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The Practice of *Maṇḍala* Art during *Tihāra* by Newars

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Abstract

Tihāra is celebrated on Aswin krishna paksha trayōdaśī, caturdaśī, and Ashwin krishna auṁsī, Kartik śukla paksha pratipadā and dvitīyā by all the ethnic groups of Nepal. Even though *Tihāra* is known as *Yamapañcaka*, the Newars call it *Swonti Nakha*. Although it is celebrated for five days, the three days – *Lakṣmīpūjā*, *Mhapūjā*, and *kijāpūjā* are celebrated as the main days by the Newar community. During these days, *jalamaṇḍala*, *pōtāyamaṇḍala*, *red powdermaṇḍala*, *tāyamaṇḍala*, *pōtāyamaṇḍala*, *new paddymaṇḍala*, *black soybeanmaṇḍala*, *gēdāmāsamaṇḍala*, *ākhēyamaṇḍala*, and the *dot oilmaṇḍala* are placed at the center, and the *eight-petal lotus* is placed out of the *maṇḍalas*. The *maṇḍalas* and the different items used in *Swonti nakha*: represent five elements. Buddhists consider a *maṇḍala* as *Saṅghamaṇḍala* whereas the Hindus believe that a *mandala* symbolizes various deities. Although the *maṇḍala* is made for the purpose of worshipping, no uniformity is seen in its features. As the worshipping is done, a spouse of the patriarch sweeps *mandalas* by a groom from the top to the bottom which is left that that night as it is, and immersed its remains in a holy river the next morning.

Keywords: *Swonti*, *maṇḍala* art, *Tihāra*, Newar, *Mhapūjā*, *Lakṣmīpūjā*

Background

Tihāra is one of the prominent festivals for the Nepali people. Every year, they celebrate *Tihāra* by lighting oil lamps in their houses. The cities and the villages are decorated with bright lights and flower garlands. The *Tihāra* is celebrated for five days. On the first day – in the morning, a delicious meal put on a leaf

is offered to crows outside the house or on the roof. A crow is considered as a messenger of unpleasant events. Therefore, crows are venerated with an expectation of keeping sorrows away. On the second day – as a dog is considered as the best companion of human beings, it is garlanded with flowers around its neck and fed with rice and meat.

On the third day – a cow is worshiped in the morning and goddess *Lakṣmī* in the evening. Both of them are believed to be the symbols of wealth and prosperity. A cow is garlanded with flowers around its neck and fed with fruits and vegetables. On this day, a house is cleaned and decorated with chain of flowers. A female member of the family smears the floor with the red mud outside the entrance gate of the house making a trail to the secret room inside the house. It is believed that goddess *Lakṣmī* would walk following the trail to take a seat in the restricted secret room. An icon or a picture of *Lakṣmī* is installed or pasted. Oil lamps are lighted outside the entrance gate, doors, windows, staircases, and treasure room in the evening. Then the family puts some money in a chest box placed by the side of the icon of *Lakṣmī* and offers delicious foods to the icon of *Lakṣmī*.

The celebration of the fourth day differs according to each ethnic groups' cultural tradition. Most Hindu families worship an ox with a garland of the flowers around its neck.

On the fifth day – sisters perform a *pūjā* for their brothers with a belief that it would ensure brothers' long and prosperous life. Thus, sisters put *tikā* on their brothers' forehead, wear down a chain of threads with some pieces of different colors of cloth, and flower garlands around their necks, and offers them various items. Reciprocally, brothers present gifts of clothes and money to their sisters.

The Newars have been forming *maṇḍalas* in their way. However, there is no particular instruction on how one should write *maṇḍala*. Hindu and Newar Buddhists differ in the ways of writing *maṇḍalas*. The lack of uniformity in the form of the *maṇḍala* seems to have made its spiritual knowledge ignorant.

This article attempts to describe the philosophy and significance of the *maṇḍalas* of *Swonti nakha*: and explain why the Newars make *maṇḍalas*.

Non-Newars call *Tihāra*, and Newars say *Swonti nakha*:. It is also known as *Yamapañcaka*. The time from the day of *Aswin krishna paksha trayōdaśī* to the day of *Kartik śukla paksha dvitīyā* is called *Yamapañcaka*. *Yamapañcaka* usually lasts for five days.

