyasaghata*) by using Mantras. After that the workers can dismantle as the Priest Aju, Puspa Ratna Vajracharya described. Likewise, in Chilancvo, Keshmuni Vajracharya and the other four Vajracharya priests perform forgiveness pooja and transfer the *nyasa* into the *Nyasaghata* (*Kalasha*). It is kept in the monastery until it is completed. First of all, in renovation, the pinnacle, thirteen spares and central pool is safely removed. During the renovation period, some archaeological artifacts were found in the center of the dome which was replaced in dome and recorded. After completing the renovation, Vajracharyas reinstall the *nyasa* in the *Caitya* by *Pranpratistha Pooja* which I observed during my research work.

The study was carried out with a view whether the inhabitants of Kirtipur and the surrounding places be promoted the cultural activities of the monastery. Moreover, the study took a genuine ambition to inform and communicate *Caitya* renovation trend to the devotees. This study helps to a comparative study of the object kept inside the *Caitya* in the past and at present. It provides knowledge about the preservation of archeological objects following religious rituals and how history could be constructed based on the archeological objects. Those artifacts help to study in anthropology, sociology. It generates respect in religion and it makes devotees to inspire to do good deeds.

Methods

I have followed descriptive and analytical methods during my research study. All the Vajracharya male family members are members of the Jagatpal monastery. Nowadays there are around 160 Vihar members. Fifteen senior-most Ajus have been selected from the members as per the rule. All the cultural activities of the monastery have been undertaken under their guidance and supervision. Therefore, for the data collection, these fifteen Ajus have been selected as informants. I interviewed and conversed with them in their residence and Jagatpal monastery using interview guidelines, note books, mobile recorder for the collection of data. I talked with them about the cultural processes of the monastery and religious values in society, and after all transcribed the informants' views for analysis. I personally participated in the process, used the observation form to record their external and internal cultural activities of the monastery daily, monthly and yearly from 2015 to 2017. I engaged myself in the fieldwork during the *Caitya* renovation period. I took photography, made safe inscriptions, and consulted related books, photos and coins as secondary sources. I have described and analyzed the data following qualitative design.

Results and Discussion

The study revealed that there are two images of the secret Gods named Chakrasambara established on the 2nd floor and Akshyabya on the 1st floor, respectively where secret and open two types of pooja are held in the house. These cultural activities are completed by fifteen *Ajus* on a rotation basis, and open cultural activities are performed by all the members. Fifteen *Ajus* are the main cultural figures of the monastery.

In the Southward of the *Caitya*, there is a Vajracharyas' *āgamchhen* (i.e. cult house) named Jagatpal Mahavihar. They practice Buddhist culture in the cult house. It is believed to have been built by Jagatpal in JeshthSukla Saptami (*Astami*) Sunday (Shrestha, 2059, p. 59). Jagatpal Verma was born in Lalitpur at Pimbahal. He married Rupa Laxmi of Kirtipur. Later, he stayed in Kirtipur in his in-law's house with his family. He was killed on the battlefield by the people of *Chapagaun* in N.S. 647 (Shrestha, 2001, p. 8). During his stay in Kirtipur, he did many social and religious work over there. He built Jagatpal monastery and renovated the *Caitya* (Shrestha, 2001). He erected a wooden pillar (*yalansin*) in the center of the main *Caitya* and added a plinth (circumambulation path) in the *Caitya*. It has been written in the inscription of the main stupa. He gave present style as a model of Pimbahal *Caitya*, Patan. There is no name of Jagatpal Verma as *Caitya* builder.

The monastery situated in Kirtipur is popular nowadays in the name of Jagatpal but in one invitation card which was sent from Bhaktapur on the occasion of *Samyak* mentions *Rajgata Lokdharma Sanskarita Padhamha Kastha Giri Gun Vihara* dated N.S 694 (1574

A.D.) (Vajracharya, 2005, p. 117). It proves that Jagatpal Mahavihar was not popular up to then as a monastery builder. The invitation card mentions that the public had the main role to build it. It is said that Jagatpal Verma had a minor role in its construction.

After Jagatpal Verma his descendants Pradhanas are supposed to be residing in Kirtipur, the premises of the palace since his time. They have still been worshipping the secret deity ChakrasambaraVajrabarahi in Agam of the monastery on the next day of their *De pooja* (linage worship day). That secret deity isn't shown to other castes except to Vajracharya members who have taken initiation. This cultural practice is strong evidence of the monastery built by Jagatpal Verma; this is evident by the fact that Pradhans and Shresthas have been practicing Buddhism since then.

