

## SWAYAMBHU BUDDHACHARYA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH BUNGADYA:

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### **Abstract:**

*Swayambhu is located in ward 15 of Kathmandu Municipality and Bungamati is situated in ward 22 of Lalitpur Municipality. Bungadya: is the common deity of Nepalmandal whose image is kept six months in Bungamati and six months at Tahbahal of Lalitpur. Its chariot festival starts in the month of Baisakha. The main aim of the study is to explore Swayambhu Buddhacharya's relation with Bungam Lokesvara. What and how cultural activities are performed during the chariot festival by Buddhacharyas. I spent 15 days in Swayambhu for data collection in 2016 Baisakha month. I selected some renowned priests of Swayambhu. I have applied the ethnographic method. During the course of data collection, I have interviewed with priests and observed animal sacrifice four days before starting the festival and involved in the preliminary procession of worship to Bungadya: at Pulchok. Books and articles have been used for description. This study is mostly completed based on the field research. Buddhacharya collects Pooja goods (objects) from each houses of Swayambhu then go to Hanuman Dhoka. The representative Buddhacharya first of all worship to Bungadya: in Pulchok before pulling chariot. Then, other devotees worship Bungadya: . On the way of returning home they deliver Prasad to the certain people. Instead of that, Prasad receiver gives Dakshina. Buddhacharya celebrate Jhwaglapagla Bhoy in Swayambhu. Four days before Panju sacrifice animal at Vayupur in Swayambhu at night and take away Swayambhu as Asana (seat) of Bungadya: . They have strong relation with Bungadya and Pānju of Bungamati. They do not keep marital relation with Bunga as well as Bunga do not marry with Swayambhu.*

**Key words:** Asana Keygu, Faypwa: Tiigu, Hajamaku, Bajimaku, Jhwaglapagla, Bhinaybhu, Dampa, Twa: Swam, Tanabaji, Mamsimha.

### **Introduction**

*Bungamati is located in south of Lalitpur Municipality. Bungamati is an important cultural heritage site where the temples of Kumari (living goddess) Hegrib Bhairab, and Bungam Lokesvara (local term of Karunamaya, Boddhisattva) are situated. Similarly, Swayambhu is west of Kathmandu Metropolitan City that comprises of Swayambhu Chaitya, temples of Haratimata, Pratappur, Anantapur, Shantipur, Manjushree Chaitya, Vasubandhu Chaitya which are important heritages. Bungamati and Swayambhu both of these places are ancient religious important centers of Buddhists. Rath Jatra (chariot festival) of Bungam (short form of Bungamati) Lokesvara is being celebrated continuously by the people of the valley since the Lichhavi period, which usually starts before the farming on the month of Baishkh (April May) every year. This deity is considered as the god of rain, food giver. The concepts of four Lokesvaras or Karunamayas are popular in the valley. Bungam Lokesvara is also known as Raktablokesvara , Chobahal Karunāmaya is known as Anandadi Lokesvara, Nāla Karunamaya is known as Sistikanta Lokesvara and Janabahal Karunāmaya is*

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known as *Aryavalokitesvara* or *Seto Matsyendranāth* (Bajracharya, 2004: p. 3). Among them the chariot processions of *Lokesvara* of *Janabahal* and the *Lokesvara* of *Bunga* are being performed in a regular basis. *Lokesvara* of *Janabahal* is called *Seto (white) Matsyendranāth* and *Lokesvara* of *Bunga* is called *Rato Matsyendranāth*. The conception of that *Lokesvara* is found to have performed *Dashakarma* (purification rite is done ten times) once in a year and gives life to the god.