The words *Swonti nakha*: are more popular than *Tihāra* in the Newar Community.

The indigenous people of Kathmandu are believed to be migrated from *Viśālanagara* (the northeast corner of ancient Kathmandu city) to the present core area of Kathmandu city. The ancient town *Viśālanagara* was devastated by fire, and some survivors migrated towards west of their place. The survivors might have performed '*swosti*' and '*śānti*'. The *swosti* and *śānti* might have turned to a festival later, and it changed into *Swonti nakha*: termed by Newars (Bajrācārya 1124 N.S.: 28).

This argument does not fit as it is celebrated not only in the Kathmandu valley but by all the Newars. *Daivējña*

Kītimadan Joshi opines that *Swonti nakha*: is derived from *swonhu tithi* (Joshi 1141 N.S.: 21). *Swonhu tithi* means three days of the lunar calendar.

Baladēva Juju states that *Lakṣmīpūjā*, *Mhapūjā*, and *Kijāpūjā* are the major *pūjās* among the five days of *Swonti*; The Newars have been saying *Swonti nakha*: as *swanhu tithi* (Juju 1122 N.S.: 20).

Maṅgalarāja Jōśī mentions that the word *Tihāra* is an aberration of the word '*tyauhāra*'. *Tyauhāra* means the main festival. The Newars call *Swonti* instead of *Tihāra*. *Swonti* is a short form of *swanhutithi*. It means that the offerings offered to *Lakṣmī* in *Lakṣmīpūjā*, including the eighty-four dishes, the fruits should be kept for three days and the offerings should be taken on the fourth day, and the festival should be observed for three days from *auṁsī* to *dvitīyā*. It is said that *Lakṣmīpūjā*, *Mhapūjā* and *Kijāpūjā* should be performed for three consecutive days. But due to fluctuations of dates, it can take up to four days (Jōśī 1091 N.S.:16).

***Swonti Nakha*:**

Based on the lunar calendar, they celebrate *Swonti nakha*: on aswin *krishna paksha trayōdaśī*, *caturdaśī*, and *ashwin krishna auṁsī*, *kartik śukla paksha pratipadā* and *dvitīyā*. The first day of *Swonti nakha*: is *Kopūjā*, the second day is *Khichā pūjā*, the third day is *Lakṣmīpūjā*, the fourth day is *Mhapūjā*, and the fifth day is *Kijāpūjā*.

¹ द्वादश्यां च त्रयोदश्यां चतुर्दश्यां तथैव च । अमावास्यां प्रतिपदां द्वितीयायां क्रमाद्बुधैः ॥१॥

गर्जं काकं तथा स्वानं गां चापि भ्रातरं यथा । पूजयेद् विधिवत् धृतं लक्ष्मीं च स्वस्वदेहकम् ॥ २॥

Mhapūjā is celebrated only by the Newars. The text *Nēpāla Varṣa Kriyā Nakha:Cakha*: mentions that Elephant worship on *dvadaśī*, crow worship on *trayōdaśī*, dog worship on *caturdaśī*, cow and *Lakṣmī* on *auṁsī*, and *Kijāpūjā* on *dvitīyā*¹ (Bajrācārya 1107 N. S.: 3). However, other worships are prevalent except the elephant worship.

Newars celebrates *Kopūjā* on the first day or aswin *krishna paksha trayōdaśī*. They believe that a crow is a messenger of Yamarāja. So, they worship a crow and feed some food.

According to the *Bhaiṣajyaśāstra* (Pharmacology scriptures), *Dhanvantarī* is considered to be the day of incarnation of the god of medications. Thus, Vaidyarāja and others also are celebrated this day as *dhana trayōdaśī* (Chitrakara 1124 N.S.: 149).

On the second day or *aswin krishna paksha caturdaśī* of *Swonti*, the Newars celebrate *khichāpūjā*. This day is known as *Naraka caturdaśī*. On this day, Yamarāja is worshiped, and lights are lit in the river (Ibid.). The dog is worshiped as the messenger of Yamarāja and the vehicle of Bhairav.

