

The Origin and Development of the *Kālacakra* Tradition in Nepal – by Surya Deep Prasad Shrestha

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Abstract

The Kālacakra tantra and its tradition is a philosophical esoteric Buddhist practice which has its roots in Nepal. This practice has developed and thrived over the centuries. This study dives into the origin and development of the profound Buddhist Tāntrik text, with a particular focus on the contributions of Nepal and in during its formative period. Drawing from various sources, it tries to trace its historical context and transmission of the Kālacakra Tantra. It highlights the significant role played by Nepalese scholars in translating, disseminating and transmitting this esoteric values. The primary sources of this study are Saṃskṛit text such as Vimalaprabhātika and Sekoddeśaṭīkā by are used. The translation a Tibetan text deb ther sngon po by Gö Lotsawa, Blue Annals is also used as the primary source for this study.

Keywords: Kālacakra tradition, Nepal Mandala, Nepalese manuscripts, Vajrayāna

Introduction

Kālacakra Tantra has been practiced for generations. This is a Buddhist ritual connected to higher *Tāntrik* Buddhism. A particularly rich textual source for study is the tantra and the literature that accompanies it. The literature from this school, which has contributed significantly to Tibetan Buddhism to this point, is known as *Tāntrik*. The *Kālacakra Tantra* and its commentary also contain social and doctrinal notions, and the pertinent *Tāntrik* practices are typical of northern Buddhism in its late phases of development. Studies on how early Buddhist concepts were perceived, expanded upon, and used also take us to Buddhism from the first half of the eleventh century. The Indian *Tāntrik* Buddhist scholarship has left a significant legacy that has helped the tantra itself. It follows naturally that it is one of the *Tāntrik* traditions that is more intricate and complex. However, its proponents had a difficult time spreading it throughout Buddhism and proving its authenticity. It was definitely a success in the end, based on how it was perceived in Tibet.

Kālacakra is a *Saṃskṛit* term which literally translates as “Wheel of Time”¹. Although *Kālacakra Tantra* belongs to one category Buddhism, *Vajrayāna* or *Tāntrik* Buddhist practice, it is still considered to be one of the most important practices within Buddhism. Besides the Gelugpa school, other schools of Tibetan Buddhism categorize it as Unexcelled Yoga *Tantra* (*annutara yoga tantra*). The Gelugpa tradition lists it under Mother *Tantra*². *Kālacakra Tantra* is often referred to as a clear tantra as opposed to other mainstream practices of Unexcelled Yoga Tantra. The unique part of this tantra is that it is written in a clear language, unlike other tantra-s which require an elaborate scheme to decode the many levels of meanings hidden behind their short and poetic style (Badal, 2021).

While studying *Kālacakra Tantra*, enigmatic points of the text are clarified from within, whereas other systems are known to be obscure³. The *Kālacakra* tradition started with the larger version of the original tantra called *Paramādhi Buddha*⁴, which was originally taught by Śākyamuni Buddha himself to Sucandra, the king of Śambhala, and an emanation of Vajrapāṇi in Dhāyanakaṭaka Stūpa. The extant version of *Kālacakra Tantra* is an abridged version of this larger version. The recipients were not ordinary people; they were already yogins. Buddha Śākyamuni also had travelled to the Dhāyanakaṭaka Stūpa by yogic powers and had taken the form of *Kālacakra* to give these teachings. The principal recipient was Sūcandra, the illustrious Dharma kings or the spiritual chieftains of Śambhala, and additional representative from six other kingdoms are also said to have been present⁵. As soon as Sucandra received the teachings, he had taken the teachings from Dhāyanakaṭaka to Śambhala. Śambhala had preserved and cultivated *Kālacakra Tantra* for many generations over centuries before it resurfaced in India. From Sucandra himself, the lineage had passed down through seven great masters and twenty-one Kalkin masters starting from Mañjuyāśa.⁶

Statement of problem

- What is the origin and development of the *Kālacakra Tantra*?

¹ Phanindra Prasad Pandey, *बृहत् संस्कृत नेपाली शब्दकोश*, Kathmandu: Bidyarthi Publication, 2073, p. 336

² Glenn H. Mullin, *The practice of Kālacakra*, New York: Snow lion publications, 1991, p., p. 69.

³ Alexander Berzin, *Introduction to the Kalacakra Initiation*, New York: Snow Lion Publication, 2010, p. 41-42.