According to legendary sources, King *Prachandadev* of *Gauda* came to Nepal and settled in *Swayambhū* as a monk. He was initiated by *Gunakar Acharya* and later, became famous as *Shāntikarācharya*. He had built the *Swayambhū Chaitya* by concealing the *Swayambhū*, self-originated flame. A few years later, during the reign of *Gunakāmdev*, there was a famine in Nepal. *Shāntikarācharya* made a *Nāgmandal* and made it rain by *Megh Sādhanā* (cultivating clouds) (Shakya & Bajracharya, 2001: Pp. 164-180). After that, there was a drought in King *Narendradev's* reign for 12 years. *Narendra Dev* consulted with *Shāntikarācharya* for solution. According to Guru his disciple *Bandhudatta* brought *Karunāmaya* to *Nepalmandal* from *Kāmarukāmaksha, Asam*. *Karunāmaya* is regarded as *Bodhisattva* as well. The same *Bodhisattva Karunāmaya* is being conducted festival continuously in Nepal. This *Jātrā* is celebrated as national festival, a symbol of syncretism between Shaivism, Vaisnavism and Buddhism. Buddhists consider this procession as the festival of *Lokesvara, Bodhisattva, Karunāmaya, Padmapani, Aryavalokiteshvara*. The followers of Shaivism considered as *Matsyendranāth*, Vaisnavism consider as *Nārayan* or *Vishnu*. The idol of this deity is kept in a Shikhar-style temple in the courtyard of *Bungmati* for six months and in *Lalitpur* (countryard of *Tahabāhāl*) for six months. The idol is brought in *Chaitra* month in *Tabahāl* before chariot procession. Generally, the local Newars consider him as a compassionate, food-giver. *Lalitpur, Bhaktapur* and *Kathmandu* have contributed to bring the deity to Nepal valley. Although *Buddhāchārya (A Buddhist caste)* of *Swayambhūs* are not seen directly involved during the procession, they play an important role at the beginning and the end of the chariot procession. The relationship between *Bungamati* and *Swayambhū* is not merely chariot festival or cultural but seems to have blood relationship. There is a popular belief that the *Buddhāchāryas* of *Swayambhū* are the descendants of *Shantikarāchārya* and the *Vajrāchāryas* of *Bungmati* are the descendants of *Shāntikara Achārya's* brothers. There is a belief that if all the *Buddhāchāryas* of *Swayambhū* die or for any reason the *Buddhāchāryas* of *Swayambhū* extinct then the *Vajracharyas* of *Bungamati* should perform daily worship of *Swayambhū*. Similarly, even if all the *Vajrāchāryas* of *Bungamati* die, the *Buddhāchāryas* of *Swayambhū* should perform the daily worship of *Aryāvalokiteshvara Karunāmaya*. According to the same belief, it is said that there should not have marital relationship between the *Buddhāchārya* of *Swayambhū* and the *Vajrāchārya* and *Shakya* of *Bungamati*. This article will be discussed about the participation and relationship of *Buddhāchāryas* in *Karunāmaya's Jātrā*.

### Seat of the Karunāmaya

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of waxing moon of April (Baishakh Shukla Chaturthi) the chariot procession of the *Karunāmaya* begins from *Pulchok* in *Patan*. Four days before 12 *Pānjus* go to *Swayambhū* around 8 pm by ringing the bell (*Tānābaji*) all over the way. The *Pānjus* provide the *Pasukā* (a kind of ritual thread), flowers, and *Tikā*. They have brought with them to all *Buddhāchāryas* of *Swayambhū*. Of the 12 members, 6 are fed by *Dampālā* and 6 by the *Shakyas* of *Itumbahal*, who live in a monastery inside *Swayambhū* premises. On the same night, *Pānju* performs *Chā poojā* at night at *Santipur*. It is considered as a Yoga practice place for *Shāntikarāchārya*. *Bungam Lokeswar* or *Karunāmaya* is believed to be the son of *Shāntikarāchārya*. It is believed that *Yogambar* demanded the sacrifice of the man who was following *Shāntikarāchārya* while he was going to perform *sādhanā* at *Yogāmbhera* of *Mhaypi*. It is believed that the person's bones were buried in *Mhaspith (Mhaypi)*. It

is also believed that the victim was born into a demonic family in *Kāmārukāmāksha*. According to this folk belief, the clay of *Mhaypi* is used to make the image of *Karunāmaya* (Shākya, 2004: p.11). The seat of *Karunāmaya* is taken with the permission of *Shāntikar* by *Pānju* who come to *Shāntipur*. *Thakāli* (seniour), *Nwakū* (2<sup>nd</sup> seniour) of Swayambhū perform Poojā at *Yogāmbher*. They sacrifice the animal brought with *Pānjus*. After the Poojā and sacrifice, the goat's meat is cooked and arranged feast on the same night. In the morning, they provide feast including goat's meat as *Prasād* to the *Buddhāchāryas* of Swayambhū. At that time, the Swayambhū people worship to the *Patukā* as thinking a symbol of Bodhisattva posture which a *Pānju* has tied as a belt<sup>1</sup>. After that, *Swayambhū's Thakāli* rings the bell surrounding the Caitya. The main *Pānju* read out the invitation letter for the chariot procession which occurs after four days. That notice or invitation letter is pasted on the *Falecha*. The bell rung by *Thakāli* is given to the *Pānju* people from the steps of *Sāntipur* to the east. From there, the *Pānjus* return by ringing along the way.