Lakṣmīpūjā

Lakṣmīpūjā falls on the day of *ashwin krishna auṁsī*. On this day, Newars keep a record of income, and expenditure or take it as the last day of the financial year (the whole year) that the work they have

done for a year has been successful. It is also known as *Sapūjā*, and it worships cows in the morning. This day is also known as *Sukharātrī*² (Bajrācārya 1107 N.S.: 5).

According to *Lakṣmīkalārṇava Tantra* text mentions that one should wash oneself; donate lamps, burn incense at home, make sweet food, keep various fruits and roots, curd, *vimiro* (a kind of large wild lime), banana, paddy, and *akṣatā* to *Mahālakṣmī* (sits on the *Padmāsana*), śakti of Viśvarūpa, on the day of *Sukharātrī*³. (Ibid.5). People pour oil and incense into small earthenware pots. The earthenware pots are placed at the main door, doors, and stairs.

Lakṣmī is worshiped by placing lamps in front of her with various food items, fruits, curd, *bimiro*, paddy, rice, and sweets. The text *Brahmapurāṇa* mentions that by lighting a lamp in the name of hell in *caturdaśī* so that all the deceased ancestors would not have to dwell in the hell. Lighting lamps on the day of the *auṁśī* would increase wealth. Lighting a lamp burns at the dawn of *pratipadā* after the night of the *auṁśī* enhances the physical health and prosperity of the nation⁴ (Jōśī 1091 N.S.: 15).

On the evening, *Lakṣmī*, is venerated in

the forms of *Mahālakṣmī*, *Vasundharā* and *Annapūrṇa*.

In the evening, red clay is used as a small path for Goddess *Lakṣmī* to the *dhukuṭī* where *Lakṣmī* is established by covering it with red clay at *pikhālakhu* (outside the main gate). As per the belief, by making a *maṇḍala* of Yamarāja, one would be blessed with *Lakṣmī* throughout the year. (Bajrācārya 1107 N.S.: 4) The *pūrṇakalaśa* is kept at the center, brooms are on the right and left side of *pūrṇakalaśa*, *maṇḍala* is written in front of *pūrṇakalaśa*. *Maṇḍala* is drawn in front of *Lakṣmī* by setting up a paper picture or a statue of *Lakṣmī*.

The Buddhists refer to Goddess *Vasundharā* as *Lakṣmī*⁵. There are sixteen types of *Vasundharā*. Those *Lakṣmī* are: *Sarvalakṣmī*, *Bhūvanalakṣmī*, *Maṇḍalalakṣmī*, *Dhanalakṣmī*, *Santānalakṣmī*, *Khadgalakṣmī*, *Dhritilakṣmī*, *Mokshalakṣmī*, *Viśvalakṣmī*, *Rājyalakṣmī*, *Gṛhalakṣmī*, *Dhanyalakṣmī*, *Janalakṣmī*, *Buddhilakṣmī*, *Jñānalakṣmī* and *Mahalakṣmī* respectively (Sakya 1114 N.S.: preface).

Pūrṇakalaśa, broom, and *vimiro* are worshiped as Kuberas (Bajrācārya 1107 N.S.: 4). According to the text

² विश्वस्वस्य भार्यासि पद्मे पद्मालये शुभे । महालक्ष्मि नमस्तुभ्यजं सुखरात्रिं कुरुष्व मे ॥

³ मद्दिने मार्जनं कुर्यात् दीपदानं तथैव च । धूपयेद् गृह मध्येच मिष्टभोजनमाचरेत् ॥३॥
विविधफलमूलं च दधि च बीजपूरकम् । मोचाफलं च धान्यं च ह्यक्षतानि च स्थापयेत् ॥४॥
विश्वस्वस्य भार्यासि पद्मे पद्मालये शुभे । महालक्ष्मी नमस्तुभ्यं सुखरात्रि ॥५॥

⁴ चतुदश्यां च ये दीपा नरकीय ददन्ति च । तेषां पितृगणः सर्वे नरकेन वसन्ति च ॥
अमावश्यां यदा रात्रौ दिवा भागे चतुर्दशी । पूजनीया तदा लक्ष्मी विज्ञेया सुखरात्रिका ॥

⁵ मण्डलं क्रियते तत्र स्वपूजां महतीं चरेत् ॥

Pramānatantra, first the omens of curd, egg, fish are taken and offered the *makhamalī* flower with reciting *swosti maṅgala* (Ibid.).