⁴ Vesna Wallace, *The Inner Kalacakra Tantra*, New York: Oxford university press, 2001. p. 4.

⁵ H. Mullin, op. cit. (f.n.2), p.129.

⁶ Ibid, p. 127-129.

- How *Kālacakra tantra* and possible cult could be connected in Nepalese context?
- Can the historical evidences and scripture could fill the gap?
- Who are the notable scholars from Nepal, that plays vital role on the early years of this practice?
- How the Nepalese artisan help to uplift this practice?

Objective

- This study examines the formation and history of *Kālacakra Tantra*, a philosophical work belonging to Buddhist *Tāntrik* literature.
- It offers information about the areas of study and continuing influence of scholars from Nepal, who have played a significant role in the preservation, translation, and spreading of this esoteric legacy made by Nepalese scholars in its early years.

Methods

- This study is based on historical design.
- This study examines the historical context, philosophical foundations, and transmission of Kālacakra Tantra using both primary and secondary sources.
- The primary sources of this study are Saṃskṛit text such as *Vimalaprabhātika* and *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* by are used. The translation a Tibetan text *deb ther sngon po* by *Gö Lotsawa*, Blue Annals is also used as the primary source for this study.
- The secondary sources were gathered through published books, articles, magazines, among other things.

Discussion

The Development of Kālacakra

Kālacakra Tantra and its early history derives from ancient India, according to its own tradition. When dealing with the origins of Vajrayāna, *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* provides a summary of the legends that describe the origins of this doctrine. A verse in the introductory chapter of *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* reveals that the teachings of Mantranaya was previously given by Dīpaṃkara Buddha, and Gautama Buddha again gave those teachings. Sucandra himself requested the Buddha for the

teachings. Sucandra also questions the Buddha in the text.⁷ Early scholars and masters such as Naropāda or the author of *Vimalaprabhā* have associated Dhāyanakaṭaka with the origination of the Vajrayāna. Another verse of *Sekoddeśatīka* from the introduction refers to *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Mantranaya*, and states that the teachings of *Prajñāpāramitā* were given in Gṛdhraḥkūṭa hill and the teachings of *Mantranaya* were given in Dhāyanakaṭaka,⁸ which now is in Amarāvati of Guntur district, South India⁹. It is not very surprising that *Kālacakra Tantra*, the ultimate synthesis of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism, was associated with a place of such renown. The region around this site also helped to flourish other Buddhist practices. Dhāyanakaṭaka, later known as Amarāvati, has existed since the time of the Sātavāhana dynasty. The dynasty existed from a few decades BCE to the third century CE in the present day Andhra Pradesh.¹⁰

The teachings of *Kālacakra* were explicated by Gautama Buddha to Sucandra. A verse of *Sekoddeśatīkā* has clarified the identity and position of Sucandra in *Kālacakra Tantra*.¹¹ The *Nirmāṅkāya* emanation of Vajrapāṇi¹², and King of Śambhala, Sucandra requested the teachings of *Kālacakra Tantra* and surrounded by various bodhisattva, deities and nāgas went to receive them from the Buddha. Sucandra also questions the Buddha on many things. *Vimalaprabhā* has thrown light on the origin of *Kālacakra Tantra*. Verses in the text state that the *Paramādhi Buddha*, who is in the form of Śrī *Kālacakra* himself, gives instructions requested by Sucandra while being seated in the maṇḍala on the Vajra lion throne surrounded by mystical beings. He is believed to have taught twelve thousand verses.¹³ Traditions also explain that on the fifteenth day of the third month after the Buddha's enlightenment, the Tathāgata gave the perfection of wisdom sūtra in one hundred thousand stanzas in a plain attire of a monk and simultaneously he also appeared at Dhāyanakaṭaka as *Kālacakra* giving the teachings of *Kālachakara Tantra*.¹⁴ *Vimalaprabhā*

⁷ Francesco Sferia & Stefania Mezagora, *The Sekoddeśatīkā by Naropa (Paramārthasanghara)*, Roma: Istituto Italiano Per L' Africa E L' Oriente, 2006, p. 63 to 64 (Verse 9)

⁸ Ibid, p.66. (Verse 1-4)

⁹ Gorge Roerich, *Blue Annals*, Calcutta: Motilal Banarsidass, 1949, p.754

¹⁰ Urban Hammer, *Studies in the Kalacakra Tantra*, Stockholm: Department of Ethnology, History of Religion & Gender studies, 2005, p. 17

