

A STUDY ON ITUMBAHAL

**A Dissertation Submitted to:
Central Department of Nepalese History Culture and Archaeology
in the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
Master of Arts Degree in
Nepalese History Culture and Archaeology**

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This dissertation entitled "**A Study on Itumbahal**" has been prepared by Ushnik Ratna Shakya under my supervision and guidance. He has conducted research in Itumbahal- a Buddhist monastery of Kathmandu.

Therefore, I recommend this dissertation to the evaluation committee for its final approval.

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LETTER OF APPROVAL

This dissertation paper submitted by Ushnik Ratna Shakya entitled "A Study on Itumbahal" has been accepted and duly approved as partial fulfillment of requirement for Masters Degree of Arts in Culture by the judgment committee comprising of:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ever since my childhood days, I wonder about the mystery of cultural activities, which our ancestor had left behind. My grandfather, late Thayapa, Moti Kazi Shakya used to tell us about the legends of Gurumapa, Keschandra, and Itumbahal. He was a source of inspiration for me, to explore the mystery, surrounding the cultural heritage of Newar Buddhism. I pay deep respect to my late grand father, Moti Kazi Shakya.

It took me long years to write this thesis, particularly because of painful job to piece together several information and evidence which I have gathered in the process. Many evidence are such that only time can prove it, I have to wait for appropriate time to capture the reality. There are still more mystery's to surface for collection in the future.

Special thanks goes to my thesis supervisor Associate Professor Dr. Milan Ratna Shakya for his guidance in dissertation writing. Thanks also goes to Dr. Beena Poudyal, head of Cultural Department for managing to write my dissertation in order to complete my masters degree.

My special thanks to Capt. Chandra Bahadur Shakya and Thayapas of Itumbahal for providing information about Itumbahal. I want to express my sincere thanks to all the friends and honourable teachers of Buddhist Department and Cultural Department of Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur for their contribution to write my thesis.

Ushnik Ratna Shakya

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Itumbahal is a prominent Buddhist Monastery of the Kathmandu valley. This is located in the heart of Kathmandu metropolitan city, at ward no. 26. It is surrounded by Kilagal in the north and Chokachen gulli in the south. One can reach Itumbahal via Yetkha-Naradevi road in the west or Indrachok Bhedasing road in the east. There are many Nanies and gullies in around Itumbahal¹. All the gullies (narrow lanes) and nannies (small compounds) are interconnected in such a way that one can move around the main shrine, the monastery of Itumbahal.

The main shrine of Itumbahal (the monastery) is square shaped (about 25 meter sq.) two storey, old looking structure with (typical) Newari Architecture. Bricks, clay and wood is extensively used in the construction. While entering into the shrine one can see a temple like structure in the centre of the compound, with enclosed stupa. Behind this structure there is a Kwapadya (Buddha) facing east. The main shrine or monastery is surrounded by big Itumbahal court yard in the east, *Tahanani* in the west, *Bakunani* in the south and *Taranani* in the North.

The antiquity of this structure dates back to the 11th century, during the reign of Thakuri king Bhaskardeva. According to an unpublished document of late elder Moti Kazi Shakya, earlier this monastery was famous for its gold coated roofs and pinnacles, then it was known as

¹ Nanies are the small compounds with entry & exit passages the gullies are small lanes with rows of houses on both sides.

“*Suvarna Mahavihar*” or ‘Golden monastery’, later during the reign of king Bhaskardeva, a gentleman Keshchandra repaired it and re-named as “*Bhaskar Deva Sanskarita Keshchandra Krita Parawarta Mahavihara*”.

According to Daniel Wright, Itumbahal must have been established around N.S. 200. The Swayambhu Purana gives an evidence of king Bhaskarvarma, who ruled around 11th century, and with his name vihara was constructed by Keshchandra² In Gopalraj vansawali, it was mentioned that a stranger from Patan came to Kathmandu to open the fort gate of *Yatum Vihara* in the year N.S. 361³.

The earliest dated inscription yet found in Itumbahal is of N.S. 502. It has been mentioned that during the time of king Jayasthiti Malla a high ranking court official 'Madan Ram Vardan' and his wife established the figure of *Dipankara* and constructed the shrine of *Arya Tara*⁴.

Keshchandra has bought about 360 ropanis of land in Kathmandu valley in order to sustain it financially and established numerous guthis to keep it socially strong⁵. The several inscriptions dotted around Itumbahal tells us about the establishment of guthis and donations of land and icons to the guthis, rich donations by devoted followers made Itumbahal one of the economically strong Buddhist monastery. However, due to negligence among sangha members, all these precious artifacts which once proudly hang around Itumbahal shrine has been stolen, lost, damaged, sold out or lying decayed in the dusty corner. The stolen

² Hem Raj Shakya, *Swamyambhu Mahachitya*, Translated by Min Bahadur Shakya, Published by Swayambhu Bikas Mandal. Swayambhu. N.S. 1124. V.S. 2061: Page No. 52.

³ See Appendix I.

⁴ See Inscription from Itumbahal ed. Swasti Ratna Shakya, *Itumbahal Abhilekh Sangraha*, published by: Sri Keshchandra Mahavihar Sanrakshyan Samaj. Itumbahal Kathamndu, 2062 Page No.1.

⁵ Daniel Wright 'History of Nepal'. Pub. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1877, reprint 1972, Page no. 170

artifact has become a part of proud possession of foreign museums, or in the hands of private collectors.

The sangha of Itumbahal consists of Shakya and Bajracharya families one of the largest sangha of Kathmandu valley, is destined to perform the numerous socio-religion activities: like guthi celebration, yearly and monthly festivals, daily ritual etc. many of the historically significant guthi celebration are abandoned now, probably due to the financial problems and disputes among the sangha members. Guthi is the socially organized people with common objectives of celebration of festivals, rituals, as well as to help unprivileged and bereaved families. However, in modern days the guthi have lost its original spirit. Most of the guthis are now abandoned, ultimately resulting a cultural melt down, creation of social confusion and unrest in the society.

The divided groups of Itumbahal Sangha are fighting for the share of responsibilities over the renovation and restoration of Itumbahal. The group wise renovation of Itumbahal resulted into the variation in architectural perfect ness. The two groups controlling the parts of southern and north half of viharas, renovated the vihara in their own ways, which resulted into the different style of architecture on the two halves of vihara.

Itumbahal is full of historical and cultural value. I make a choice of Itumbahal as a sample among many Buddhist monasteries of the valley, primary because it's a major Buddhist monastery with largest sangha members and full of socio-cultural events. Architecturally, it is still well preserved archaeological objects of 11th century A.D. The secondary motive of this work is to make survey on the preservative and conservative works conducted during different phases of history. The

time span from the foundation days from 11th century, then medieval years and up to modern period is covered in my thesis. The several struggles and difficulties faced by sangha for preservation and conservation through the ages, are mentioned in my research.

1.2 Objectives of Research

I have twin objective both primary and secondary, which are as follows:

1. Primary

The prime objective of this research is to obtain the MA Degree in culture.

2. Secondary

- a) The secondary objective of this research is the study of religious, cultural and social structure of medieval Nepal and its comparative deviations in modern Nepal. This study especially focuses on the artistic and architectural peculiarities of Itumbahal and its restoration works of recent years. The complete knowledge about cultural heritage of Nepalese monastic Buddhism is the objective of research.
- b) The advantage of being a sangha member of Itumbahal, would contribute to find out the unpublished legends, research evidence and other peculiarities not yet known before.

1.3 Significance of Study

Itumbahal is one of the major Buddhist Viharas of the Kathmandu valley. There are 18 major Buddhist Viharas, in the 3 major towns of the

valley. The major Viharas are also known as Mahaviharas, where the ‘*Chudakarma*’ is performed and the secret teaching of Buddhism taught. Itumbahal is a unique among a few major viharas where the ancient structure has remained intact despite some unsuccessful efforts made by guthiyars to privately own it.

Architecturally, it is one of the major structure as well as the master piece of ancient Buddhist monastery. Itumbahal is a square shaped Buddhist Vihara, several renovations and restorations by different groups of people through the ages have significantly altered the original architectural beauty of Itumbahal. From the earliest dates of foundations of Itumbahal there are, evidences of donations of precious art objects to the monastery. Many of those donated artifacts are missing, lost, theft, sold, lying decayed, renovated or replaced. The observation and collection of datas in the course of my study will, I believe help to gain awarness in the society about the identification, preservation and conservation of such art objects.

Many Buddhist gods and goddess carved at struts wood, stone, clay figures, metal statues, canvas paintings, found in Itumbahal are unique. Some of the beautiful artifacts found in Itumbahal are quite unknown in Buddhist iconography. Indeed, it demands more research on Identification. The entire philosophy of Buddhism are hidden in these Buddhist iconography. The research and indepth knowledge about iconography will certainly help understand the Buddhist teachings and its social implementation. The art, as we know, today not only describes the Buddhist teachings but it also tells about the hidden stories of legends, cultural beliefs, traditions, philosophy of contemporary society, my research will certainly help enrich the knowledge about the socio-cultural aspects of Itumbahal sangha, and to some extant the sanghas of the valley

as a whole. The sangha of Itumbahal consists of Shakyas and Bajracharaya families; one of the largest sangha of Kathmandu valley, numerous socio-religious activities like daily rituals, monthly and yearly festivals and performed.

I take, Itumbahal as a sample among numerous Buddhist Viharas of Kathmandu valley to study about the glory of monastic order and its socio-cultural and religious impact upon the society through the ages. The past present and future of Buddhist monastic order is the prime objective of my research.

In my course of writing this thesis, I came to know about that, Mrs. Chiranjevi Shova Bajracharya had already written a thesis on Itumbahal and submitted it to Cultural Department about 20 years back. That was unpublished document, which unfortunately, not available, either in cultural department or in the central Library. She wrote in Nepali with then available research evidence. However, the time has changed significantly, the research evidence, then available, is not available now, most of the artefacts, manuscripts, paintings, inscriptions (the primary sources) are stolen. My thesis report is based on some of the available primary and secondary sources, with sole objective of protection of cultural heritage of Buddhism in Nepal.

1.4 Methodology

Following methods are applied in this research:-

- a. Literature review is the initial method of this research, it means, the research oriented journals, newspaper articles, standard publication and unpublished documents is compiled and analyzed properly.

- b. The standard observation method like collection of photographs, and field study is adopted in this study.
- c. The interview's, with concerned authority of this monastery is taken for the collection of the data for this study/research. Legends, related with Itumbahal is taken into account as secondary source.