Mhapūjā

Mhapūjā is a combination of two words: 'mha' and 'pūjā'. *Mha* means body, and *pūjā* means to worship. Thus, *Mhapūjā* means: worshipping one's self, or one's body. The text *Nēpāla varṣa kriyā* mentions to worship *svopūjā* in the *maṅḍala* ⁶ (Joshi 1091 N.S. 4). *Mhapūjā* is also known as *atmapūjā* or *swopūjā* (Ibid. p. 1). On the day of *Mhapūjā*, the members of the householder take a bath. *Maṅḍalas* are drawn for everyone from the youngest to the eldest except the newborn baby in the evening. The spouse of the patriarch worships all the *maṅḍalas* and family members.

K. B. Uday has speculated that *Mhapūjā* might have been started by King Rāghavadēva as there was an epidemic in the country, and there was an outbreak of the disease while reciting the King's

worship (Udaya 2058 V. S.: 9). No documents are found to testify his logic. During the *Mhapūjā*, omen like eggs, curd, fish, alcohol, etc. are also served.

Khadgamāna Śrēṣṭha has estimated that *Mhapūjā* was started by Buddhist *Ācārya Vāgvajra* (Śrēṣṭha 2008: 202).

Yajñamānapati Bajrācārya has speculated that *Līlāvajra* might be making the principle of worship by giving importance to the body. He was even the chief administrator and professor of Nalandā Vihāra in India. The Vajrācāryas of Kathmandu have been venerating Līlāvajra on one day of the year as *De Ācārya Guthi*. The Vajrācāryas have been celebrating *De Ācārya Guthi* as the descendants of Līlāvajra dynasty.

According to *vajrayāna*, deities and human bodies are of great importance. All the deities dwell inside a human body and they are also the places of pilgrimage, This theory was widespread in Kathmandu at the time of *Līlāvajra* (Bajrācārya 1124 N.S.: 49).

⁶ According to the *pūjāviddhī*, if *Lakṣmī* is white and *Vasundharā* is yellow, she should be worshiped on a full urn with two hands, three eyes, a happy smile, yellow clothes, various ornaments and black hair. In the case of *Vasundharā*, there are six hands, in the right hand there is a rosary, in the second hand there is a *Sinhamu* (artistic metal vessel for commentary), in the third hand there is *Varada mudrā* and in the left hand there is a wisdom book, in the second hand there is a rice stalk and in the third hand there is an urn. *Lakṣmī* is a four-armed woman holding a urn in her left hand, her right hand is of *Abhaya mudrā* and her left hand is of *Varada mudrā*. But the Newar Buddhists of Kathmandu have used the image of *Lakṣmī* with four arms, holding *Jvālānhāyaka* in the upper right hand and *Sinhamu* in the upper left hand, *Varada mudrā* in the lower right hand and *Abhaya mudrā* in the lower left hand, *Kubera* carrying wealth and *Khāyaka* pouring *Dakshinā*. Similarly, holding four hands, holding *Jvālānhāyaka* in the upper right hand and *Sinhamu* in the upper left hand, the lower two hands are pouring asarfi from a pot, while *Kubera* is carrying wealth and *Dakshinā* is pouring. In KathmanduValley, *Lakṣmī* is depicted using various *āsanas*. In some pictures *Lakṣmī* is seen in *Padmāsana*, in some in *Pralambapādāsana* and in some in *Lalitāsana*. *Lakṣmī* is adorned with various ornaments such as crowns, earrings, necklaces, armlets, bangles and anklets. A halo is behind herhead. various packets of fruits and wealth are also shown in front of *Lakṣmī*.

Kijāpūjā

Kijā pūjā is performed on the second day of *Kartik śukla pakṣa dvitīyā*. The text *Bhātripūjā Pramāna* mentions that eating nutritious food from the hands of sisters on this day; as long as the oil sphere lasts, a man keeps his soul and body together. While performing the ritual, a *maṇḍala* of oil in the form of Chitrugupta and Yamarāja ⁷ (Bajrācārya 1107 N.S.: 8-9).