On the fourth day of the *Rathjātrā*, there is a tradition of offering flowers to Kirtipur as an invitation. The *Shāntipur* of *Karunāmaya* come along with a person carrying a *kharpan* (a pair of baskets carried on shoulder) to worship at *Pyagasthān*, near *Umā maheshwar* temple in Kirtipur and offer invitation to a woman of *Pyangathan* with a *Twāswān*, a kind of flower garland which is to wear on forehead as an give her invitation of *Lokesvara Rathjātrā*. On their way back, the people of different neighborhood keep adding worship items on the *Kharpan*.

### Participation in Rathjātra

On the evening of 4<sup>th</sup> day of waxing moon of April (Baishakh Shukla Chaturthi) the chariot of *Bungadya*: begins in the evening. Early in the morning, in Swayambhū, *Dampālā* (Guard of the deity) brings out a *poojā* plate with two *poojās* ingredient. In those two *poojās* plates, other *Buddhāchāryas* of Swayambhū add the *poojā* items from house to house on the same plate. Carrying these worship items, the *Buddhāchāryas* of the 13 members of Swayambhū first gather at the house of *Bajimāku Hajāmāhu*<sup>2</sup> (Jyāpu caste), who lives at *Timāko* (near Ombahal Kathmandu) house. The *jyāpu* gives rice-beer, potatoes, *wo*: (pan cake made of pulse) and *chhoelā* (roasted buff) to the people. From there, they proceed for Hanumān Dhokā palace along with Jyapu.

They enter Hanumān Dhokā (main entrance), then make the *poojā* touches on the throne on the left of brinking from Swayambhū. Doing so is considered as proof of King's consent for the worship and the chariot procession of the Bodhisattva. It came to know that 51 paisa was given to the *Guthiyārs* of Swayambhū during the Malla period for performing the *poojā*, but nowadays it is told that Rs. 11,500 is given by *Kausitoshakhana*<sup>3</sup>.

From there, they go to worship the temple of Min Nath in Patan, then worship the compassionate Bodhisattva enshrined in the chariot in Pulchok. After the *poojā*, they arrange a place for a feast. Some of them return after feast while others return only after watching the chariot procession. On the way of returning, the *Guthiyārs* bring flowers and *tikā* (vermilion powder) as *prasād* of the Bodhisattva with them. They deliver *Rājakkhā* (king's garland) and *Rānikkhā* (Queen's garland), vermilion powder and flower in *Hanumān Dhokā* palace first. Then all those returnees gather at Maru Ganesh in Kathmandu. The *Guthiyārs* have a tradition of distributing or giving Bodhisattva's flower and *Tikā prasād* in the plazas of Kathmandu. After receiving the *prasād*, those who received the *prasād* offer *Dakshinā* on *Vinaeabhu*. *Hajāmāku* and *Bajimāku* have arranged two people to carry

1. Bāburājā Buddhāchārya age 81, Interview in 2077, Ashoj 19, in his residence at *Swayambhū*.

2. Hajamaku, Bajimaku, these people come to Swayambhū on every full moon day and they help to devotees who come to worship Buddhist flags and white lime (*Sakhwā*) at Swayambhū.

3. Bāburājā Buddhāchārya age 81, Interview in 2077, Ashoj 19, in his residence at *Swayambhū*.

worship items to the *Bungadya*: procession. One of them lives in *Timāko* and the other in *Dokodol*. Before the worship of chariot of *Bungadya*, people gather in *Timāko* and those *Guthiyār* gather after distributing *prasāda* to plaza of Kathmandu for managing the collected money got as *Dakshinā*.

### **DampāhGuthi**

There are four *kawah*(clans) and 28 families in Swayambhū. These families have been conducting daily worship in Hārati. The daily *nitya* goes on turn by turn basis to each family but *Dampālā* gets certain offerings (foods) and *Dakshinā* that devotees offer to the Hārati. On twelve full moons of the year, five days including full bright moon of month of September (Ashoj), and two days including full bright moon of the month of October (Kartik), the *Dampālā* receive all the *Dakshinā* and foods offered. *Dampāh Guthi* is celebrated once a year on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of September from the collected income. Each year, turn of *Guthi* changes. The *DampāhKhalak* (family) makes all such arrangements. The worship of *Pālā* (turn) begins from the September waxing full moon (Vajracharya, 2066: p. 63).

### **Jyaglapagla Feast**

On the day of *Karunāmaya* Jātrā, after returning from worship, the *Guthiyārs* distribute Poojā Prasād to people of *Asan Tol*, *Maru Tol* or surrounding central Kathmandu. *Dakshinā* is collected and the fee paid from *Kausikitoshākhānā* is collected and on the day of 10<sup>th</sup> day of September. From the collected money, *Guthiyārs* gather and organize a *Jhwaglapagla* feast (b<sup>h</sup>wae) is celebrated. For that feast, *Hājāmaku* *Bajimāku* *Jyāpus* bring 9 kg 3 *pāu* (four *Dhārni*, 5 *pāu* is equivalent to 1 kg) potatoes. On this feast, six types of dishes are served/prepared by *Dampālā*. In *Sāntipur* of Swayambhū, *Dashmipoojā* is performed every month from *DanPālā*, which is special kind of *Dashamipoojā* in which the participating *Guthiyārs* in the *Bodhisattva* chariot procession are invited<sup>4</sup>.