1.5 Review of Literature

There are occasional publication of articles regarding the historicity and legends of Itumbahal. Local Journals like *Newa Times*, *Viswabhumi* regularly publishes articles about Itumbahal. Some foreign trusts and organizations had also published a few documents regarding the restoration of Itumbahal. The recent publication of *Itumbahal Abhilekh Sangraha* will, be scrutinized; besides the *Buddhist Monasteries* of John. K. Locke. '*Buddhist Iconography*' . of B. Bhattacharya. *History of Nepal* by Daniel Wright, *Nepal Madala*, *Arts and culture of Nepal* written by Mary Slusser, P. Pals's, *Arts of Nepal Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*, *Swayambhu Mahachaitya* by Hem Raj Shayka, Luciano Petech's *Medieval History of Nepal*, David N. Gellener's *Monks Householders and Tantric Prist* and many other publication are helpful in making my study a complete research.

Here I will deal some of the books and publication, from where, I borrow some significant points to complete my thesis work.

1. Daniel Wright's, '*History of Nepal*' Published by Cambridge University Press of Cambridge, England 1877. Daniel Wright who visited Nepal during Rana period, has extensively written about the history of Nepal. In page 167 of his book, Daniel Wright has mentioned about legends of Itumbahal, about Keshchandra and

Gurumapa. The dates and time period may be erroneous, however it gives an ample source about the legends then prevalent in Kathmandu valley.

2. Hem Raj Shakya's '*Sri Swayambhu Mahachatiya*' translated by Min Bahadur Shakya, published by Swayambhu Bikash Mandal. Kathmandu in 2004. It contains a chapter about the legends of Itumbahal, Swayambhu bahi and its connection with the sangha of Itumbahal. The original version of this book is '*Sri Swayambhu Maha Chaitya*' written in Newari by Pd. Hem Raj Shakya. It tracks down, its sources from the ancient book of '*Swayambhu Purana*'. The '*Swayambhu Maha Chaitya*' is helpful in verifying the legends and cultural heritage of Itumbahal.
3. John K. Locke's '*Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*' and '*Karunamaya*' published by Sahayogi press, Kathmandu is helpful in identifying the development of Buddhist monasteries in Nepal and its social and cultural values. He makes several visits to Itumbahal and mentioned about the architecture, arts and socio religious aspects of Itumbahal.
4. Mary Slusser's '*Arts and culture of Nepal Selected Paper*' published by Mandala publication, Kathmandu, 2055. Mary Slusser had paid several visits to Itumbahal and mentioned about condition of arts and artefacts found in Itumbahal. Most of the artefacts mentioned by Mary Slusser had been disappeared, may be stolen. Her photograph and description contains an immense artistic value.
5. Benoytosh Bhattachaya's (1) '*The Indian Buddhist Iconography*' 1968, and (2) '*Nispannana Yogawali*' published by oriental publication, Baroda, in 1972 contains many iconographic features

of Buddhist gods and goddess. His book is helpful in identifying the gods carved in strut woods and tympanyum.

6. '*The life of Marpa*' the translation: translated by Nalanda translation committee, Pragya press, Boulder 1982. This book contains in details the biography of Guru Marpa, his life and achievement. The original version in Tibetan, written in 1505 A.D. while the Siddha Guru Marpa lived in 11th century. The dates of his birth, and his visits to India corresponds with the political events in Kathmandu valley. With the study of his life time events makes me assume that both Gurumarpa and Gurumapa of Itumbahal are same personality.
7. '*Restoration of Itumbahal*' a progress report published by Kathmandu valley preservation trust, Kathmandu 2001, contents in details the progress made during the recent restoration and preservation works of Itumbahal. Several maps, sketches and photographs of Itumbahal shrine is helpful in studying the architectural features in details.

Nepali/ Newari

- a. Edited by Swasti Ratna, Siddha Ratna '*Itumbahal Abhilekh Sangraha*' published by Itumbahal Sangrakshyan Samaj, Kathmandu in 2062, contains in details the inscriptions found in Itumbahal. The Inscriptions written in broken Sanskrit, old Newari are translated into Nepali, and the theme of inscription is explained. The first historically important inscription, dated NS. 502 to up to NS. 1058 is compiled in this publication, about 43 pieces of inscription is explained in the publication. This books is valuable in explaining the socio-cultural activities prevailed in Itumbahal during medieval years.

- b. Dhanavajra Vajracharya and K.P. Malla's, '*The Gopal Rajvamsawali*' published by Nepal research center 1983. In this book, while explaining the Gopalraj Vamsawali, Dhanavajra had mentioned, twice the name of Itumbahal as '*Yatum Vahara*'. It proves that Itumbahal existed in 13th century as a center of Buddhist activities. This book is helpful in providing the historicity of Itumbahal.
- c. Bhuwanlal Pradhan's '*Kathmandu Upatayaka Ko Kehi Sanskritic Chirkamirka*' Published by Dr. Sumitra Manandhar, Kathmandu 2064. In this book an entire chapter is dedicated to Itumbahal, it's historicity, legend, socio-religious activities, guthis, areas around Itumbahal shrine, and its importance. He had interviewed with 'Thayapa, Moti Kazi Shakya before writing this chapter. It describes some of the guthi celebrations which were now abandoned in Itumbahal.
- d. Gyan Mani Nepal's '*Nepal ko Purva Madhya Kal Ko Itihas*', Published by Nepal and Asian Research Centre T.U. Kirtipur-2054, in this book he had written about the time period of King Bhaskardeva in the middle of 11th century and the personality of Keshchandra, as mentioned in an ancient manuscripts. This books is helpful in explaining the political situation during the reign of Bhaskardeva.
- e. Bhikshu Sudarsan's '*Nepa Ya Baha Bahi Ya Bisesta*' Published by Nepal Boudha Pariyati Samaj, 2051. In this book Bhikshu Sudarsan had given some characteristics feature of Nepalese Buddhist monastery and its comparative analysis with ancient vihara's of Buddhas time.
- f. '*Gunala-Bajan Bojya- NS. 1118 - Lumanti Pau*' published by Keshchandra Gunala Bajan Khala, Itumbahal, Kathmandu-2054

is important publication of Itumbahal Sangha, it gives information about different activities of Itumbahal sangha, legends of Kanga Ajima etc.

1.6 Justification

All these literature deals with traditional aspect, are valid for reviewing of this new research. However, they suffice with important informations for the deelopment of this topic. These, however, does not suffice with this new objectives. Hence, this new reseawrch is valid for the study.

1.7 Chapter Schemes

Chapter I	:	Introduction
Chapter II	:	Itumbahal Complex
Chapter III	:	Historicity of Itumbahal
Chapter IV	:	Legends, of Itumbahal
Chapter V	:	Socio-Religious activities and Sangha of Itumbahal.
Chapter VI	:	Socio-economic condition of Itumbahal.
Chapter VII	:	Architectural Heritage of Itumbahal
Chapter VIII:	:	Art objects of Itumbahal.
Chapter IX	:	Recent restoration and conservation of Itumbahal.
Chapter X	:	Conclusion
		Appendix I
		Appendix II
		Appendix III
		Bibliography

CHAPTER TWO

ITUMBAHAL COMPLEX

2.1 Introduction

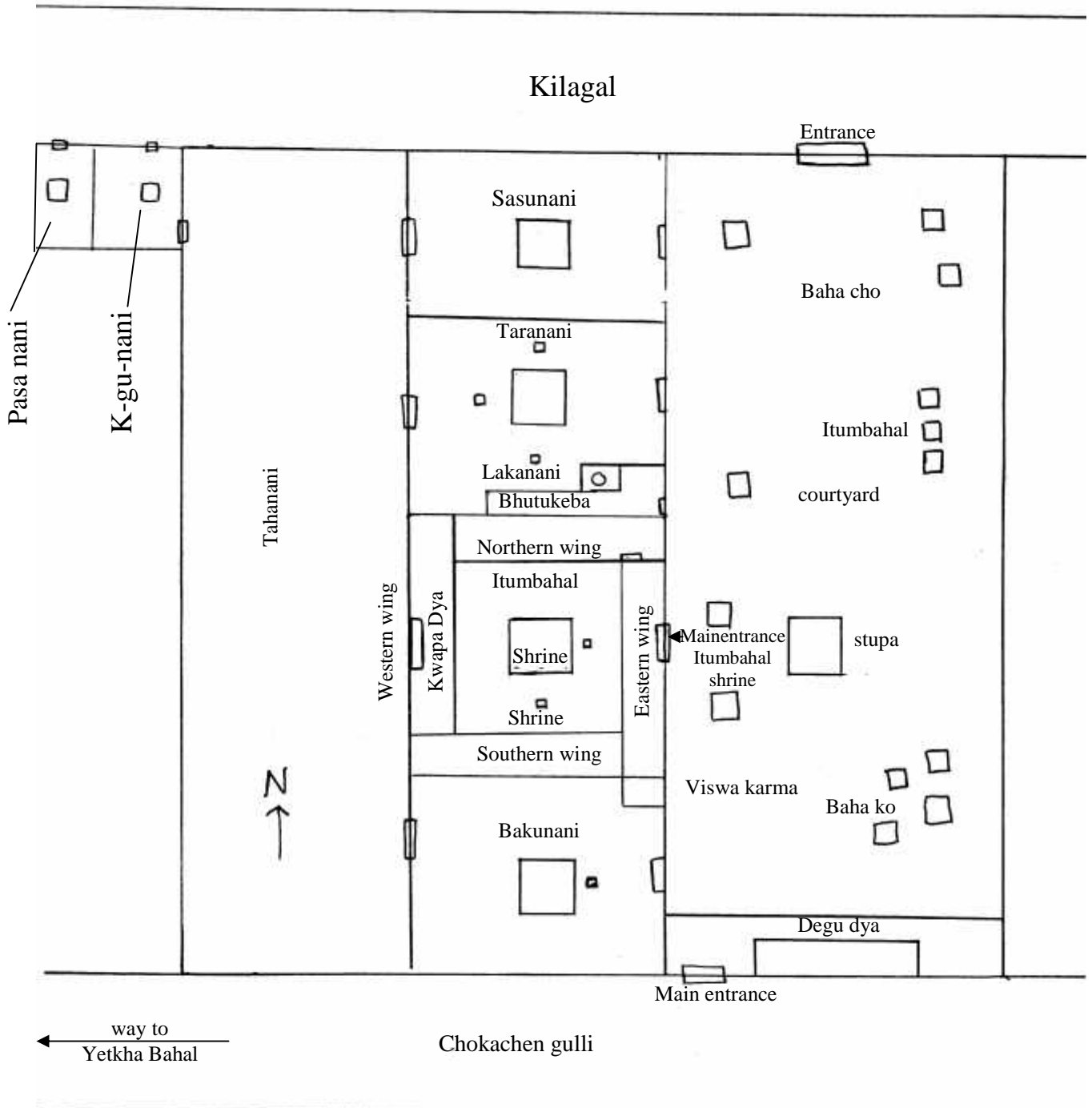
The Itumbahal complex is full of many bahas, nanies & chukas (the typical Newari names for narrow lanes connecting rows of household compounds and another compounds). Every compound are dotted with many votive stupas, sacred shrines, wells and sacred objects of worships. Once there has been seven *Agam Ghar* and seven wells around Itumbahal, but now there are only three *Agam Ghar* and one well.⁶ The proper shrine of Itumbahal is flanked by two big rectangular compounds of *Tahanani* in the west and Itumbahal courtyard in the east. The main entrance of Itumbahal shrine is from eastern courtyard of Itumbahal. The courtyard is connected by two narrow gullies of *Chokachen Gulli* in the south and *Kilagul* in the north. The eastern courtyard of Itumbahal is so big that local residents divided it into two halves, northern half is known as *Baha cho* (top end of baha) and the southern *Baha ko* (lower end of baha). The northern border of proper Itumbahal shrine is shared with *Taranani* (The shrine of Goddess Tara) and *Baku nani*- a small shrine housing a votive chaitya in the south. There is no inter connecting doorways opening towards those shrine of north and south. The proper Itumbahal is perfectly square shape with two-story structure made of wood, bricks and clay. The area of proper Itumbahal shrine is - 1 ropani - 7 anna-1dam or 7893.14 sq ft and it is located at ward No 26 with kitta no- 197.⁷