Misra, Brahman, Verma, Gupta along with the Hindu castes Shrestha, Pradhans are found to have contributed to Buddhism in the past. They have been involved in Buddhism activities. Even today, in the Vikramsila monastery of Thanhiti, Kathmandu, the Pradhans have been conducting Buddhism activities and Vajracharyas (have been) performing poojaas with pradhans as their family priests. Similarly, the Yampi Vihar, Yashodhara Mahavihar and other many Mahavihars of Lalitpur were built by non-Buddhists, as depicted in the inscriptions of a festooned archway (Vajracharya, 2000, p. 120).

Courtyard of the monastery

The main entrance of the monastery is to the east where two lions made of stone stand on either side of the gateway. On the right side of the main gate, we find idols of Ganesh, and Mahankala and on the left side, the idols of Ram Laxman and Hanuman. The interview with the priest Aju, Puspa RatnaVajracharya, revealed that the idols on the left were established in 1977 by Bhai Maharjan. There is a stone stair that leads to the first tier of the courtyard where two *Falchās* (rest place) stand on either side of the gateway. From there, one can see two more Falchās and five main Stupas in the upper courtyard. The enclosed courtyard has been measured about 70 by 70 meters area. On the first tier, there are idols of *Kwoyanā Ganesh*, *Saraswoti*, *Vajrasattva* and a traditional water tank (*Jahdhun*). On the second tier there is a small Stupa on the stairway. The upper (top) tier of the courtyard is measured about 50 by 50 meters (Shrestha, 2001). There are five main stupas, a big one in the center and four smaller but identical ones in the ordinal directions to the center. There is a Mandala with *Vajra* on the top in front of the main Stupa and a *Civa* on the right side. On the top tier, there are two *Falchās* on either side where Buddhism activities are performed in the morning. One is used for reciting *Namasangiti* and the other is used for playing devotional music (*Bhajan* and *Dāfā*) during *Caturmāsa*. There are many images on the upper courtyard that include idol of Buddha, Dharma, Sangh, Akśbhya, Prajnāpāramitā, Śadākṣari, Padhampani, Vajrapani, Vishowpani, Ratnapani Lokesvara, Mamaki, Locani, Pandura, Arya Tara, Ratnasambhava, Amitav,

Amoghsidhi, Vasundharā, a pair feet of Svayambhu, Maitri Bodhisatva, Asti Dhātu *Caitya* and so on enshrined all around the courtyard. Kirtipur and out of Kirtipur's devotees come to worship deities and also participate in the cultural programme of the monastery. They participate in renovation pooja. But, during the renovation period, it was observed that devotees were prohibited to circumambulate the main Stupa. That indirectly affected the devotees.

Cultural activities

Vajracharya is a household monk and a protector of Buddhism. A Vajracharya delivers Buddhist philosophy to the lay people. He takes care of the Buddhist deities of the monastery. The monastery is used for multi-purposes where Vajracharyas and their families learn Buddhism and practice Buddhist culture. According to the rules and regulations of the monastery, they observe various cultural activities. The cultural practices of Jagatpal monastery are connected with the monastic system of Patan. The Dipankar Buddha and Shakyamuni Buddha of the monasteries are invited at the time of Samyak Parva in Patan which is organized every five years by the Guthi and guest gods and goddesses are kept in a row the list of which is given (Shakya, 1995, pp. 84-85). Similarly, According to *Aju*, *Dyapālā* and *Chatradhari Aajus* (umbrella wearing Ajus) are invited for BahaPooja, *Panchdāna*, *Chatranku* feast in Patan.

"The *Sangh* (i.e committee) of this *Baha* consists of 128 Vajracharyas. Though until the recent time all the members of the *Sangh* served as *dya-pala* (i.e. guards of God) in the shrine of the *kwapa-dya* by turn for one month at a time" (Locke, 1985, p. 178). According to *Aju*, there were 107 Vajracharyas in 2011 B.S (Vajracharya, 2011, p. 34). But now there are around 160 members and the turn goes fifteen days at a time for daily *Nitya Pooja* of *Kwapadyo*. Among the members, fifteen are appointed as *Ājus*. They have come from three different places to stay in the monastery. They are believed to have come from Hiranyavarna Mahavihar, Patan, Vajrayogini, Sankhu and old Guhyasvari, Kathmandu. The selection process is unique compared to other monasteries. In other monasteries, as per rules and regulations ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty *Ajus* are appointed from their senior-most members.