¹¹ Sferia & Mezagora, op. cit (f.n.7), p. 63-64. (Verse 10-12)

¹² Benoytosh Bhattacharya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography Mainly Based on The Sadhanmala and Cognate Tantric Texts of Rituals, Second edition*, Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958, p. 53

¹³ Sri Manjusriyasa, (Edit. Jagannath Upadhyaya), *Vimalaprabhātīka of Kalkisripundarika on Srilaghukalacakra tantraraja*, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1986, p.12. (Verse.7)

¹⁴ Jeffery Hopkins, *The Kālacakra Tantra Rite of Initiation*, London: Wisdom Publication, 1985 p. 59

explains that after the transmission, Sucandra immediately took the teachings to Śambhala. Thereafter the tantra was expounded and compiled in an extended form. It was said to contain sixty thousand stanzas and their commentary where he is said to have revealed and clarified the meanings of all the vehicles.¹⁵ The eighth king of Śambhala, Mañjusrīkīrti initiated many people into the *Kālacakra* Maṇḍala, (about thirty-five million in number) for which he and subsequent kings, were called ‘Kulika’ (one who bears the lineage).

Based on the long root tantra, Kulika Mañjusrīkīrti composed a shorter tantra of five chapters which was named as the condensed *Kālacakra Tantra* (Skt. *Laghutantra* Tib. *bsDus rGyud*). Currently, this is the one that is commonly known as *Kālacakra Tantra*. The extended version is still extinct. *Laghu Tantra* has 1047 stanzas. Puṇḍarika, the successor of Kulika Mañjusrīkīrti, composed the most famous and currently used interpretation of the tantra, which is called “The Great commentary in *Kālacakra Tantra*”, the Stainless light or in Saṃskṛt *Vimalaprabhā* and ‘*Grel Chen Dri Med Od*’ in Tibetan.¹⁶ Puṇḍarika, the writer of *Vimalaprabhā* wrote a twelve-thousand-line text on the Abridged *Tantra*, based on the main tantra, that clarified the sacred words.¹⁷ Eight hundred years after Kulika Puṇḍarika, around 624 CE, an invasion weakened the kingdom, but the Kulika lineage carried on as it is recorded that the famous Indian scholar Cilupa (Tib. Tsi-lu-pa) travelled to Śambhala from Orissa. He then became the first known expert on *Kālacakra Tantra* and the great commentary of Kulika Puṇḍarika from outside Śambhala. His return to India is believed to have been around 966 CE.¹⁸ Historians point to 966/7CE as the common date when *Kālacakra Tantra* became widely known in India. Later, he contributed a lot to establish and spread the tradition in India with the patronage of king Mahipāla from present day Bengal.¹⁹ Cilupa’s contribution helped in the development of *Kālacakra Tantra* in India which inspired numerous compositions on different bodies of tantra. Cilupa is also known as *Kālacakrapāda* the elder²⁰. He defeated Naropāda (tib. Na-ro-pa) in a debate. After that, he (Naropāda) got an

¹⁵ Manjusriyasa, op. cit. (f.n.13), p.3. (Verse. 25,26)

¹⁶ Hemlut Hoffman (Trans. Edward Fitzgerald), *The religions of Tibet*, Connecticut: Green Wood Press Publication, 1961, p.125-126.

¹⁷ Manjusriyasa, op. cit (f.n.13), p.3(verse 27)

¹⁸ Roerich, op, cit (f.n.9), p.753-755.

¹⁹ Hopkins, op. cit (f.n.14), p.63

²⁰ Hoffman, op. cit (f.n.16), p.27-28

opportunity to study under that pioneering master, which helped him become the most eminent interpreter of the teachings.

The entire *Kālacakra* tradition seems to have been derived from these two great masters in India and Tibet²¹ Naropāda, a notable scholar instrumental in establishing the tradition also wrote the famous commentary *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*. He had many disciples who propagated this tradition. Newari Paṇḍita Samantaśri, Kashmiri Paṇḍita Somnātha, Vāgīśvarakīrti (Tib. Pham-mthing-pa) and his brothers, Dharmamati, Bodhibhadra and Kālacakra of the Kathmandu Valley²² were notable scholars developed by Naropāda for *Kālacakra* studies. There were many other scholars trained by him in different aspects of Buddhism. Till then, the practice of *Kālacakra Tantra* was not very popular in India. However, there were notable scholars in Nepal and Kashmir who were responsible to carry this tradition to Tibet. The first translation of *Kālacakra Tantra* was carried out by Bhadra Bodhi's disciple Gyi-jo who later taught *Kālacakra Tantra* in Tibet (Bhadra Bodhi was a disciple of Cilupa).