⁶ Bhuwan Lal Pradhan; *Kathamndu Upatya ka Kehi, Sankritic Chirka Mirka*, Published by Dr. Sumitra Mahandhar 2064, page No. 123.

⁷ According to capt . Chandra Bahadur Shakya, president , Itumbahal Sangrakshyan Samaj.

Here, I will deal separately all the compounds around Itumbahal complex.

The Itumbahal Complex



(Sketches not according to scales)

2.2 Itumbahal Shrine

The main shrine of Itumbahal is square shape with 24.95 meter×24.85 meter. The main entrance into the shrine is from the open courtyard of Itumbahal. The main entrance is guarded by two stone lions and decorated with a wooden *Torana*. Just behind the entrance there is a resting place or a *Phalincha* on both sides. A small temple like structure of one storey with enclosed votive stupa is located at the centre of the courtyard, right in front of main entrance is Kwapadya - a *Santum Santorium*, with *Akshobhya Buddha* statue facing east as usual. The shrine is decorated with gold polished repousee door panels and wooden *Torana* with *Vajrasatwoo*. There are two stone carved pillared frame with hanging bells (Fig-2). Two pairs of stone and metal lions guard the entrance of Kwapadyas. The 'arc' shaped wooden oil lamp holder is placed above the pair of lions. There are two figures of Buddha's devout disciples *Sariputra* and *Maugadlayani* on both sides of entrance, and a big lotus shaped mandala in front of entrance. The upper storey of kwapadya is empty with finely carved wooden window. The finely carved strut wood supports the sloping roof of upper storey. The gods are believed to be of *Pancharakshya* Gods and a pair of *Maha Akshobhya* (Fig.-1). The roof top of the Kwapadya shrine is decorated with gold polished five pinnacles.

The most part of ground floor is empty and used during the social and religious occasions. The ground floor of northern wing is open hall, known as *Sanghasala* or *Salinsala*. In the middle of *Salinsala* there is a special alter where the *Aaju Dya* or *Keshchandra* is displayed during the festivals of *Gun-la*. This place has been utilized as a exhibition hall during the festivals of *Gun-la*. The compulsory duty among sangha members to guard the exhibition during *Gun-la* festivals is known as

Salan-Pa-Guthi. The upper floor of northern wing is the *Agam Ghar* where secret tantric deities are resided, only initiated persons are allowed to enter. This place is also known as *Taha-Matan-Agam Ghar*. Guthi members gather here to celebrate guthis like *Tuta-gu*, *Swancha gu* etc. Behind the northern wing there is *Bhutukeba* or kitchen complex, where a *mun* of rice and meat is cooked for legendary demi-god Gurumapa, during the annual festivals and guthi celebrations, all the necessary cookings are done at this place. The entrance of *bhutukeba* is located at the north east corner of bahal. Just above the entrance there was a giant figure of *Gurumapa Bhairab (Kirti mukh Bhairab)*, which has been stolen now (Fig. -6).

The ground floor of southern wing is utilised as a store house during the annual guthi celebration, and upper floor is a place for secret Agam deities where no body is allowed to entre except those with higher initiations like *Dekha*. All kinds of legal and official jobs, documentation and meetings are held at the 2nd floor of eastern wing, the office of Itumbahal.

There are three votive stupas at the courtyard including a stupa with four standing buddhas, facing four directions and about four ft tall. Just below the *chatrumukh stupa* (fig-2) there are sunken carved stone where the *pinda rice* is offered in the name of deceased one, during the *srad*. Similarly, the kids are bathed at the base of another votive stupa, in front of main entrance, during the process of initiations. (see fig. 5) The place is marked by 3 sunken stones place together. A big stone mandapa at north west corner of courtyard, is the bathing place for Thayapa's during the moment of auspicious initiation. A small rectangular sunken tank below the courtyard level is located at the south west corner, also known as *Ikun - ga*, here all kinds of puja offerings are

thrown into, after conclusion of puja held inside courtyard.⁸ A swastika marked stone is located at north-east corner. It's remarkable for the launching pad of cooked rice and meat offerings to Gurumapa. From this swastika marked stone the rice is carried non-stop- upto Tudikhel for feeding Gurumapa.

2.3 De-Puja Agam Ghar

The *De-paju Agam Ghar* is located at the southern half (Baha ko) of the Itumbahal courtyard. The old looking structure of storey is facing north. A pair of stone lion stand guard at the entrance of *Agam Ghar*. A beautifully carved *Tympanum* can be seen just above the entrance. A couple of blind window in located at both side of entrance.

The first floor is the main shrine of *Agam Ghar*. The secret deity of lineage, is belived to be brought from the gum-vihar at sankhu, by Keshchandra. The long beautifully carved wooden window with five niches is located at the 1st floor, just above *Tympanum*. The design and wood carving can be compared with the cavings inside the Itumbahal shrine.

The 2nd floor is almost ruined structure with sloping roof, and a short varandha, without pinnacles. The old people in Itumbahal used to say that earlier there was a sloping lattice window, supporting the sloping tiled roof of 2nd floor, and from this lattice window an oil lamp (*Dalucha*) is hanged upto the entrance of *Agam Ghar*, at ground floor. The three gold polished pinnacle grace top of the sloping roof but its empty now.

Looking back at the history of this structure; it was widely repaired around 1985 B.S. by *Chakreswar Hiranya Vajra Bajracharya* by raising

⁸ Bhuwan Lal Pradhan. *op . cit* p. n. 127

funds and donations among sangha members. However, during the 1990 earthquake the entire top floor collapsed, the rain water trickled inside the *Agam Ghar*. Once again, the fund raised among sangha members for repairing, roof top, and save the *Agam* from destruction⁹, still today it remained as partially repaired. A dispute is going on, about the rights of control over *Agam Ghar* among Bajracharya guru and Sangha members, ignoring urgently needed repair and maintenance. The overall charge of De-Puja *Agam ghar* is given to Chakreswar of Itumbahal. The term expires as soon as he dies and charge is given to next Chakreswar, appointed by Itumbahal Sangha.

2.4 Itumbahal Courtyard

The big rectangular shaped courtyard of Itumbahal is connected by *kilagul* in the north and *chokachen gulli* in the south. The entrance to proper Itumbahal shrine, *Baku nani*, *Taranani*, *Sasunani* is in the western part of this courtyard. There are about 15 big and small stupas dotted around courtyard including a big white *Asoka Chaitya* at the center. The courtyard is so big that locals divide in into two halves and called, *Baha-cho* the northern half and *Baha-ko* the southern half. In *Baha ko* there is a *Agam Ghar* of the deity of lineage, which opens for a month during month of Baisakh. The old looking shrine has been robbed by thieves several times. Many sacred deities has been stolen. A pair of stone lion is guarding the shrine. The beautifully carved windows and wooden tympanum grace the entrance of *Agam Ghar*.

2.5 Baku nani

Baku nani is the distorted version of *Baha-ko nani*. If a person enters Itumbahal courtyard from south it is the first courtyard in the left, from *Baku-nani* one can exit towards *Tahanani*. It is a small compound

⁹ According to the unpublished document of late Thayapa Moti Kaji Shakya written in 2052.

with an enshrined stupa at the center. This was renovated in A.D. 1853.¹⁰ Once there was a separate *Agam Ghar* of this Vihara, but now, it became a private property. *Baku nani* is also locally known as *Kutum Vihara*.

2.6 Viswakarma

Just on the left side of main entrance of Itumbahal shrine there is a small shrine of Viswakarma (the lord of workman ship) with Toranas and carved wooden door frame. The shrine does not exist now, however, it can be identified with a small lions carved on stone base of entrance into Viswakarma shrine presently, an electric workshop is running at the shrine.

2.7 Taranani

The small compound located at Northern border of proper Itumbahal shrine is known as Taranani. This nani is named after lord Tara. A single roofed one-story shrine of Tara is located at the center of this nani. According to the inscriptions located just outside the shrine, the white Tara and shrine itself has been constructed and donated by Mrs. Jayatra Laxmi Sakya. (Wife of Madan ram Vardan), in N.S 502¹¹. Mrs. Jayatra Laxmi Shakya belongs to, Kirtipunya Mahavihar (Lagan Bahal), Kathmandu. She was daughter of Harsharam Chandra Shakya (According to Dr. Milan Ratna Shakya). The structure was completely collapsed in 1990 earthquake. It was repaired in 2006 B.S. In 2046 B.S. the corrugated metal sheath roof was replaced with copper sheath roof and iron grill put around the Tara shrine.¹²

¹⁰ John.K Locke. *Buddhist Monastries of Nepal*, Published by Sahayogi Press, Pvt Ltd. Kathmandu 1985. page No. 290.

¹¹ Ibid. page no - 288

¹² Amrit Man Shakya, *Itumbahal ya Sri Taradevi Ya Mhasika*, A report published in *Yen Newapost* 9 Aug. 2004.