### **Phaepwā: tigu**

The chariot procession of *Karunāmaya* starts from Pulchok and believed to be ended after reaching *Lagankhel*. According to the process of the chariot procession, as the chariot reaches *Lagankhel*, the chariot of *Karunāmaya* circumambulate a tree three times (local people say it *Kusima*) which is also called as *Māsimā*. The concerned *Guthiyārs* think the procession was completed without any hindrance during the *Rathjātrā*. Therefore, at night, some of *Pānjus* go to Swayambhū for performing *poojā* of completion of procession, which is called *fay pwātigu*. On that day, *Pānjus* go to Swayambhū with a goat. There, the goat is sacrificed at the *Vāyupur*, and the meat of the sacrificial goat is cooked and had a feast and subsequently returns at the same night. On that day, salt, oil, cumin seed and turmeric should be given to cook by *Danpālā*. After completing the entire banquet is arranged, offerings (*Prasāds*) are given to four *Kawal* of Swayambhū.

After that, *Naikyalan* *Luigu* (coconut throwing) *Jātrā*, *Yakamisāyā* *Bhujyā* (single woman's festival), *Jawaljātrā* or *Bhoto* *Jātrā* is observed in *Lagankhel*.

In *jāholākhel*, on the same day, people come all over the valley especially seven villages *Panga*, *Kirtipur*, *Nagau*, *Balambu*, *Lhonkha*, *Satungal*, *Tapakhyah*. On the occasion the national anthem is played. An official *Guthi Sansthan*, representing the Government of Nepal shows the *Bhoto* (a vest engraved with precious stones) to the crowded devotees. The long chariot festival is concluded. The *Pānju* then removes the image of *Karunāmaya* from the chariot and enshrines on the *khat* (portable seat of the god). Yet, another procession accompanied by musical instruments along with torches forms up to escort the deity proceeds back to *Bungamati*. The procession heads straight towards south, across the *Nakhu* River. There a large group people carrying torches of burning strew. When

4 Thirvakra Buddhāchārya, age 56, Interview in 2077, Ashoj 14, in his residence at Swayambhū)

*Bungady*: reaches to its' hometown, the deity is welcomed by performing purification *poojā* before the image of deity is installed inside the temple (Locke, 1980: p. 276).

Four days later, having completed all rites, the image is properly installed inside the temple and is opened for worship. The people of the valley celebrate the festival in *Bungmati* with musical bands as take care of it. Thus, the entire chariot festival of that year is completed.

### Conclusion

The Karunāmaya chariot procession has started in the seventh century during the reign of King Narendra Dev in *Nepalmandala*. Karunāmaya or Lokesvara is considered as the god of rain. It is believed that it was brought from Assam for public welfare during the drought in Nepal. According to religious beliefs, Shaivites worship as *Matsyendranāth*, Vaishnavism worships as Vishnu and Buddhists worship as Lokesvara or Bodhisattva. The local people worship as *Karunāmaya*, *Bungadya*. This deity is considered as a symbol of religious tolerance and nationality. Historically, this deity is associated with Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Kathmandu. Culturally, there seem some connections with Kirtipur, Swayambhū and Patan during the Rathjātrā. The procession of Lokesvara starts and ends with the Buddhāchārya of Swayambhū. In the beginning of the *Rathjātrā Pānju* takes away a seat from *Shāntipur* and at the end *Pānju* perform complementary *poojā* in Vāyupur.

According to popular belief, *Karunāmaya* is considered to be the son of Shantikarāchārya. So *Shāntikarāchārya* seems to have been worshiped for permission. *Yogambar* in *Swayambhū* is worshiped as *Yogambar* of *Mhaypi* in Kathmandu. *Shāntikar* had sacrificed his son who had come with him one day while he was practicing yoga regularly in *Mhaypi*, *Yogamber*. After the sacrifice, Shantikarāchārya's son was born as a Bodhisattva in *Kamarukamaksha*. In order to conduct the procession of the Bodhisattva, it is seen that a goat was sacrificed as a symbol of the first sacrifice to *Yogambar* and its skin was used as an Asana (Seat). It is believed that there is a blood relationship between *Buddhāchārya* and *Bungamati* of Swayambhū.

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