This monastery has Shakyas and Vajracharyas as members; they involve in *Si Guthi* that is used to observe once a year. Vajracharya members, according to the rule of the monastery, observe daily, monthly and yearly rites and rituals on a rotation basis. *De khechayke* (i.e. wash face to the god) is performed by Guthi members (not necessarily to be the *Aju*) to the *Kwapadyo* (Akshyabya) of the monastery every morning. They perform *San-yāygu* (i.e. evening worship to the god), *Majhan-yāygu* (i.e. middle day worship), which are performed daily, three times a day on the 1st floor of the monastery. Similarly, one of the *Ājus* among fifteen performs *Nityapooja* to *Chakrasambara* and *Vajrabarahi*

deities in the morning. On particular days, Dashamipūjā is observed on every 10th day at night in the secret room of the monastery on the 2nd floor. Similarly, *Sanlhu Pa*: pooja is performed on the 1st day of every month in front of the main *Caitya* in the morning along with the fifteen *Ājus*.

The *Vashundhara Vrata* is performed in the month of *BhādraKṛṣṇa Tritiya*. Similarly, *Buddha Jayanti* is performed on the full moon day of *Baishakha*. *Panch Dana* is observed on *Bhadra Krishna Triyodasi*, and *Lukumadyapūjā* is observed on *Panhacarhe* 14th day of Chaitra. *Si Guthi* is celebrated on the 10th day of *Jestha* and *Acharya Guthi* is organized on the 10th day of Chaitra. The *Acharya Guthi* is a kind of mini Buddhist council. Except for these cultural functions, the monastery organizes *Pravajya* rite. In that rite, the neophytes offer *Kisali* (i.e. an earthen pot filled with rice, bettle nut, and money) to *Ājus* to be a Pravajit monk. After acceptance of their request, on the main day, the main *Aju* hands over the yellow dress to the neophyte. The main priest makes him offer Guru mandal. The maternal uncle shaves the top-nut of his head and his aunt receives his hair on a plate. After completing shaving, the five senior-most *Ajus* pour pure water from a vessel on his head. The *Ajus* make monks to male vajracharya family members. They provide neophytes to initiation and Buddhist teaching. At last, the relatives of the neophytes provide them with a full bowl of rice and money. At that time, the neophytes hold an alms bowl and *Khikhirika* (i.e. a kind of ritual tool, armour) with a yellow ritual dress. After four days of initiation rite, they request *Ājus* let them get back to a householder. After completing four days of rites, the next five additional initiations are provided to the neophytes members by the senior *Aju* and make them ligible to become Vajracharya priests. The researcher himself is a member of the monastery who practiced these annual cultural activities, observed, and recorded.

Caitya renovation culture

Caitya word was derived from ChitiyaVastu. It means things of cremation. *Citi* and *ana* suffix make *Caitya* (Vajracharya, 2007, p. 9). It is a memorable place, concealed a monument where precious phenomena exceptional relics have been deposited (Vishnu, 2018, p. 162). *Caitya* establishment practice was very popular in Shakyamuni Buddha's lifetime.

There are many inscriptions related to renovation, the establishment of *Caityas* and images dated of 635 NS., 790 NS., 791 NS., 790 NS and 789 NS. According to available inscriptions, it could be said that the main Stupa had been renovated several times. Before the last renovation that took place in 2018 the main *Caitya* was used to have thirteen circles topped with a pinnacle and a square Chhatra supported independently by four iron poles set around the base of the dome (Shokoohy, 1994).

During the last renovation after the earthquake, some precious artifacts were found. For a proper recording of those artifacts, an agreement was made between representatives of the Archaeology Department and Jagatpala monastery on Saturday, 31st Ashar, 2018 the list of the recovered artifacts is given in the appendix 1.

Among the artifacts, the dated coins of *Shiddhinar Singh Malla*, *Rajendra Laxmi Devi*, *Prithvi Narayan Shah*, were found. The 751 N.S. dated coin of King *Shiddhinar Singh Malla* were found who ruled from 739 N.S. to 772 (1676 B.S. —1698 B.S) in Patan (Tamot, 1132, P. 44). Similarly, the coins dated 1698 B.S., 1700 B.S. of *Rajendra Laxmi Devi*, dated 1796 B.S. of *Prithvi Narayan Shah* and *Tribhuvan Vir Bikram Shah's* copper coins were found. Likewise, *Fukka Dam* (i.e. the smallest denomination of Nepalese coin) Crystals, gold-coated metals, precious stones, rings were found (see appendix 2).