Bhātripūjā pramāna also mentioned that on this day, sisters worship their brothers and sisters to wishing them good health and long lives. *Jyōtiṣatantra* text mentions that that *kijāpūjā* is done as well as *Mhapūjā* ⁸ (Jōṣī 1091N.S.:12

As said in *jyōtiṣatantra* the *maṇḍala* is formed according to the number of brothers as on the day of *Mhapūjā*. Sweet fruits and pieces of bread are fed with a feeling of deep affection. It is believed that Chitrugupta, the messenger of Yamarāja, protects the oil *maṇḍala* and the *makhmalī* flowers built in the middle of the *maṇḍala* until it dries up.

Maṇḍala during Swonti Nakha:

Mandalas should be made on *pikhalaku*, both sides of the main door, and in front of the painting or statues of *Lakṣmī*, *kalaśa*, *thāpin*, which are installed in the *dhukūṭī*. The ground

is covered with red clay before the *maṇḍala* is covered. Then, first of all, *jalamaṇḍala* (the *maṇḍala* of water) is composed. Inside the *jalamaṇḍala*, *pōtāy* ⁹ *maṇḍala* and red powder *maṇḍala*, *lāvāmaṇḍala* or *tāymandala* (puffed rice) within *pōtāymaṇḍala*, new paddy *maṇḍala* ¹⁰ within *lāvāmaṇḍala*, black soybean *maṇḍala* within paddy*maṇḍala*, *gēdāmāsamaṇḍala* within soybean*maṇḍala*, *ākhēyamaṇḍala* within *gēdāmāsamaṇḍala*, the dot oil is at the center, and the most outer is depicted with the eight-petal lotus.

Siddhi Gopāla Vaidhya states that the *maṇḍala* should be formed with five circles and the eight lotus petals. The paddy rice is put in the innermost circle. On the rice, *ākhēya*, flower, and the *jajankā* is placed on the paddy rice and burn itā and incense (Vaidya n.d.: 20).

The *maṇḍala* is surrounded with *vimiro*, and on top of it, twenty-one sleeping raw threads, five pieces of colored cloth are placed around the neck. Flowers like *godāvāri*, *sayapatrī*, *lālupāte*, *makhmalī*, etc. are placed on the *vimiro*. *Sukundā*, lights, conch shell, etc. are placed on the *maṇḍala* of *āgandya*.

Maṇḍalas face towards east and north during *Mhapūjā* and *kijāpūjā*. But Siddhi Bahādur Rañjītakāra views that all the family members should sit together

⁷ यत्नेन भगिनी हस्तान् भोक्तव्यं पुष्टिं वर्द्धनम् । यावन्मण्डलं तैलस्य तावज्जीवति मानवः ॥७॥

तस्मात् त्रैव तैलेन मण्डलं क्रियते बुधैः । पूजयेत् यमस्मं च भ्रातरं चित्रगुप्तकम् ॥८॥

⁸ भातपूजां द्वितीयायां स्वपूजावत् समाचरेत् ।

⁹ White stone dust was used, nowadays Pōtāy is used instead of stone dust)

¹⁰ New paddy rice is not used in Bhaktapur.

in a row likewise facing east or west (Rañjitaḥkāra 2002: 46).

Kalyāṇa Mitra mentions that the mandalas should be rowing in facing east (Mitra 1136 N.S.: 76). The people used to face east or north or west of their tradition. The members of the family take a seat in their respective *maṇḍalas*. The extra *maṇḍalas* also are formed in upper and lower rowing *maṇḍalas*. The texts *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* and the *Nēpāla varṣa kriyā* mention that Yama Yamabhagini and Chitragupta should also be made *maṇḍalas* while performing *Mhapūjā*¹¹ (Jōṣī 1091 N.S.: 4 & 11).