Inside, there are three statues of *White Tara*, *Pragyaparamita* and *Green Tara*. Beside, *White Tara* the other two statues in the shrine are of later additions. The daily rituals of this Tara shrine is performed by elder of saky lineage, who automatically, becomes a member of samyek guthi, and bear the responsibility of organizing 12 years samyek festivals, but now, daily ritual performance has become a hereditary job.¹³ The Sanskrit name of this vihar is *Dharmachakra Vihar*.

There are 3 stupas in this courtyard and during the festivals of Gun-
la, gods like Dipankars, and ritual texts are displayed at the basement of
northern rows of houses of this compound. A narrow gulli in the back
side of *Taranani* exits towards *Tahanani*.

2.8 La-ka nani

In the south east corner of *Taranani* there is a Well, where it is
believed that powerful *Jwala nag* resides. The *Jwala nag* is so powerful
that it can bite any body any where in the valley. Once bitten a severe
itching starts around body and have had to pacify the *Jwala nag* by
offering pujas and cow's milk in the Well, and draw a small figure of
Dragon on the affected areas of body.¹⁴

The Well is very deep one locals call it 'I-Tum', or deepest one, and
The very name of *Itumbahal* derives from the name of this well. It existed
even before the foundation of *Itumbahal*. During the Leechavi period the
sacred water of this well was brought in for bathing Bungadya, before the
start of festivals of Bungadya in Patan. The tradition must have been
initiated by '*Bandhu Datta Acharya*' and king '*Narendradeva*' of 7th

¹³ John K. Locke. Op. cit. p. 290

¹⁴ Bhuwan lal Pradhan, Op. cit p. 128

century when they brought in the lord Karunamaya from '*Kam rup kama khya*'.¹⁵

The water from this well is offered daily to the kwapadya and in any sacred puja celebration the water is brought in for offering. Because of so many people came to fetch water from this well, this small area near *Taranani* has been named as *La-ka nani* (source of 'water' compound). The puja offering of this well is done by the *Guthi pala* of kwapadya. While offering puja the bell must be ringing for, the Naga residing in the well is believed to be a deaf one. It hears only while ringing bell. Once in a year during the festivals of *sin-nakha*. which fall during the 6th day of Jestha. the well is thoroughly cleaned by drawing water from inside.

2.9 Sasunani

The compound of *sasunani* is located at the north of the *Taranani*. As name suggests this compound has a shrine in the middle of the courtyard with the figure of Manjushree, the god of learning. Sometimes *Manjushree* has been confused with goddess Sarawati, also a god of learning. Therefore, this area is named after goddess Saraswati. One can exit towards *Tahanani* from behind this *sasunani* compound. Locals are ignorant about the foundation period of the shrine. Latest reparing was done in N.S. 1099. This nani is also known as Manjushree Vihar.

2.10 K-gu-nani

From the northwest corner of *Tahanani*, the gulli exits towards small bahal compound known as k-gu-nani. Here a votive chaitya enclosed within a small roofed structure also known as *Dhananju chaitya*

¹⁵ There is a sperate Guthi to look after the offering water of this well to the lord Bungadya. The important ritual of bathing Bungadya has been discontinued recently because of internal fued among Guthi members.

can be found. Another chaitya, located nearby is recently established one. Some of the residents of this compound are jyapus, called as 'Duin' from Halchok. They came here to see the festivals of Indra Jatra. Locals nick named this baha as *Duin baha*. During the festivals of Indrajatra the dance of *Sawabhaku* is prepared and performed at this compound before moving around the city.¹⁶ The small gulli below a private house at North East corner exit towards Naradevi-kilagal road.

2.11 Pa-sa nani

In the west of k-gu-nani, a small compound with main entrance from Naradevi kilagul road is known as Pa-sa nani. Here a big black votive chaitya enclosed within a grilled frame work can be seen. The residents of this compound are Sakyas, Udyas and Jyapus. At the basement of a house facing west, annually displays, the Dipankaras and other ritual objects during the festivals of Gunla, by Uday samaj.

2.12 Main Entrance

The main entrance into Itumbahal complex is the narrow passage below the *Depuja Agam Ghar* from the southern corner of Itumbahal courtyard. The passage exits towards *Choka-chen Gulli*. The entrance is decorated with stone figures of Ganesh, Mahankal, Bhairabas, Narasingh and some inscriptions pasted against the wall of a private house. Any socio-religions function, for example during birth, initiations, marriage and death of residents inside *Bahal* is concluded by throwing the residue (Kala- wayegu) just outside this entrance.¹⁷

¹⁶ Bhuwan Lal Pradhan. Op. cit, p. 130.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 131.

2.13 Kacha Baha (Branch) of Itumbahal

'Kacha Bahas' are the branch monasteries founded by the sangha members of Mahavihars. *Yetkha Baha*, *Syansyan Baha (Atalakhu Bahi)*, *Tamuga Vaha (Ratnakar Mahavihar)*, a *Swayambhu Bahi*, an old Vihara in Kimdol and a Vihara in Banepa (Bhota) are believed to be the Kacha Bahas of Itumbahal, founded by sangha members from Itumbahal but with independent identity. Earlier residents from these viharas came to Itumbahal for initiations, but nowadays, citing different reasons some of them stop initiations in Itumbahal and they are performing initiations on their own, with separate identity.

2.14 Yetkha Baha

Yetkha Baha is located just south west of Itumbahal, one can reach there by walking west of Chokachen Gulli and crossing the street of yetkha. Yetkha Baha is a big compound with 100 mt square (approx). The big stupa with gilded 13 tire pinnacle is located right at the center of courtyard, there is one *Agam Ghar* and *Kwapadya*. Yetkha Baha is not an official branch of Itumbahal but every Sakya families of this courtyard are initiated sangha members of Itumbahal. Therefore the Sakyas of Yetkha Baha recognize Itumbahal as a main Vihara of their lineage, where all the socio-religious rituals are performed.

2.15 Swayambhu Bahi

The *Swayambhu Bahi* is located just right of the Harati temple at Swayambhu. The two story *Bahi* has a *kwapadya*, a stupa and numerous Buddhist deities around the walls of *Bahi*. It is believed that it was the place where Keshchandra's rotten rice was eaten by flocks of pigeons while Keshchandra was asleep. When Keshchandra cried, the pigeons

feel sorry and paid back in gold droppings according to legends. Later in the year NS 513 the *bahi* was founded by faithful doner Joti Raj, right at this place. The Sakya Bhiksu sri Madanju of Itumbahal was put in charge of looking after this *Bahi*. Only the initiated inhabitants of Itumbahal are allowed to tend the *Bahi* acting as a main priest.¹⁸ Nowadays the priesthood became a hereditary job and members of *Bahi* came to Itumbahal only for initiation. During the *Gunla* festivals, every morning the puja offering are compiled by those members of *Bahi*, while members from the Itumbahal circumvent the Swayambhu stupa, chanting Buddhist hymens.

¹⁸ Hem Raj Shakya. *Sri Swayambhu Mahachaitya*, translated by Min Bahadur Shakya. Published by Swayambhu Bikash Mandal. 2061. Kathmandu Page No. 497.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICITY OF ITUMBAHAL

3.1 Historical Evidence

The Sanskrit name of Itumbahal, '*Bhaskardeva Sanskarita Keshchandra Krita Parawarta Mahavihar*' is a clue, which explains the historicity of Itumbahal.

The legendary figure Keshchandra who has constructed, Itumbahal is still elusive. Some historians date him about the 11th century. He is a son of Thakuri King Bhaskar Malla¹⁹ according to Daniel Wright. In those days Kathmandu is believed to be under the rule of king Bahasrkardeva of Nuwakot²⁰. Keshchandra was a gambler son of Bhaskar Malla, once he lost everything in gambling, disheartened, he went to the jungle (Swayambhu) to be returned with sack full of Gold, then he established huge monastery and named it as "*Bhaskardeva Sanskarita Keshchandra Krita Parawarta Mahavihara*" The nearest meaning of this Sanskrit name is as follows:- 'The pigeon monastery founded by Keshchandra with the patronage of Bhaskardeva'. Besides the Sanskrit name of Itumbahal, we didn't have any authentic evidence about the founding of Itumbahal by Keshchandra himself during the time of Bhaskardeva. We have to prove the evidence with historical fact and figures. First, let's determine the position of Bhaskardeva in the history of Nepal.

¹⁹ Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 1877. Reprint 1972. page No. 167.

²⁰ Bal Chandra Sharma. *Nepal Ko Aitihāsik Ruprekha*, Published by Krishna Kumari, Varanasi. 2053. Page No. 15.

3.2 Reign of Bhaskardeva

There are three persons with the name of Bhaskara: 1. Bhaskardeva. 2. Bhaskar Varma 3. Bhaskar Malla in the early medieval period of Nepal. According to Vamsawali, the Lechavi dynasty ended with the death of last Lechavi ruler Jaya Kamadeva, in the beginning of 11th century; thereafter *Bhaskardeva* came from Nuwakot and ascended the throne and even acquired the title of “*Param Bahttaraka Maharaja Dhiraja Parameswari*” as mentioned in the colophon of a manuscripts dated N.S 167 (1047 AD). He ruled for a short period of 3 years, NS. 165-167 (1045-1047 AD) after that he jointly ruled with Jayadev for 10 years²¹, altogether his reign period is about 13 years from N.S 165-178. (1045-1057 A.D). Gyan Mani Nepal in his ‘*Purva Madhyakal Ko Itihas*’ has allocated the dates of Bhaskardeva as 1042-1052 A.D. Luciano petech in his book ‘*Medieval history of Nepal*’, express that Bhaskaradeva remained alone in throne for about three years from 1045-1048 A.D. According to Vamsawali there was another person with the name of *Bhaskarvarma* who established *Nhuo-Baha* and *Hiranyavarna Mahavihar*, of Patan. This same personality has been described as Bhaskardeva in Daniel Wright’s, ‘*History of Nepal*’ and this Bhaskardeva had no relation what so ever with the establishment of Itumbahal.

According to Daniel Wright, there was a Thakuri named *Bhaska Malla* in Nuwakot whose son’s name was Keshchandra, during the reign of king Harideva in Kathmandu. The date of Harideva can be calculated as, during his (Harideva) great grand father Nara Singh Deva’s reign the village of Chapagaun was founded on 6th of *Phagun Sudi* N.S. 111 i.e. 991 A.D. During the span of 100 years, Santideva and Rama Singh Deva

²¹ Ibid.

reigned for 39 years and 58 years respectively. Therefore, we can calculate the approximate date of Harideva in Kathmandu and Bhaskar Malla in Nuwakot as N.S 210 (1090.A.D.) It was also mentioned that Bhaskardeva married the daughter of Harideva²² of Kathmandu.