He translated the condensed essence of the shorter tantra (Skt. *laghutantra*) and two exegetical works. He passed on the tradition to four disciples, but they couldn't continue and pass on the teachings to others.²³ Later on, the development of *Kālacakra Tantra* in Tibet started with the schools of 'Bro and Rwa. Both of these schools were established with the help of Naropāda's disciples Somanātha and Samantaśri. These two teachers became very popular and important masters after Naropāda. Sixty years after Cilupa's return, the *Kālacakra* tradition was carried back to India from Śambhala. Most of the scholars i.e. Urban Hammer²⁴, Helmut Hoffman²⁵, John Newman²⁶ and Roerich²⁷ mention the year as 966/7 CE. The year the teachings were taken to Tibet was about 1026/7 CE. The 'Bro School was the first to begin the traditions and started the journey. The Kashmiri Paṇḍita, Somanātha, the disciple of Nādapāda travelled to Tibet and reached a place named gNyos. Under patronage of the local ruler Ye-Shes mChog, he initiated the translation of

²¹ Ibid, p.128.

²² Roerich, op. cit (f. n. 9), p.375-381

²³ Hoffman, op. cit (f.n.16), p.129-130.

²⁴ Hammer, op. cit. (f.n.10), p. 27-28.

²⁵ Hoffman, op. cit. (f.n.16), p. 126

²⁶ Jhon Newman, "Epoch of the Kalachakra tantra", *Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol 41, Netherlands: Khnver Academic Publishers, 1998 p. 342-343

²⁷ Roerich, op. cit. (f.n.9), p. 754

Vimalaprabhā.²⁸ The ruler actually had promised the paṇḍita a donation one hundred golden Srang²⁹. The paṇḍita stopped the translation work as the ruler couldn't live up to his promise. More than half of commentary still remained to be translated at that time. The offerings made by disciples or pupils to the teachers in the form of gold held extreme significance during that time and became assurances to the teachers that the disciples admired and were enthusiastic to practice the teachings.

A huge amount of gold was offered to the masters specially by Tibetans travelling to Nepal and India to receive the teachings, translations and transmissions.³⁰ The Blue Annals mentions various occasions where gold was offered to masters.³¹ The donations which were received by the teachers, were only used for building shrines and for other religious purposes. The wealth couldn't be used for their own luxury. After that incident, Paṇḍita Somanātha travelled to the northern region of Lha-sā to a place named 'Phan-yul. There, he met 'Bro-lo-tsa-ba, who later became the disciple of Somanātha. 'Bro-lo-tsa-ba requested his teacher to complete the translation, after which translation

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The second tradition was the school of the translator Rwa lo-tsa-ba and had its own importance. He travelled to central Nepal and Kathmandu searching for exposition of the highest teachings. In Kathmandu, he met Paṇḍita Samantaśrī and requested the explanation and the empowerment of *Kālacakra Tantra* together with its instruction. Samantaśrī provided him with everything he requested. Rwa lo-tsa-ba spent five years, five months and five days in Kathmandu to obtain everything he wanted.³⁴ Later, he invited his teacher to Tibet. There, the tantra with its great commentary together with the branches were expounded by Samantaśrī. His translation and system of practice was held with great veneration by everyone. Samantaśrī returned from Tibet after

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²⁸ Ibid, p.758-760

²⁹ Srang was a monetary unit in Tibet at that time.

³⁰ Hammer, op. cit. (f.n.10), p.29

³¹ Roerich, op. cit. (f.n.9), p. 378

³² Hammer, op. cit. (f.n.10), p. 29

³³ Hoffman, op. cit. (f.n.16), p. 129

³⁴ Hammer, op. cit. (f.n.10), p. 46

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accomplishing all that. Rwa lo-tsa-ba was very pleased with his teacher's efforts and compassion, and to express his gratefulness, he offered him three hundred gold Srang as a farewell gift. He also accompanied him up to the border of Nepal. That was the largest amount of gold Srang offering mentioned in the text.³⁵