According to Chundā Bajrācārya, the upper *maṇḍala* is the symbol of *āgandya* (god of the secret room), and the lower *maṇḍala* is the symbol of Yamarāja (Bajrācārya 1120 N.S.: 46). According to Sumati Vajrācārya, the upper *maṇḍala* is the symbol of *Lakṣmī* (Sumati Vajrācārya. Personal Interview. 2013). Siddhi Bahādur Rañjitaḥkāra writes that the top *Maṇḍala* is for *Janmarāja* and another at the bottom for Yamarāja. According to him, Newars revere the life-giving deity is known as *Janmarāja* first, and the life-taking god is said Yamarāja last. *Jammarāja* represents the past, human represents the current time, and Yamarāja represents the future. We are always between Janmarāja and Yamarāja. We are always moving from the future to the end to start again. It is a vicious *maṇḍala* (Rañjitaḥkāra 2002: 47). Maṅgalarāja Jōṣī writes that the mandala should be representing the five elements in the asana of eight lotus-petals; Hindus should form Varuṇa, Viṣṇu and

Mahēśvara, or the Buddhists should make the top three *maṇḍalas* for Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha (Jōṣī 1091 N.S.: 6). Sid'dhi Gōpāla Vaidya writes that the upper *maṇḍala* is the symbol of āgandya and the lower *maṇḍala* represents Bali. The Bali *maṇḍala* should be formed five colors (Vaidya 23).

***Maṇḍala* symbolizes five elements**

The *maṇḍala* of *Mhapūjā* symbolizes a person's soul being the center and the body its periphery (Amatya 2000: ix). *Maṇḍala* is a symbol of five elements (sky, earth, water, fire, and air). Milan Shakya mentions that the *maṇḍala* of *Mhapūjā* represents five elements. (Shakya 2000: 87). Baladēva Juju and Surēndra Mān Śrēṣṭha write that the five elements symbolize three kinds of objects: at the first – water, *ṭikā*, *akṣatā*, *jajaṅkā*, and flower; second – incense, *itā*, fruits, sweets, water; and meat, fish, eggs, *bārā*, and alcohol (Juju and Śrēṣṭha 1120 N.S.: 26).

Different items symbolize five elements in *Maṇḍala*

Different people have different opinions about items used in the *maṇḍala*. According to Sumati Vajrācārya, *lāvā* is the symbol of Vairōcana Buddha or water element, the symbol of black soybean is the symbol of Akṣōbhya Buddha or sky element, the Paddy rice represents of Ratnasambhava Buddha or earth element, the black *gēḍāmāsa* stand for Amitābha Buddha or fire element, and *ākhēm* indicates of Amōghasid'dhi Buddha or air element. Oil is considered as a

symbol of lightning. Siddhi Rañjita-kāra opines that water *maṇḍala* symbolized a pond. The eight-petal lotus with the *pōtāy* inside the water *maṇḍala* stand for lotus. *Tāy* indicates earth, *ākhēm* represents air, mustard oil represents water amber powder symbolizes fire. He adds the *tāy*, *ākhēm*, mustard oil and amber powder represent the aerial view of a human body sitting on the lotus (Rañjita-kāra 2002: 47). According to Phanindra Ratna Bajrācārya, Buddhists worship Buddha, *dharma*, *saṅgha*, *kuladēvatā*, and *ishtadēvatā* in *Mhapūjā*. The body is alive with five skandhas and five elements. After death, this body merges into the earth element. The body dissolves into emptiness. So life, even if it is like real life, is emptiness, then the sense *maṇḍala* and *kheluita*: (long light of cloth) is used. When *kheluita*: burns, it is the proof of burning ashes. *Kheluita*: burning is the proof that we have burned ourselves or by burning our life; it is a symbol of seeing with the eyes of knowledge. Because *kheluita*: is measured by the size of the face. The face is a symbol of man. *Kheluita*: burning is a symbol of self-sacrifice for the salvation of worldly beings. If betel nut or okhar is a source of inspiration to perpetuate this spirit of sacrifice, then egg, fish, fruit seems to be the symbol of power. *Mhapūjā* is performed by sacrificing delusion, hatred, attachment, craving, etc., to save only the creatures (Bajrācārya 1118 N.S.: Preface).

The paddy rice indicates smell, *akṣatā*

symbolizes water, flower represents word, jajanka stand for touch and the *kheluita*: denotes form. (Bajrācārya 1120 N.S.: 57. & Mitra, 1136 N.S.: 76). Thus, writing a *maṇḍala* on the ground is given as a living being. *Mhapūjā* is the unique tradition of the Newar community. During *Tihāra*, *maṇḍala*, as god and people wish, do not enter the body with evil elements; to be in good health; not to be in debt; to be successful in daily work, to have a long life. It is worshiped with various blessings, omens, and flowers. Kalyāṇa Mitra states that the omens are boiled egg, Bara, meat, fish and alcohol. Boiled egg denotes sky element, Bārā represents air element, meat symbolizes earth element, fish indicates water element and alcohol denotes fire element (Mitra 1136 N.S. 76).