According to historians, during the late Malla period there was a Malla king with the name of Bhaskar Malla. He reigned between NS 823-834. He was a son of Bhupalendra Malla, a devout Buddhist, king Bhaskar Malla actively participated in the renovation of Swayambhu Maha Chaity²³.

What so ever, the arguments, the dates of Bhaskardeva according to different Vamsawalis, one thing is certainly clear that he was a vaisya-thakuri who came from the hills of Nuwakot and ruled over the Kathmandu valley during the middle of 11th century. D.R. Regmi believes that Bhaskardeva was elected by the people to fill up the vacancy caused by death without any issue of the last king of the preceeding dynasty of rulers, he ruled probably around NS 167 or (1046 A.D.)²⁴

3.3 Who was Keshchandra?

According to the Bhasa Vamsawalis, Keshchandra was a contemporary of king Guna- kama-deva, who ruled both in Kathmandu and Patan for about 51 years around 10th century, he was credited with the founding of Kantipur and many temples of deities around the city of Lalitpur and Kantipur, Keshchandra was a renown businessmen who led

²² Daniel Wright, Op cit. . Page No. 169.

²³ Hem Raj Shakya, *Sri Swayambhu Mahachaitya*, translated by Min Bahadur Shakya. Pub. by Swayambhu Bikash Mandal. 2061, Kathmandu, Page No. 208.

²⁴ D.R. Regmi, *Ancient and Medieval Nepal*, Printed at Prem Printing Press Lucknow, 1952. Page No. 142

700 (?) businessmen and went to Tibet for business, and came back with enough gold to construct a Buddhist Monastery i.e. Itumbahal²⁵.

But according to Daniel Wright, Keshchandra was contemporary of king Hari Deva, who ruled in the valley in the later half of 11th century. Keshchandra was a son of Bhaskar Malla. His father died when he was young, unable to take care of himself he proceed on gambling, until he lost every thing and left the city to wander into surrounding jungle. On the way with the miraculous blessings of *Kirtimukh Bhairaba* he returned back to valley with tons of gold being carried by *Gurumapa*, later he married the daughter of Raja Harideva. He has a son, who died in his early youth and out of grief he established the monastery, named it as a *Parawarta Mahavihar*, because all his wealth was derived from the pigeons, people afterwards named this Vihara as Itumbahal²⁶.

According to the Swayambhu Purana, around 11th century A.D. there was a king named Bhaskar Varma. During his reign Keshchandra established the monastery which inherited the reigning monarch's name²⁷. The authenticity of Swayambhu Purna is still inconclusive.

3.4 Written Evidence

The earliest written document with the mention of Itumbahal is found in Gopalraj Vansawali, where it has been mentioned that “during Sambat 361, (1241 A.D.) a gentlemen from Patan named Kirti Bharo came to Kathmandu and opened the fort gate of ‘Yatum Vihara’”. The

²⁵ Gyan Mani Nepal, ‘*Nepal Ko Purva Madhya Kal ko itihās*’. pub. by Nepal and Asian Research Centre. T.U. Kirtipur, 2054. Page No. 27.

²⁶ Daniel Wright, Op. cit. Page No.169.

²⁷ Hem Raj Shakya, Op. cit Page No. 122.

mention of *Yatum Vihara* with date N.S. 361 gives us an evidence of probability of existence of Itumbahal at least 200 years before N.S. 361.²⁸

According to unpublished document of late Thayapa Moti Kaji Shakya, written in 2052, Itumbahal is famous as '*Subarna Maha Vihar*' with golden roofs and pinnacles; later Keshchandra, repaired it and re-named it as '*Keshchandra Krita Parawarta Maha Vihar*'.

According to Mary Slusser, who has seen the stolen scroll painting (*Bilanpau*) of Itumbahal, wrote in her book, that scroll painting of Itumbahal bears a clear dates written as V.S. 1280 (A.D. 1233, NS 353) as a foundation dates of Itumbahal. However, the date is certainly not that of a present painting, which is believed to be of a recent copy of faithful succession of series of several earlier paintings, which did bear a similar date at that time. It's mysterious, that dates are written in Vikram Sambat instead of Nepal Sambat therefore, this date is not authentically accepted one.²⁹

Another written evidence with the full Sanskrit name of Itumbahal as a Bhaskar Deva Sanskarita Keshchandra Mahavihar has been found at the end of a manuscript dated N.S. 478; (1358 A.D). In this manuscripts it has been mentioned that on the auspicious 10th day of Bhadra Suklapaksya N.S. 478 a Sakya Bharu Buddhacharya Sri Rajbramha of Bhaskardeva Keshchandra Mahavihara had concluded the celebration of Lakshyabhagwati.³⁰

In the colophons of many religious text books, written in late medieval period, also mention the full Sanskrit name of Itumbahal. It

²⁸See Appendix I.

²⁹Mary Slusser, *Art and culture of Nepal*, selected papers. Published by Mandala publications, Kathmandu. 2005 Page No. 518.

³⁰See Appendix II.

proves that religious teachings and rituals were carried out in the Itumbahal during medieval days.³¹

The earliest dated inscription yet found in Itumbahal is of NS. 502, 1382 A.D. This inscription is a significant source of evidence in studying the socio-political and religious situation of medieval Nepal. It highlights about the donations of Dipankar figures to the Vihara and establishment of Arya Tara shrine by Jayatra Laxmi wife of Madanram Vardan in the Itumbahal complex.³²

After N.S. 502 many inscriptions of NS 682, NS 714, NS 783, NS 795, tells us more about the donations and establishment of many figures (Statues) and celebration of festivals like Samyek Mahadan etc.

3.5 Who was Gurumapa?

Gurumapa was a demi god- Bhairaba who helped Keshchandra, the founder of Itumbahal to construct Vihara. Gurumapa was a legendry figure and contemporary of Keshchandra he found him in the forests of Swayambhu (according to Swayambhu Purana), while he was collecting gold droppings of pigeons, suddenly, Gurumapa appeared out of nowhere and threatened to eat, Keshchandra alive. The massive looking, strong, heavy built with big eyes, frightened Keshchandra. The wit and intelligence of Keshchadra is in no match with Gurumapa. Keshchandra pacified the Gurumapa with a stroke of wit. He called him as maternal uncle and a good person and asked him to carry a sac full of gold up to his house in Itumbahal and Keshchandra would offer him a mun of rice and a buffalo to eat forever. Gurumapa agreed and carried sac full of gold

³¹ See Appendix III

³² John K. Locke. *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Published by Sahayogi Press. Pvt. Ltd. Kathmandu 1985. Page No. 288.

up to Itumbahal (House of Keshchandra) accordingly, Gurumapa resided at Itumbahal and was given rice and meat to eat. Later he developed the habit of cannibalism. Gurumapa was so much feared that even a weeping child would stop crying with just mentioning the name of Gurumapa, "if you don't stop crying, the Gurumapa will take you" mothers used to threaten their unrelenting child, to stop crying. Initially, Gurumapa used to eat dead small kids, later he devoured, live children; this embarrassed Keshchandra, even his only son became a victim of Gurumapa; now people demanded Gurumapa be expelled from neighbourhood and kept at the open field of Tundikhel outside the city of Kantipur. Keshchandra bought Tudikhel and Gurumapa was resided there. Every year on the full moon day of Falgun- a mun of rice and meat of a buffalo is sent for Gurumapa - as promised by Keshchandra. The tradition is still carried on in remembrance of promises made by Keshchandra to Gurumapa.³³

According to seniors of Itumbahal Gurumapa was a *Kirtimukh Bhairaba* a Bodhisatwoo.³⁴ Bhairaba was provoked by Keshchandra to liberate from suffering, incurred by Keshchandra, ultimately Bhairaba helped Keshchandra, to get liberation from sufferings and construct the Vihara. Indeed, it was Kirtimukha Bhairaba ordered pigeons who have eaten the rotten rice of Keshchandra to pay back in golden droppings, he took form of a rakshyasa to ward off the evil forces and protect gold. During his resident at Itumbahal Gurumapa has shown the secret form of Bodhisatwoo to Keshchandra. As time passed on it became quite impossible for Kachchandra to meet the ever growing demands of Gurumapa, even with the minor breakage of agreement with Keshchandra, Gurumapa began to eat children in order to press for full compliance of agreement, finally Gurumapa agreed to live at Tudikhel

³³ Daniel Wright Op. cit. Page No.168. 169.

³⁴ This was also confirmed by Daniel Wright in his 'History of Nepal' page no. 169.

with yearly supply of a mun of rice and a buffalo meat as agreed during their first encounter. Later Keshchandra constructed the Itumbahal and placed a figure of Kirtimukha Bhairva in remembrance of Gurumapa.³⁵

There are both legendary and historical account, now can we prove him to be a true historical personality?

According to the Tibetan sources there was a Siddha-a Bodhisatwoo, with a similar name of Gurumapa (Guru marpa, fig. 7). The study of the biography of Gurumarpa, which was written in 1505 A.D.³⁶ reveals many interesting point which is near to certainty that both the legendary figures of Gurumapa of Itumbahal and Gurumarpa of Tibetan sources are same personality (?) The interesting discovery in my research work is that both of them are contemporary; matches historical background, sequence of events, and personalities as described in both sources.

The Tibetan Gurumarpa was born in 1012 A.D in Lhotrak near Tibet Bhutan Border³⁷. As a boy he was very aggressive and destructive child; concerned with his aggressive nature, parents decided to send him to a religions training, lest he might control his hot temper. Gurumarpa quickly mastered both reading and writing and learned sanskrit. The thirst for knowledge make him decide to go to India and meet more Gurus and Siddhas. He collected enough gold, to spend on his way towards India. He even met a travelling acquaintance and a generous friend who provided him with all necessaries, including caps and boots and an ample supply of gold.

³⁵ For detail see section Legends. Chapter IV

³⁶ The life of Marpa- the translator, Translated by Nalanda Translation Committee. Prajna Press, Boulder. 1982. Page no. xii.

³⁷ Ibid. page no. xxvi.

In Nepal he stayed at Swayambhu for three years.³⁸ Then he began first of his three journey's to India. In India he met siddhas like *Naropa*, *Kukuripa*, *Maitripa* and *Jnanagarbha*, received blessings, initiation and *abhisekhas*. In his first journey, he spent 12 years including his stay in Nepal. He spent 6 years and 3 years respectively, in 2nd and 3rd journey to India. While returning to Tibet from India he made stopover at *Richen Tsul Vihara* in Nepal and received teaching from Nepalese teachers like *Pindapa* and *Chitterpa* and often went to Phamtimpa (Pharping).