The Rwa school was of major significance as its tradition formed the basis for the study of *Kālacakra Tantra* in important sects such as *Sa-sKya-pa* and *Jo-Nang-pa* (the famous historian Tāranātha belonged to this sect). *Sa-skyā Pandita* (1182-1251) and *Chos rGyal 'Phags Pa* (1235-80), played vital roles in the Mongolian period of Tibetan history.³⁶ These two tradition, 'Bro and Rwa, are said to be the most important lineages of transmission in the early spread of *Kālacakra Tantra* in Tibet. They seemed to have flourished and expanded well from that time onwards. Later, Bu sTon Rin chen grub prepared some intensive writings on *Kālacakra Tantra*. His works were dedicated exclusively to these expositions, extending from an annotated version of the tantra to various texts and topics ranging from the six branched yoga to astrology to initiation and so forth. Bu-dön's disciple Chö Kyi dPal conferred the *Kālacakra* tradition on Tsongkhapa (1355-1419)³⁷, the founder of the Gelukpa order of Tibetan Buddhism. The Gelukpa order preserved this tradition within their practices. Later, there were various works produced by many Tibetan scholars up to the nineteenth century. The tradition remained strong within the Gelukpa school as opposed to the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. When it was popular, it often flourished with popular intensity outshining others among the three highest yoga tantras.

Contribution of Nepalese Scholars to Kālacakra Tantra

Nepal is a spiritual haven which used to be home and prime center for Buddhist study and practice. The Kathmandu Valley or the ancient Nepal Maṇḍala developed esoteric *Vajrayāna* and *Mahāyāna* practices while coexisting with Hindu practices. The Nepal Maṇḍala basically took Buddhist practices to the next level and created something beautiful and unique that is now known as *Newāri* Buddhism. There were many scholars, teachers and practitioners who originated in this spiritual land. As esoteric practice was becoming popular in India, the practice was also transmitted to Nepal. In this way esoteric *Tāntrik* practices found its root in the Nepal Maṇḍala. Nepal Mandala, renowned for its rich cultural and religious heritage, played a pivotal role in the

³⁵ Ibid, p. 46

³⁶ Hoffman, op. cit. (f.n.16), p. 129

³⁷ Hopkins, op. cit. (f.n.14), p. 62

dissemination, preservation, and development of the Kālacakra teachings. Nepalese scholars made significant contributions to the tradition, enriching it with their intellectual insights, institutional developments, and manuscript contributions.

As the practice started to grow, the fame of Nepalese scholars also started to grow. Nepalese Scholars such Leelā Vajra (741 CE) are very notable for pioneering the establishment of the practice of Buddhism. Nepal Maṇḍala³⁸, its Vihara's, Baha's, Bahi's and its people have served as training grounds and as the intersection between India and Tibet. Indian scholars used to acclimatize themselves in the Himalayan region of Nepal before going on to Tibet. There were many examples of Indian scholars who lived in the Nepal Maṇḍala for a while and expanded their knowledge in this spiritual land, for instances Padmasambhava, who lived in Pharping for six years and Dipamkara Śhrī Jñāna who lived in modern day Thamel. Tibetan scholar Marpha, was initiated in Ratnākara Mahāvihara of Gā Bahāl, Patan. There is long list of scholars who found their paths to Nepal³⁹. Many Tibetan scholars came to study and learn *Samskṛt* with Nepali scholars. As Nepal was a major contributor to the flourishing of esoteric practices, Kālacakra Tantra also reached the Nepal Maṇḍala. There were experienced masters who spread the tantra not only in Nepal but in Tibet too.

There are the two major schools of *Kālacakra Tantra*, the 'Bro school established by 'Bro Lo-Tsa-Ba with transmission of *Kaśmīrī Paṇḍita* Somanātha and the Rwa school established by Rwa Lo-Tsa-Ba with the transmission of Newari *Paṇḍita* Samantaśri from Patan (Tib. Ye-rang)⁴⁰. One has to study the background of Rwa Lo-Tsa-Ba Chos-Rab in order to understand his contributions. He lived in the second half of eleventh century, and was nephew to Rwa Lo-Tsa-Ba rDo-rJe Grags, who was a very famous and wealthy figure of that era. According to Blue Annals, rDo-rJe Grags had mostly studied in Nepal. He had got to study under the Nepalese scholar Mahākaruṇā who was also a disciple of Naropāda (Tib. Nā-ro-pa). He was a specialist in the *Tāntrik* cycle of *Yamāntaka* and introduced the *Yamāntaka Tāntrik* cycle in Tibet.⁴¹ He got an opportunity to attend the council (Chos-'khor) organized by king rTse-lDe in 1076. After this, he had gone directly to