The renovation began from forgiveness amnesty *pooja* on the 1st of Ashar. According to the ritual, the priest summons the *Caitya* god by using mantra and thread and apologies for dismantling. Then the *Nyasa* (soul of the god) is transferred to *Kalash* by the officiating priests. While the *Caitya* is being renovated, the *nyasaghata*, the aforementioned vessel with the divine life, is kept in the pure place. Daily worship is performed until the *Caitya's* reconsecration (Rospatt, 1999, p.127-128). Similarly, the *nyasaghata* is kept in cult house (i.e. *Digi*) and worshipped by the *Ajus*. When the *nyasa* is transferred back to the *Caitya*, the five senior *Ajus* performed *Pranpratistha* (i.e. God's soul back to the *Caitya*) *pooja* in front of the *Caitya*. In the middle when the *Caitya* is completely dismantled, the priest resumed *Pooja*. At that time, devotees kept golden earring, coins, golden rings, and a small image of Buddha made of silver. On the full moon day of Ashoj, the *Caitya* establishment day, the *nyasa* was transferred back to the *Caitya* by performing *Pranpratistha Pooja*.

This study helps to a comparative study of the object kept inside the *Caitya* in the past and at present. It provides knowledge about the preservation of archeological objects following religious rituals and how history could be constructed based on the archeological objects. Those artifacts help to study in anthropology and sociology. It generates respect in religion and it makes devotees inspire to do good deeds.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Jagatpal Mahavihar was named by Jagatpal Verma who built the monastery, not *Caitya*. The Vajracharyas of the area practice Buddhism activities daily, monthly and yearly. Three types of cultural activities are observed by members as per the rules and regulations of the monastery.

The *Caitya's* last renovation was held after the devastating earthquake of 2072. During renovation, many coins and artifacts were found and it is known that the past renovation was completed in the period of late King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah. The *Fukka* coin, go

round coin, copper coin, crystal, gold plate, precious stones, small images of Buddha and silver rings have been found which inform that in the past renovation, valuable objects were deposited into the womb of the *Caitya*. The devotees seem to use gold earrings, gold rings, coins, images of silver and gold *Caitya*, images of Buddha and so on the precious things for merit. These ritual practices make devotees increase regard toward the *Caitya*.

Regarding the *Chilancvo Caitya* and the monastery, these edifices are more respectable for the surrounding clients (i.e. Jajamans). The monastery and *Caitya* cultural activities relate with the direct and indirect impacts on the devotees. The physical *Caitya* is a tangible part of the culture. All the tangible culture arranges on the basis of intangible culture. This study recommends the further researchers to study the intangible part of the monastery and *Caitya* renovation culture. Likewise, physical edifices are not only religious monuments but also archaeological repositories, so one should preserve it.

Many cultural activities have been discontinued due to the passiveness of Guthi members and the paucity of its' resources. The tangible and intangible culture is the identity of Newar. Archaeological artifacts are historical objects which relate to the lifestyle of the past. The cultural heritage should be preserved by the Local Government and Department of Archaeology, Government of Nepal.

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Appendix 1. A

Agreement Minute of Guthi and Archaeological Department

गिरीश्वर हाती तपासिलेला प्रागैतह आगे यस कीर्तिपुर नगरपालिका वड. नं १० चित्तनचोको प्राग् १९७२ साल वैशाख १२ गतेको विनाशकारी भूकम्प वाट क्षतिग्रस्त भएकाले राजगोष्ठी गर्ने उद्देश्य भेटिएको तपासिल अनुसार सामानहक पुरातत्व विभागका प्रतिनिधि, कीर्तिपुर नगरपालिका वडा नं १० को जनप्रतिनिधि, जगतपाल महाविहार संरक्षण संघ (चित्तनचो भगवान गुठी) का प्रतिनिधिहक उपास्यत भई मुकुल्का गरि सम्बन्धित निम्नलिखित १/१ प्रति बुझायौं।