While in Tibet he practiced as a Tantrik lama, undertaking protection of rich and famous and their children from evil influence. He even cured childhood diseases, infant deaths and received an ounce of gold as fees. He became a famous tantrik lama in Tibet, many, influential citizens become his disciple and collected still more gold as fees for his next Journey to India.

The arrogant and aggressive young man became one of the renown saint, a siddha, a poet, a translator, and founded the Tibetan Buddhist sect of *ka-gyu-pa* based on the teaching of Naropa and Tilopa.³⁹ Guru marpa was a Bodhisatwoo and possessed super natural knowledge a secret power like "Conscience transference, transferring his own soul into a dead body and take that dead body as his own."⁴⁰ The secret art of conscience transference was known by his son, who accidentally died in

³⁸ According to Blue Annals, Guru Marpa was 15 when he met guru Drogmi, he was 31 when Atisa traveled to Tibet and at 42 he married Dagmema, after returning to Tibet, spending 3 years in Nepal and 9 years in India. Therefore, if he was born in 1012 A.D. then in 1054, at 42 he returned to Tibet. Spending 12 years in India and Nepal. He spent 3 years before he went to India. He must have been at Swayambhu from 1042-1045 A.D.

When Atisa was on his way towards Tibet from Nepal in 1042 A.D., Guru Marpa arrived in Nepal via kerong.

- The life of Marpa - page no. 200.

³⁹ Sir Charles Bell "*The religion of Tibet*", Oxford University Press, first published 1931. Re-print 1968, page no. 63.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Page no. 64

his youth. The soul of his dead son was transferred into a pigeon and from pigeon the conscience was transferred into another dead body, so that his physically dead son was alive again, Gurumarpa lived up to 85 years and died at fire female fox years of 1097 A.D.⁴¹

According to the biography of Gurumarpa, there is no mention of his visit to Itumbahal while in Nepal and meeting Keshchandra. The Tibetan sources acknowledge him as a Siddha, a Bodhisatwo. His biography was written in much later years of 1505 A.D, there is no authentic proof that Guru marpa of Tibet and Gurumapa of Itumbahal are the same person. However, the biography of Gurumarpa clearly mentions that he spent 3 years at Swayambhu from 1042 to 1045 A.D and Keshchandra founded the Itumbahal monastery during the period of Bhaskardeva at around 1045 to 1057 A.D.⁴² Keshchandra might have met Gurumarpa at the forest of Swayambhu around 1042 A.D. He might have discovered hidden gold brought in by Gurumarpa and disputes may have arose about the rightful ownership of sack full of gold, the heated arguments, may have compelled Gurumapa to threaten to kill Keshchandra. (legend: threatened to eat him 'alive'). However, Keshchandra was able to persuade Gurumapa, that gold is rightfully owned by him and agreed to carry it up to the house of Keshchandra in Itumbahal, in return Gurumapa will be served by pot full of rice and meat as a reward. May be, Gurumapa agreed to, part of his gold to be spend for construction of Vihara in lieu of food and lodging at Itumbahal. Anyway,

⁴¹ The life of Marpa - Op cit. Page no. 200.

⁴² The exact date of Bhaskardeva is disputed among different scholars. According to Dhanavajra Vajracharya, Bharkardeva became absolute ruler from Srawan Sukla 10, 165 NS. (1045 A.D.) to Aswain Krisna 6, 167 NS. (1047 A.D.). and Jointly ruled with Baladev upto 1057 A.D.- Dhanavajra Vajracharya. *Gopalraj Vamsawali*, Nepal research Centre, Kirtipur, 1985. Page no. 236. According to Gyan Mani Nepal, Bhaskardeva ruled from 1042 A.D. to 1052 A.D. - Gyan Mani Nepal, *Nepal ko Purva Madya Kal Ko Itihas* CNAS 2054, Kirtipur Page No. 54. According to Balchandra Sharma, Bhaskardeva was a absolute ruler from 1047 A.D. to 1050 A.D.- Balchandra Sharma *Nepal ko Aitihāsik Roprekha* 4th Publication. Published by Krisna Kumari, Varansi, 2053, page no. 15.

while he was in Itumbahal a deadly childhood viral diseases like, small pox and chicken pox might have spread killing many children and blame was showered upon the stranger called Gurumapa, resulting the expulsion of Gurumapa from Itumbahal.

The nature of characteristic personalities of both Gurumapas are similar and chain of events are also strikingly contemporary, still without any conclusive proof, we cannot say that both personalities are same. It needs more research work.

3.6 Approximate Date of Construction

There is no tentative date of construction of Itumbahal. We can only guess the nearest time and period of construction of Itumbahal. The sources like inscriptions, manuscripts, art and architectural evidence, legends, social and ritual practices will be taken into account to reach a conclusion about period of construction.

Itumbahal has a unique tradition of fetching water from well in Itumbahal to bath the Bungadya at Lagankhel in Patan.⁴³ The tradition of bringing water from Itumbahal to Bungadya must have been continued ever since the start of the tradition of *Bungadya Rathajatra*, i.e. since 7th century A.D. There is a special guthi to look after the tradition. But it has been discontinued now. It is significant, that Itumbahal must have been existed at the time of introduction of Bungadya into Nepal by Lechavi king *Narendradeva*. There must have been some kind of shrine during the Lechavi period. The well '*I-tum*' near Itumbahal existed even before the construction of Itumbahal. The very name of Itumbahal is derived from this Well.

⁴³ John K. Locke. Op. cit. page no. 286.

Both the legendary figure of Keshchandra and the king Bhaskardeva are historical personalities. The legends of Keshchandra going towards the *Bhagwan Bahal*, where his sister lives, makes a point about the existence of Bhagwan Bahal during the period of Keshchandra. Historically, we know that Bhagwan Bahal has been constructed by Atisa Dipankara in 1041 A.D., when he visited Kathmandu valley on his way towards Tibet.⁴⁴ Therefore, Itumbahal as a full fledged vihara makes its existence after 1041 A.D. Gopal Raj Vamsawali has mentioned existence of Itumbahal before N.S. 361.⁴⁵ Itumbahal has been, specially related with the name of Bhaskardeva. The absolute reign of Bhaskardeva is between 1045-1047A.D.⁴⁶ Itumbahal must have been constructed during the reign of king Bhaskardeva i.e. (1045-1057 A.D.) This evidence is also proven by the fact that, in the stolen scroll painting (Bilanpau), the dates of foundation has been clearly mentioned as VS 1280 (A.D 1233) NS. 353.

The calculation of dates of arrival of Guru Marpa from Tibet and his stay at Swayambhu in between 1042 - 1045 A.D.⁴⁷ corresponds with the sequence of events happened during those days. Guru Marpa helped Keshchandra in the foundation of Itumbahal monastery. He, might have spend some of his gold brought from Tibet to construct vihara. Unfortunately, something, unimaginable event might have happened during Guru Marpa's stay at Itumbahal, which disgraced him (Gurumapa) as a bad character. The respected name of Guru Marpa became a fearful demi god Gurumapa. Ultimately led him to be thrown out of the boundaries of Kantipur city, of course! into the open field by Tudikhel.

⁴⁴ Hem Raj Shakya, op. cit Page no. 117.

⁴⁵ Mary Slusser, op. cit page no. 518.

⁴⁶ Dhanavajra vajracharya op. cit. page no. 22,

⁴⁷ The life of Marpa, Op. cit page no. 200.

CHAPTER - FOUR

LEGENDS OF ITUMBAHAL

4.1 Introduction

There are many interesting legends prevalent in Itumbahal. The foundation of Itumbahal and consequent events, happened in Itumbahal during the medieval period, which has been heard through generation to generation, came down as a superb legends of the monastery. The verbal recitation of legends from one generation to another generation and the gossips about Keshchandra, Gurumapa at the gatherings in Itumbahal are the sources of those legends. The *Bilanpau* or scroll painting, once proudly decorated at the premises of Itumbahal, vividly picturises the events following foundation of Itumbahal. Unfortunately, those *bilanpau's* are no where to be seen, an immense losse of the History of Itumbahal. Great writes like Daniel Wright, John. K. Locke. Mary Slusser had seen those *bilanpau's* and they had written commentaries in their respective publication.⁴⁸ Daniel Wright had fully described the legends of Itumbahal in his “History of Nepal”. Similarly, the legands can be found in the “Swayambhu Mahachaitya” by Hem Raj Shakya.⁴⁹

The legends overwhelming with supernatural events, are quite enough to generate faith and devotion towards society, religion and the monastery as a whole. Here I will deal with the full version of story of Keshchandra as told by Thayapa, Moti Kaji Shakya, then the version of Daniel Wright and Hem Raj Shakya will be referred separately.

⁴⁸ Daniel Wright ‘*History of Nepal*’ Pub. Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 1977. re-print 1972. page no. 170.

- John K. locke. *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Sahayogi Press Kathmandu 1985. Page No. 290
- Mary Slusser. *Art & Culture of Nepal selected papers*. Pub. By Mandala publication, Kathmnadu 2005, page no. 518.

⁴⁹ Hem Raj Shakya, *Sri Swayambhu Mahachaitya*. Translated by Min Bahadur Shakya. Pub. by Swayambhu Bikash Mandal 2061. Kathmandu page no. 208.