³⁸Acharya Mahayogi Sridhar Rana Rinpoche, "The Four Pillars of the Vajrayana of Kathmandu Valley", *Crazy Cloud, Vol 1*, 2011, p. 56

³⁹Khadka man Shrestha, "Buddhist light, Buddhism and Sino- Nepal Cultural Linkage", *Ancient Nepal No: 173*, May, 2010, p. 8-9

⁴⁰Roerich, op. cit. (f.n.9), p. 789

⁴¹Ibid, p.374-375

Nepal and India to receive the teachings.⁴² According to Urban Hammer, based on the timings, there is a possibility that Chos-Rab had gone to Nepal with his uncle, and was separated from his uncle and had gone to see Samantaśri. Later on he invited his teacher to Tibet. Chos-Rab travelled to Nepal in about 1076 CE and Samantaśri arrived in Tibet in about 1082 CE⁴³ Although rDo-rje Grags was in Nepal and learnt from the disciple of Naropāda, it is not mentioned that he studied or preached *Kālacakra Tantra*.⁴⁴ Therefore, this points out that Chos-Rab is the one who learnt a lot from his own school which led him to find the teachings of *Kālacakra Tantra*. Urban Hammer concludes that the Rwa Lo-Tsa-Ba Chos-Rab came to Nepal between 1080 to 1090 C.E.⁴⁵

The Blue Annals mentions the master as Samantaśri of Ye-Rang in Nepal⁴⁶. He probably lived in late eleventh century and the first part of twelfth century, he could have been a learned scholar of the Kathmandu valley. He was at Nālanda and Vikramśīla to learn about *Kālacakra Tantra*.⁴⁷ Before the establishment of the Rwa school in Tibet, the *Kālacakra* tradition had already been established and was spreading in Nepal due to scholars such as Samantaśri, Mahākaruṇā, Pham-mThing-Pa and his brother Dus-'Khor-Ba, (Skt. *Kālacakra* - the name itself denotes that he had studied *Kālacakra*), Byang-Chub bZang-Po (Bodhibhadra), who could have been the same Bhadrabodhi who was working with Gyi-Jo and was also a teacher of Atiśa,⁴⁸ and their elder brother Dharmamati. All of them had studied directly under Naropāda. The *Kālacakra* tradition seems to have been passed down many generations.

The *Kālacakra* tradition used to thrive in Kathmandu valley. The manuscripts in the *Nepal Bhasa* and *Devnāgari*, originating from the Kathmandu Valley are living evidences of this fact. The dates are not mentioned in most of these manuscripts, therefore, *Saṃskṛit* text are a milestone in the study of *Kālacakra Tantra*. In modern days, scholars have developed a particular interest in this highest level teaching. Though the Tibetan versions are well preserved, the *Saṃskṛit* text have been very rare. The manuscript tradition in Nepal has also played a vital role in preserving and propagating the *Kālacakra* teachings.

⁴² Ibid, p.70-71

⁴³ Hammer, op cit. (f.n.10), p. 45.

⁴⁴ Roerich, op. cit. (f.n.9), p. 375

⁴⁵ Hammer, op. cit. (f.n.10), p.45

⁴⁶ Roerich, op. cit. (f.n.9), p.789

⁴⁷ Hammer, op. cit. (f.n.10), p. 45

⁴⁸ Roerich, op. cit. (f.n.9), p. 381-384

Numerous palm-leaf manuscripts and paper manuscripts have been discovered in Nepal, containing valuable commentaries, treatises, and ritual manuals related to the *Kālacakra* tradition. These manuscripts provide valuable insights into the specific interpretations and practices developed by Nepalese scholars within the *Kālacakra* tradition. Their meticulous preservation and diligent study have contributed to the deepening of our knowledge and appreciation of the tradition. Late Giuseppe Tucci, who was a well-known Buddhist scholar, visited Nepal at end of 1920s and in the early 1930s, studied various *Samskṛt* manuscripts in The Royal Library of Kathmandu.