सामानको विवरण

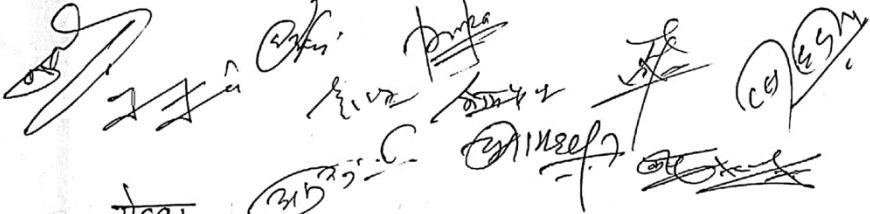
१. चैत्य - ३ वटा भुवन भएको धातु-धान १
२. सुनको पुष्प ग्रीष्म राखिएको वडा - धान १
३. पुष्पको लकडा - धान १
४. धातुको आसन वडा - धान १
५. ७५ धया - धान ६३
६. धातुको पाता - धान १
७. चाँदीको मालाको गोडी - २२ गोडा
८. सुनको पुष्प - १ धान
९. चाँदीको कमलको फुल सहित सुनको चकडा २ वटा - १ धान
१०. सुनको फुक्का दाग - १ धान
११. सुनको सानो पाता - ३ धान
१२. संवत् ७५१ को सिद्धि रासिह मल्लका चाँदीको मुद्रा - १ धान
१३. राजेन्द्र लक्ष्मी देवीको १६३८ को चाँदीको मुद्रा - २ धान



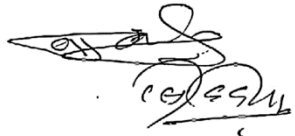



Appendix 1. B

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| १४. राजेन्द्र लक्ष्मी देवीको सम्बत
१७०० को चाँदीको मुद्रा | १ थान |
| १५. पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको सम्बत
१७५६ का चाँदीको मुद्रा | १ थान |
| १६. राजेन्द्र लक्ष्मी देवीको सम्बत
१६५६ को चाँदीको मुद्रा | १ थान |
| १७. मुद्रा (आभिलेख पढ्न नसकेको) | १ थान |
| १८. श्री त्रिभुवन वीर विक्रम शाहदेवको
ताम्रको मुद्रा | १ थान |
| १९. सुनको काणज जस्तो फाला | १२ थान |
| २०. चाँदीको फालाको भाँडल | १३ थान |
| २१. फुस्कादाम (चाँदी) | २६२ थान |
| २२. औंठी (विभिन्न धातुको) | २ थान |
| २३. विभिन्न पत्थरहरू | १६ थान |
| २४. ताम्रो/जन्तर | २ थान |
| २५. क्रिस्टल (शानो/हुलो आकारको) | १३ थान |
| २६. स्फटिक मालाको गैडी | २ थान |
| २७. निलो धाँका भएको क्रिस्टल | १ थान |
| २८. चैत्य धातुको | १ थान |
| २९. कर्चौरा धातुको | १ थान |
| ३०. ताम्रको तुका | १ थान |
| ३१. चाँदीको रिङ्ग सहित विभिन्न सामग्रीहरू | १ थान |


Appendix 1. C



शोहर
 (अ) - कीर्तिपुर न.पा. वडा नं १० का वडा अध्यक्ष श्री अमन महर्जन
 (ब) - से. से. का वडा सदस्य श्री हरिशरण महर्जन
 (ग) - पुरातत्व मन्त्रालयका प्रातिनिधि पुरातत्व आर्क्षिक यमुना महर्जन
 (घ) - से. से. पुरातत्व ज्ञानजीमियर शोभा महर्जन
 (ङ) - जगतपाल महाविहार संरक्षण संघ (स्विकृत भगवान गुडी) का आज
 ६६

१. बाबुकाजी वज्रान्चार्य	अध्यक्ष	
२. सिद्धिचरण वज्रान्चार्य		
३. व्यवस्थापक समितिको तर्फबाट		
१. वज्रभुनि वज्रान्चार्य	अध्यक्ष	
२. पुष्प रत्न वज्रान्चार्य	उपाध्यक्ष	
३. केशरत्न वज्रान्चार्य	साचिव	
४. संघ रत्न वज्रान्चार्य	कोषाध्यक्ष	
५. ओमप्रकाश शास्त्र	सदस्य	

काग ताम्रली


 कीर्तिपुर न.पा. वडा नं १० का वडा साचिव सृजना महर्जन

इति सम्बत २०७४ साल असार महिना ३१ गते रोज ७ शुक्रबार

Appendix 2 A

Archaeological artifacts found during renovation of the *Caitya*.



Appendix 2B



Appendix 2C



Appendix 2D



Appendix 3

Ashok Stupa of Lagankhel, Lalitpur (source: Google)



Appendix 4

Chilancho Stupa in Kirtipur. (source: Google)