4.2 Version I

During the time of Bhaskandeva, Keshchandra was living around the present Itumbahal. He was a prince, the youngest son of Bhaskardeva. He had a bad habit of gambling. He used to play *pasa*⁵⁰ and lost everything, became penniless, then he went to his sister, who was married to a rich gentleman and living at Bhagwanbahal, Thamel. His sister pleased to see him, served him dinner in a golden dishes. After dinner, he stole the golden dish from his sister's house and went on to gamble, betting the golden dishes, he lost. The thirst of gambling seems to be never ending with Keshchandra. He again went to his sister's house, begged innocence, and his sister out of compassion, served him again in a silver dishes. His passion for gambling make him steal that silver dish too, and tried his luck at gambling. The fate never seems to be in his favor, he lost again. He has no option but to visit his sister again, sister abused him about his habit of gambling, and complained about the lost dishes. This time she served him in a bronze dish, Keshchandra stole that bronze dish too and made bidding at gambling table, he lost, Keshchandra was highly depressed man. He had no where to go, absolutely nothing to do, nobody to help him, Finally he decided to go to his sister's house again, and asked for her help. His sister angrily reacted and abused him. This time his sister did not serve him in any dishes, but placed all the meals on floor; Keshchandra felt highly disgraced and dishonored by his sister. Disheartened Keshchandra did not eat that meal, but patiently collected those meal in a pieces of cloth and went toward jungle. He went on and on! until, he felt tired and take a rest under a shade of a tree. He had not eaten anything for days, feeling hungry he opened the food packed in a cloth. The food is already rotten, smelling. He thought about

⁵⁰ A game of throwing twin dices. (like casino).

it spreading under warm rays sun, and take a short nap. When he awoke, he found that the dried food is already being served by pigeons. Feeling hungry poor Keshchandra cried a lot, he had nothing to eat in the middle of the Jungle, he will die without any food, much worried he became unconscious, meanwhile, the pigeons who had eaten those foods felt sorry about plight of stranger, and out of compassion they thought about helping poor Keshchandra, by excreting gold. When Keshchandra gain consciousness, he saw that all the pigeon's droppings turned into gold. He thanked god and pigeon for their benevolence and thought about constructing a monastery and never ever play gambling. He wished to dedicate his entire life in the name of god. The gold is so heavy that he cannot carry it alone. Meanwhile, a demon (?) *Gurumapa* came out of nowhere, in the middle of the Jungle, and threatened his life, poor Keshchandra fearlessly tried to negotiate with Gurumapa by calling him as his maternal uncle and a friend, a good friend, never kill a friend Keshchandra was successful in persuading Gurumapa to carry sack full of gold upto Itumbahal and in exchange he vowed to serve him a good meal and accommodation and stay there as a honoured guest as long as he wishes. With all this gold Keshchandra constructed Vihara and established the guthi tradition. The new Vihara is named as '*Bhaskardeva Sanskarita Keshchandra krita Parawarta Mahavihara.*'

While the life is running peacefully, the Gurumapa became a headache for the Keshchandra. Gurumapa -even though he was served fully satisfied he developed the habit of cannibalism. He stole small kids in the neighbourhood and eat them. The habit of Gurumapa to eat small kids alarmed Keshchandra and the neighbors. The Gurumapa is so much feared that mother's use to threaten their unrelenting, crying small kids, 'do stop crying or else Gurumapa will take them away!'. The kids remain

‘pindrop’ silence with just the mentioning of the name of Gurumapa. As time passed Gurumapa became so much aggressive that even, a small only son of Keshchandra became victim of Gurumapa’s cannibalism. Then disheartened Keshchandra, decided to dump him in the open field of Tudikhel and serve a mun of rice and meat once in a year, with this, brought a peace of mind in Itumbahal. The tradition of serving Gurumapa once in a year is still observed during the end of Holi festivals.

This legend tells us about how does the Itumbahal came into existence. Itumbahal is believed to be construct by Keshchandra, with all his gold brought into Vihara, with the help of Gurumapa. There is no written evidence like inscription, to commemorate the date of establishment.

4.3 Version II

In Daniel Wright “History of Nepal” there is a slightly different version of legends of Keshchandra. As I found it very interesting I think its proper to include the full version of legends according to Daniel Wright.

In Narasinha deva’s reign, in Nepal Sambat 111 (A.D. 991), on the 6th of Phagun Sudi, Raja Malla deva and Kathya, Malla, of Lalit- patan, founded the village of Chapagaon, then called Champapuri.

1. His son Sakit-deva regned 39 years.
2. His son Rama-sinha-deva reigned 58 years. All went well in his reign.
3. His son Hari-deva.

He removed his court to Kantipur, in which city at this time lived a Thakuri, named Bhaskara Malla, who has a son called Keshchandra, who was a minor when his father died, and unable to take care of his own affairs, so that his father had appointed a guardian. Keshchandra, however, being of a truant disposition, used to give his guardian the slip and go gambling here and there. One day he went to Thambahil, where he saw the devata being repaired by the descendants of Sinhal. This devata had been erected by Sinhal, but was destroyed when Danasur flooded the valley. He began gambling there, and as it was late, instead of returning home, he went to the house of his sister, who lived at Thambahail. His sister reproved him for playing to so late an hour, but he paid no attention to her, and after taking his meal, he again went out to gamble. He lost heavily, and returned to the house of his sister, who again reproved him, but with so little effect that Keshchandra now took away and staked the plate off which he had eaten his meal, and lost it also. When he returned his food was served to him on the ground, which so affronted him that he tied up the rice in his clothes, and going home he put it in a corner. To relieve his mind from the feeling of degradation he then went to Nilakantha Gosain Than, and having bathed in the lake, prayed to the lake, prayed to the deity, and asked for help. Nila-Kantha's voice replied from the sky, that he should visit Pashupati and Kritimukha Bhairava, and his misery would be ended. Keshchandra did as he was directed, and seeing that the offering of rice before Kritimukha was so rotten that the grain had become full of maggots, he gathered it up, and took it home. His curiosity then led him to go and see in what condition the rice was which he had brought from his sister's house. This also was rotten, and Keschandra, not knowing what to do with it, begged for and obtained a quantity of rice from some other people, and mixing the rotten rice with this, he went to sell it. He exchanged it for some *morcha* (the refuse rice

that remains after distilling spirit), and went to a place named Bakhunchha, where he spread it out to dry, as it was wet, and then went to sleep. While he slept pigeons come and ate the morcha, and being told by Kritimukha Bhairava to give something in return, they left golden dung on the spot. Keschandra, having awoke, was gathering the gold, when a Rakshasa named Gurumapa, came by and was about to devour him; but being addressed as Mama (maternal uncle), the Rakshasa was appeased, and helped Keschandra to carry the gold to his home. Keschandra then married the daughter of Raja Harideva.

As for the Rakshasa, he kept him in his house, and told him that he might have the bodies of all the persons who died there for his food. This gave much annoyance to the people, and caused a great deal of misery; for when parents, to frighten their crying children into silence, said “Gurang Mapa take thee”, the Rakshasa took them at their word, and soon devoured them. The people therefore complained to Keschandra, he had bought 360 ropnis of land, which he had leveled into a khel or plain, and called Tudi-khel because he, had purchased the land with gold begotten by *tudi*, or maggots produced in rotten grain. He therefore now gave this plain to Gurumapa as his residence, on condition that he was not to devour any one, and was never to allow three bricks to stand on one another on the Khel. In return for this service Keschandra promised to send him every year an *ara* of rice and a buffalo for his food.

Keschandra’s son having died in his youth, he took his body to burn, and having ascended into the sky by means of the smoke, he saw his son above him in the clouds mounting upwards. Having come down again, he performed the funeral rites. He then returned home and built a Vihar, in which he placed a Buddha, and assigned a Guthi for feeding pigeons with 102 aras of dhan (unhusked rice), because all his wealth was

derived from pigeons. The Vihar he named paravata maha-Vihar, from paravata, a pigeon. He also assigned a Guthi to place on the 14th of phagun badi. He then caused a picture of all these circumstances to be made, and put it in his Vihar, where he lived as a devotee of Buddha. This picture is shown to those who wish to see it in the month of srawan. People afterwards named his Vihar Itumbahal.

Daniel Wright 'History of Nepal' Cambridge University Press. 1877 reprint 1972. page. 162-170.

4.4 Version III

There are many anecdotes about miraculous events which occurred in the Swayambhu forest because of the deeds of some historical figure. one such event took place in the eleventh century during the period of Bhaskara Varma (1045-1048 CE). the story goes like this:

Once there was a merchant's son called Kesacandra. He was a compulsive gambler. Indeed, he eventually gambled away all his money and property, and was left destitute. He then found it difficult to make both ends meet each day. So he went to eat at his sister's residence at Thahity. When she saw her brother's pathetic situation, she served him delicious meals on exquisite platters. But Kesachandra had no scruples whatsoever about stealing the utensils to wager in his gambling sprees. As such, she reluctantly served his food on the floor due to his distrustful behaviour although she still feel sorry for him.

Deeply humiliated, he packed his food in a handkerchief, rose to his feet and left her sister's house in anguish. After wandering aimlessly here and there, he ultimately reached the formidable Swayambhu forest. There he felt extremely hungry and opened up his handkerchief to eat the

food. But the food was soggy, so he left it to dry out in the sun while he took a rest on the large stone nearby. But suddenly he felt asleep while keeping watch on his food. In the meantime, a flock of pigeons came across the food lying on the ground, ate it all, and conceitedly roosted in a nearby tree. When Kesachandra awoke, he could not find his food. Overwhelmed with hunger, he was left at a loss and devastated. Reproaching himself, he shouted, "Alas! there is none on earth as unfortunate as I am. In what way should I make my both ends meet, what to eat now?" He wept bitterly over his predicament, and fell asleep once again.

On seeing his sorry state, the pigeons felt pity for the poor man and expressed their sympathy over him, saying, "O God! how greedy and heartless we are to have eaten the food belonging to such a poor man? Shame on we pigeons! Now it is useless to cry over the spilt milk. But with our joint efforts we can eliminate his poverty once and for all. Motivated by the strong compassion, they thought to help him out by leaving droppings of gold upon the same ground from where they had stolen his food.

Kesachandra awoke and was amazed to see the golden droppings, thinks, "Oh! I cannot believe my eyes. Due to the wealth I thus obtained in the form of pigeon dropping, now my days of poverty and privation have gone. I attribute this miracle to the holy pigeons residing in this sacred Swayambhu." In this way he considered himself to be very lucky to have the blessings of Swayambhu. Rejoicing, he began to gather the droppings. He found them extremely heavy, more than even four or five porters could carry. While he was worrying about how to carry the droppings, the demon Gurumapa suddenly appeared. On seeing the handsome Keshchandra, he was extremely pleased and thought, "Finally,

I will be able to satisfy my hunger, my meal has been prepared by the God." He was ready to pounce on him.

At this, Kesachandra pleaded with the demon: "O king of demons! Please don't worry about your hunger. I'll take care of all that. Don't be in such a hurry. Even if you kill me, I don't think I would suffice for a proper meal. Wise ones do not think of catering to the present needs only while being uncertain about the future needs. I have ample gold, which I received through the compassion of pigeons, as the blessings of Swayambhu. Because of this wealth, I can easily afford to feed you rice and meat to your heart's content. But you have to carry this load of gold droppings to my residence."

The demon Guru Mapa accepted his proposal and did the job as asked. From that time on, he fed the demon as promised, and hid him in a secret chamber so that no body could see him. In spite of this, the demon began to devour children, and the news spread rapidly throughout the city of Kantipura. Even today, when children start crying, parents clam their cries by saying that the demon would come to devour them.

Finally, the enraged people from different localities were all united together and were on the verge of killing the demon. At that point the demon with his palms folded together declared "Please spare my life. from now on, I will never kill and devour a single child. All I want is just request you to fulfill that Kesacandra had promised to me. Please fine a suitable place for me to live. If you do that, I will assure you of protecting you people from other dangerous demons and ogres."