Maṇḍala as a Saṅghamaṇḍala

Buddhists consider the *maṇḍala* as a *saṅgha maṇḍala*. According to Ratnakājī Vajrācārya, *Maṇḍala* is also known as '*saṅghamaṇḍala*' or '*kāyamaṇḍala*' (Bajrācārya 1122 N.S.: 8). A union is a group of two or more people. In this sense, a family is also a group. The body also became a union as it was a collection of different organs. Mother, father, grandfather, grandmother, brother, brother, sister, sister, and others families are all one unit. *Mhapūjā* is performed by forming a *maṇḍala* with all the family members. That is why it is called *saṅghamaṇḍala* or *kāyamaṇḍala* (Ibid. p.10). Worshiping in this way is considered to be a symbol of the refuge

¹¹ पूजयेत् यमभगिनी यमं च चित्रगुप्तम् । मण्डलं क्रियते तत्र स्वपूजां महतीं चरेत् ॥

of the saṅgha. *Maṅḍalapūjā* is performed in the saṅghamaṅḍala with the feeling that the planetary condition of a year will not be anything.

According to the Buddhist tradition, the eight lotus-petals represent eight Bodhisattvas, and the shape in the middle is the symbol of Avalōkitēśvara (Bajrācārya & B 1122 N.S.: 2). The eight *Aṣṭamaṅgalas* are also the symbols of the eight Bodhisattvas: *Śrīvatsa* – Maitreya Bodhisattva; *Pundarika* – Gaganganj Bodhisattva; *Dhvaja* – Samantabhadra Bodhisattva; *Kalaśa* – Vajrapani Bodhisattva; *Camara* – Manjughosh Bodhisattva; *Matsya* – Sarvanivaranaviskammi; *Chatra* – Kshitigarbha Bodhisattva and *Śaṅkha*, Khagarbha Bodhisattva. According to Ratnakaji Vajracharya, the Buddhists believe that Avalokitesvara produces the grains that grow from the earth. Therefore, grain is considered a symbol of Avalokitesvara (Bajrācārya 1122 N.S.: 2).

Ashtapadma symbolizes as different Hindus deities

According to Śaiva tradition, the eight-petal lotus indicate *Ashtavitarāga*: *Maṅḍalīṅgēśvara* – Maṅcūḍa Mountain; *Gōkarṇēśvara* – Gōkarṇa; *Kilēśvara* – Cāṅgunārāyaṇa; *Kumbhēśvara* – Konti in Pātan, *Jñānēśvara* – Pharping mountain; *Phanjikēśvara* – Pharping; *Granthēśvara* – Cōbhāra Mountain, and *Vikramēśvara* – Svayambhū. According to the Sakta tradition, the eight lotus petals stands for *Aṣṭamāṭṛkā* or *Brahmayānī*, *Mahēśvarī*, *Vaiṣṇavī*,

Kaumārī, *Vārāhī*, *Indrāyaṇī*, *Mahākālī*, and *Mahālakṣmī*. It is believed that worshipping *Aṣṭamāṭṛkā* protects from *Aṣṭamāṭṛkā* (Mitra 1134 N.S.: 2).