He remembering his first expedition to Nepal he says:

*“I have been to Nepal on occasions. I buried myself in the libraries and awoke from the dusty sleep amongst ancient manuscripts most relevant to the history of Indian thought, and particularly Buddhism.”*⁴⁹

In this way, Tucci copied many manuscripts, and managed to borrow some palm leaf manuscripts in 1931. His student, another scholar Mario E. Carelli confirmed that Tucci had borrowed a text named *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*. The importance of this particular Nepalese text, can be seen in his own words:

*“Many of his (Naropāda) works have been rendered into Tibetan by his pupil Marpa, and are found in the bsTan aGyur. The only book from his pen still preserved in Samskṛt being Sekoddeśaṭīkā, a treatise concerned with the Tāntrik initiation and its rituals according to the Kālacakra and Vimalaprabhā systems. This text was discovered by me in Nepal, and is being edited and translated by my pupil, Dr. M Carelli (1935:677)”*⁵⁰

This manuscript was written in old Newari characters on ninety-seven leaves. It was written in Nepal Samvat 514, which corresponds to 1394 CE.⁵¹ Francesco Sferra, editor of The *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*'s *Samskṛt* text's critical edition, published in Serie Orientale Roma, tried to locate the manuscript in 2002 but the unfortunately it had already been lost. Then, Sferra acquired another manuscript from Nepal and another at Oxford. The Nepalese manuscript has been kept in the

⁴⁹ Sferia & Mezagora, op. cit. (f.n.7), p.14

⁵⁰ Sferia & Mezagora, op. cit. (f.n.7), p. 15

⁵¹ Ibid, p.16

National Archives of Kathmandu MS 5-116. This manuscript is written in Newari script and is from around Nepal Samvat 800 (1680 CE).⁵² This helped in the reconstruction of a landmark text, the *Sekoddesāṭīkā* by Naropāda, which published in 2006.

Another very important book was published by the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, in 1986 CE called *Vimalaprabhā* of Kalki Śrī Puṇḍrika on *Śrī Laghukālacakratantrarāja* by Śrī Mañjusrīyaśa. Later, it was critically edited and annotated with notes by Jagannatha Upadhyaya. For the *Samskṛt* edition, a total of six manuscripts were used, five of which were from Nepal. The first manuscript was from a private collection of Pandit Divya Vajra Vajracharya. The entire *Ṭīkā* (up to the fourth *Paṭala*) was reconstructed from this manuscript.

This manuscript is very special because the original verses are followed by a commentary from the very beginning. Meanwhile other manuscripts used in this book didn't have verses but only commentaries.⁵³ The second manuscript was preserved with Pandit Asha Kaji Vajracharya of Patan. The microfilm reel (No. E 618/5, Running no. E. 13746) of this text is preserved in the National Archives, Kathmandu. This manuscript is in Newari-compounded *Devanāgarī* script.⁵⁴ The third manuscript is a palm leaf manuscript, in the National Archives, the microfilmed copy (Reel no. A 48/1, C. no. 5-240, Vol. 9) is from 262 leaves. It is incomplete because it only has pages 58 to 364, but it carries more commentary than the first and second manuscripts. This is also written in Newari script.⁵⁵ The fourth manuscript is also a palm leaf manuscript in the possession of the National Archives, Kathmandu, The microfilmed (Reel no. B.31/16, C. No. 5-238, V. No. 68) copy has 157 folios, but it is also not complete. It is also written in Newari script. The fifth and final manuscript is also at the National Archives, Kathmandu. This manuscript (C. No. 5-241, V. No. 15) is also an incomplete manuscript with 153 folios, written in *Devanāgarī*.⁵⁶

The next very important Buddhist text related to the *Kālacakra* Maṇḍala is the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* of Mahāpaṇḍita Avayākaragupta. It was edited by Benoytosh Bhattacharyya and had been published in 1949 by Oriental Institute, Baroda in Gaekwads Oriental Series Vol: CIX. This book used three Newari manuscripts, two of them were written in Newari characters from the last century and one of them is dated to Nepal Samvat 995 (1875 CE).

⁵² Ibid, p. 17

⁵³ Manjusriyasa, op. cit. (f.n.13), p. xxix

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. xxix

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. xxx

⁵⁶ Manjusriyasa, op. cit. (f.n.13), p. xxx

Nepal has proved to be a very important source for *Saṃskṛt* texts related to *Kālacakra* that were thought to be extinct in India. But the question arises whether we were only preserving the texts or preserving the practice as well. As there are early texts dating from 1394 CE, it was probably not just the texts that were passed down, but there must have been practices that were passed down too. In the present context, neither are there qualified *Tāntrik* Newar Buddhists part of an uninterrupted lineage to give the teachings nor are there any kind of initiations being given related to *Kālacakra*.