Various items symbolize different meaning in Maṅḍala

Various people consider various items are symbolized different meanings, which are used during *Tihāra*. According to Chunda Bajrācārya, the paddy rice used in the *maṅḍala* is considered to be the symbol of *Vasundharā*, *Akhēm* symbolizes *karuna*, oil indicates mind, *katusa* stand for foresight, and *bimiro* represents purity. According to Ratnakajī Bajrācārya, Buddhists believe that Avalōkitēśvara produces the grains that grow from the earth. So the grain is considered a symbol of Avalōkitēśvara. Ratnakajī Bajrācārya opines that the characteristics of the *Mhapūjā* are: Bōdhisattvacaryā can be worn for one year, the effect of *aṣṭamaṅgala* is always well, be firm like soybean, complete like *gēḍāmāsa*, be pure like wealth, be pure like Akhēm, be as subtle as oil, and be merciful, compassionate like Bōdhisattvas (Bajrācārya 1100 N.S.: 10). The characteristics of *Mhapūjā* are: shiny like syāṅguli, strong as okhara, holy as bimiro, the body will not be weak, just like the makhamalī flower is not dry, keep your eyes sharp, and your eyes fixed on the light bulb and with the spirit of containing five types of knowledge, five colors, five elements cloth wearing the body is strong, and stable in all time, etc. (Ibid. 10). But according to Sumati Vajrācārya, *lāvā* is the symbol of fame, black soybean is the symbol of

vighnaharakartā, *gēḍāmāsa* is the symbol of strength, and *akṣatā* is the symbol of *Vasundharā*. Kalyāṇa Mitra writes *tāy* symbolizes the flower of heaven; black soybean indicates *śaniścara*, *masa* represents *saṅkaṭā*, *akhēm* denotes for *karuṇāmaya* and the dot oil stand for soul (Mitra 1136 N.S.: 76). Even though they worshiped in different ways, *Mhapūjā* with the help of *Śakti Sāadhanā*. *Bimirō*, *syāṅguli*, *chaksi*, *banana*, *apple*, *pear*, *guava*, *ribuwa*, *bhogte*, *amba*, *okhar*, etc. fruits are placed on top of each circle by writing another *maṇḍala* from *pōtāy*.

The designs of the *maṇḍala* differ from house to house. Some people make a circle in the center and eight lotus petals; a little people make a circle in the middle and eight rings outside in the four directions and four intermediate directions, and people make a circle in the center and four discs in four sides touching the ring (Raṅjitakāra 2075 V.S.: 56). However, oil, black soybean, black *masa*, *akhēmmaṇḍala*, *lāvā* are used as essential commodities in the *maṇḍala*.

After completing the worshipping, a spouse of patriarch sweeps mandalas by a groom from the top to the bottom and gathering, leaves that night and flooded in a holy river in the next morning.

Conclusion

The *maṇḍala* is formed to be made in different ways. The Newars worship *Mhapūjā* of atman or body during *Swonti nakha*; they have to form a *maṇḍala* of symbols of five elements. But there is no official text that has

been mentioned on the symbolism of five components. Buddhists and Hindu Newars have been making their kind of *maṇḍalas*. Some Newars have *pōtāymaṇḍala* within eight lotus petals, *lāvāmaṇḍala* within *pōtāymaṇḍala*, black soybean within *pōtāymaṇḍala*, new paddy *maṇḍala* within black soybean, black *gēḍāmāsa* within black soybean *maṇḍala*, *akhēmmaṇḍala* within black *gēḍāmāsamaṇḍala*, and dot oil within *akhēmmaṇḍala*. Buddhists and Hindu Newars consider these objects to be the symbol of five elements. But there are different opinions on the symbolism of five elements. Both Hindus and Buddhists write eight lotus petals, but Hindus consider eight lotus petals are to be the symbol of *ashtavaitarāga* in the eight directions and Buddhists to be the symbol of the eight Bodhisattvas in the eighth direction. Most Newars do not even know that these objects are the symbol of five elements. However, these items have been used in *Swonti nakha*:

Most Newars make a *maṇḍala* in their style. In the family of the researcher's birth home, traditionally, five circles are made from rice flour during *Swonti nakha*:. When the researcher studied religion, philosophy, and Newar culture, and then realized that these five circles are the emblems of the five elements. Some Newars have stopped making *maṇḍalas* for worshipping in *Swonti nakha*:. As the number of single families has increased from a joint family, they have become difficult to form a *maṇḍala* for worship. People have stopped worshipping due to a lack of sizeable

space for worship. If the official religious persons of Buddhism and Hinduism provide information on the making *maṇḍalas* and their philosophical aspects through various ways. *Maṇḍala* will not be designed in the wrong method. In this way, *maṇḍala* making and worshipping during *Swonti nakha*: has become a separate identity to the Newars in the world. The *maṇḍala* formed is also an original art of the Newars.

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