The artistic expressions related with the *Kālacakra* tradition in Nepal include a various range of methods, including sculptures, paintings and mandalas. These artistic creations help to visually illustrate the philosophical teachings, symbolism, and cosmology of the *Kālacakra* tradition. Some notable artistic expressions related with the Kālacakra tradition in Nepal include:

Kālacakra Paubha/Thangkas: Paubha are traditional Buddhist paintings on fabric that depict various aspects of the Kālacakra tradition. The Paubha paintings are traditionally produced in Nepal which is often exported to Tibet, India, China and other places from Nepal. These intricate paintings often portray the *Kālacakra* mandala, deities, and important events from the *Kālacakra* text. They are used as visual aids for meditation and as objects of veneration during rituals and ceremonies. In traditional Thangka Paintings There are two types of subjects which are related to this tradition which are as follow:

Kālacakra Mandalas: Sophisticated and precisely crafted mandalas depicting the *Kālacakra* cosmology and the sophisticated chemistry of deities, elements, and energy. These mandalas often feature complex geometric arrangements, symbolic representations of deities, and intricate color schemes.

Kālacakra Deity: The *Kālacakra* deity is painted according to the its primary text which has accurate colors, attributes, gestures, posture in a precise way which is also used for visualization in practice.

As artisan of Nepal are also world renown for Sculptures created in various unique mediums. Sculptures of *Kālacakra* deities and other related figures are made in numerous materials such as bronze, wood, and stone. These sculptures portray the deities in their iconic forms, often with several faces, arms, and elaborate ornamentation. Which is crafted with great attention to detail, capturing the spiritual core and representation of the *Kālacakra* tradition. As well as numerous ritual objects are made for the performance of *Kālacakra* ceremonies. These

objects include ritual implements such as vajras (thunderbolts), bells, and ritual knives, which are crafted with intricate designs and symbolism.

These artistic expressions associated with the *Kālacakra* tradition in Nepal reflect the deep spiritual and aesthetic significance of the tradition. They serve not only as visual representations but also as tools for meditation, contemplation, and the embodiment of the profound teachings contained within the *Kālacakra* tradition.

Conclusion

The esoteric practice of *Kālacakra Tantra* was taught by Buddha himself according to its own tradition. Cilupa brought back this tradition to India from Śambhala. He transmitted the teachings to Naropāda. The transmission of this practice in Tibet are done by the students of these two scholars. The transmission in Nepal is through the students of Naropāda. In the early period of this practice the history suggest that Nepal was a major stakeholder in *Tāntrik* practice. The *Tāntrik* Newar Buddhists were the key practitioner. The Tibetan practitioner and scholars used to come here for learning and transmission of various *Tāntrik* practice. The Nepalese manuscripts provide valuable insights into the specific interpretations and practices developed by Nepalese scholars within the *Kālacakra* tradition. These manuscripts also helped in preservation of *Samskṛt* texts which is very rare to this tradition. The Nepalese artisans are also helping this practice to survive as they are creating various handcrafted products since centuries related to this practice.

Findings

The findings of the study are enumerated as follows:

The teachings of *Kālacakra Tantra* were originated and developed in Nepal and brought to India by Cilupa in C.E 966/7, there the teachings didn't exist for long, but the historic facts suggest teachings of this tantra flourished well in Nepal and in Tibet later by the development of Sambhota script.

The Nepalese students of Naropāda such as Samantaśrī, Mahākaruṇā, Vāgīśvarakīrti (Tib. pham-mthing-pa) and his brother Dharmamati, Kālacakra (Tib. dus-'khor-ba), Bodhibhadra (Tib. byang-chub bzang-po) were very active and teaching others in Tibet and Nepal. the Rwa school was established by Rwa lo-tsa-ba with the transmission of Newāri Paṇḍita Samantaśrī from Patan. It justifies that Kalachakra Tantra was originated in Nepal.

The Tibetan text related to *Kālacakra Tantra* are mostly preserved in *bstan 'gyur* but *Saṃskṛt* texts are known to be rare. Those rare *Saṃskṛt* texts can be found in Nepal. *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* from this study has found Nepal *Samvat* 514, which corresponds to 1394 CE, is the earliest one that has been found so far. Yet there are so many undiscovered and discovered texts scattered around there is a possibility to more ancient text yet to come in light.

Nepali artisans have contributed a lot in preserving and promoting the *Kālacakra Tantra* as they have been producing various hand crafted paintings, sculptures as well as the ritual object used in the practice.

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