Local people then agreed to arrange for a place to live in the open ground near the forest of Lumadhi (now known as Bhadrakali) and

buffalo and provide him a muri of cooked rice every year on the full-moon day of Holi. Thus they provided him with a place to live, and warned him not to enter the city again. the demon then asked what job he should do in the particular place. Then everybody consulted on the topic and after arriving at the unanimous conclusion, they told the demon, "From now on, in your place, your job will be to separate the three stones whenever you see the, lying together." It is still believed that when three stones are kept together in that place, we find them dispersed the next morning.

With money amassed from the pigeons droppings, keschandra became very rich and devoted to Buddhism. He later built a magnificent monstrey called Itumbaha, one of the principle monasteries of Kathmandu. It is now called as 'Sir Paravarta Mahavihara; but by sri Keshchandra'.

- Hem Raj Shakya, Sri Swayambhu Mahachaitya. Translated by Min Bahadur Shakya. Pub by Swayambhu Bikash Mandal. Swayambhu, Kathnandu 2004.

4.5 The Legend of Kanga Ajima

There is an interesting legendry story behind the arrival of lord *Kanga Ajima* into Itumbahal. Lord *Kanga Ajima*, *Lumari Ajima* and *Nyata Ajima* are belevied to be three sisters. In Ancient days, the *Guru Bajracharyas* of Itumbahal practice all kinds of relief works. The *Guru Bajracharyas* are invited by all those who are suffering from pain and illness. Like modern doctors *Guru Bajracharyas* would distinguish the type of suffering and possible relief from sufferings by recommending

puja to different gods, recommendation of medicinal herbs, looking at horoscope etc.

Once, *Kanga Ajima* wished to test the efficiency of *Guru Bajracharyas* of Itumbahal. She arrived in Itumbahal in the guise of a small girl child acting as a patient. The *Guru Bajracharya* soon identified her real identity and with the power of tantra, guru seized her, immovable. Then, the Guru forced to make her promise to come every year into Itumbahal as a precondition, before let her go.⁵¹

Yet another version of story tells about, the lord *Kanga Ajima*, onece appeared as a young teen aged girl right into the *Agam Ghar* where the gurus and sangha member were offering puja during the festivals of '*Pahan charey*'. The astonished guruju asked her "who are you?" she replied 'Oh!, I am looking for my sister, did she came here?' 'How does your sister looks like?' the guru asked her, 'don't you know! one who has been given the golden bread, to eat!' Then the and sangha members identified her as a "*Kankeswari Devi*" and bowed before her. As a reminder of this event every year lord *Kankeswari* seated in her planquin is brought into Itumbahal and offered puja before moving around the city.⁵²

4.6 Legends of Sitala Maju

Sitala Maju is believed to be a goddess who protects an infant from childhood diseases. If an infant suffers from viral diseases like chicken pox, small pox, high fever, a prayer is offered to goddess *Sitala Maju*, she in turn takes care of sick child with love and affection. It is being said

⁵¹ Mani Ratna Shakya, A report published in "*Gunla Bajan Bojya-Lumanti Pau*" Published by Keshchandra Gunla Bajan Khala. Itumbahal. NS 1119.

⁵² Bhuwan Lal Pradhan, op.cit page no. 124

that, she grabs sick child in her bosom like her own child and drives away the evils which is threatening to snatch lives away, and ultimately protect the life of infants. Her iconographic figure shows her with a small child in her bosom with hand gesture of blessing, which signifies protection and fearlessness⁵³. Her figure is displayed once in a year during the festivals of *gun-la*.

4.7 Legends of Dhon-la-hiti

Dhon-la-hiti is a wooden water spout, beautifully carved with *makara*. The elders in Itumbahal said that *dhon-la-hiti* is significant for drinking water from it moments before the end of life. It's a supernatural experience of life beyond death. When a person suffers extreme pain and end of life is imminent, the lord of death *Janmaraja* appears to take the lives away, he asks the dying person, whether he/she has seen the *Dhon-la-hiti* or not, if not, the first thing that *Janmaraja* does is to take him upto *Dhon-la-hiti*. When a dying person approaches it the water flows, instantly and person quenches thirst from that spout, followed by the peaceful release of life from the person for heavenly abode. If water does not flow from, *Dhon-la-hiti* while dying person approaches it, signifies that time has not yet come for death, therefore he must return, of course, with lots basteing from gaurds. The gaurds of *Janmaraja* beat that person with lash and stick, until cry with pain, before being release into living world, its to make sure that person is fit to survive in mundane world. In some instance, the water flows backward from *Dhon-la-hiti*, it signifies a bad omen, the approaching person must have been a sinner and unsuitable to drink sacred water, therefore, he will be taken into dark hell, instead of heaven⁵⁴. The specimen of celestial *Dhon-la-hiti* is displayed during the

⁵³ According to the Thayapas of Itumbahal

⁵⁴ According to the Thayapas of Itumbahal.

festivals of *Gun-la* in Itumbahal. This story is even narrated in David N. Gellener's book, *Monk House holder and Tantric Priest*, when the writer visits Itumbahal and interviewed local people⁵⁵.

4.8 Legends of Jhyalincha

Long time ago, legend says. Lady *Jhyalincha* onces lived in Itumbahal. She always used to steal cooked rice, ate them and does not bother to wash hand. The unwashed hand after meal is considered to be unclean and uncivilized, bad habit among Newar Buddhist society, one should not touch anywhere with unwashed hand after meal, it can invite bad omen and destroy peace at home. *Jhyalincha* used to steal rice, ate it and does not wash her hand, her behavior is considered as an uncivilized manner. Once, Thakalis in Itumbahal discovered her bad habit, she was caught red handed on the spot, stealing rice: As a punishment, she was tied with rope at top end of pillar, even then, she used stairs to come down and steal rice, then, he elders decided to tie her ankle with small bells (*Ghangla*), so that it make noise while moving around to steal rice⁵⁶.

The statue of *Jhyalincha*, is still displayed at Itumabahal during the festivals of *Gun-la*.

⁵⁵ David. N. Gellener, *Monk Householder and Tantric Priest*. Cambridge University, Press 1992, reprint. 1996, PN. 188

⁵⁶ According to Thayapas of Itumbahal

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES AND SANGHA OF ITUMBAHAL

5.1 Initiation and becoming a Sangha Member

5.1.1 Importance

In every 12 years the male child of sangha members comprising Shakya and Bajracharya are initiated. In Newari, Initiation is known as 'Bare Chuyegu' or becoming a *Bare*. *Bare* is a short form of 'Bandhyakarn' or 'bound by a certain rules and regulation'. *Bare chuyegu* is synonymous with *pravajya* initiations of a Buddhist monk⁵⁷. *Pravajya* is a part of 'dasa sanskara' or the ten life cycle sacraments of mahayana Buddhism⁵⁸. It's a step towards the entrance in the Buddhist way of life and teachings. Once initiated they will automatically become a sangha members of Itumbahal. The average male child of 12 years and below, will be eligible for initiation.

5.1.2 Process

The auspicious date of initiation is selected usually around the winter month of *Magh*. The selected male child are seated according to date of birth, with eldest seated at the top of line up. The horscope of eldest child is match for selecting auspicious day of initiation⁵⁹. The top five are specially treated, while the performance of initiation takes place. The initiation celebration is a week long programme. Three days before main day of *Chudakarma* is known as *Gueydan* or presentation of 5pc of

⁵⁷ John K. Locke. *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*. Sahayogi Press, 1983, Kathmandu, page no. 12.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 209.

⁵⁹ According to the Thayapas of Itumbahal.

betel nuts, betel leaves, a *Gulupa* full of rice grain and Rs. 1 coin, is presented to the Elders or *Thayapas* of Itumbahal. Its symbolic for honest request to the elders and determination to be Initiated at Itumbahal. The next day is known as *Chuela bu*, on this particular day the boys who have requested for initiation will be invited in Itumbahal along with their aunt for '*Samay, Bhoje*' (feast). The boys will be seated according to their age and date of birth. *Chuela Bu* is significant for the acceptance of request for initiation into vihara by the Elders of Itumbahal. Third day is called as *Dhusa*, on this day every boys who have requested for initiation will be seated as days before, and *Astami Varta* is performed as a purification rite and commitment to follow the path of Buddha, a small piece of gold is tied at ponytail of fresh monks to be. The fourth day is the main day of *chudakarma*, on this day early in the morning, a group of Itumbahal's music performer, the 'Gunla Bajan khala' and 'Nayan Bajan' will go to Jyatha to bring *Inaydya* (Ganesh) for smooth function of Initiation process. The boys will be welcomed into vihara by wives of the elders and seated as before, after a short puja, the boys are lined up for shaving hair, leaving the ponytail. The aunts actively help boys in shaving hairs. Aunts collect hairs in a *Thayabu*- a bronze tray, so that the hairs should not fall into ground, then the boys receive *Aruwa and Keyta* to be tied along their waist, there after the boys will be bathed by five *Thayapas*, who pour sacred water from conch shell (fig. 5), murmuring the secret mantra and ringing bells. The Mu-Thayapa receive these freshly bathed boys at the entrance of Kwapadya. The Mu-Thayapa then cut the gold tied tuft with the '*Lu-khocha* and *Wa-khocha* (Golden razor and silver razor), before they enter into Kwapadya. The boys steps into seven betel leaves on the way of entrance to Kwapadya and pay homage to the Buddha inside. Now the boys will be seated accordingly and the *Thayapas* award them with red gown of a monk. A special stick with

stupa on top (*Silaku*) and a round bowl (*Gulupa*) is presented to the newly initiated boys. A series of *Gurumandal puja* and *varta* is performed again, and a special vow is taken to uphold the teachings of Buddha, perform Dharma (righteousness) and live in a united sangha for ever, close relatives will fill the round bowl (*Gulupa*) with rice grain and a coin as a gesture of best wishes to freshly initiated monks.

The newly initiated boys are taken in a procession around the city, with band of music performers of Itumbahal 'Gunla Bajan', 'Nayan Bajan', the procession must enter into Hanumandhokha Royal Palace as a guesture of registering the initiation in the office of the king. The tradition allows the young monks to travel at least seven homes begging alms, certain restrictions like eating meat, food with salt and touching leather goods, including shoes, dogs etc, have to abide by young monks. The initiation celebration will end after four days with disrobing monk's red dress and allowing them to wear normal dress, a puja, the a short tour at Swayambhu's Santipur, and feasting will end the week long celebration.⁶⁰

In Itumbahal the initiation (*chudakarma*) takes place only in the span of twelve years. The number of kids to be initiated reaches around 120 to 125. the age old hitherto available data⁶¹ shows that number of boys initiated in

NS. 1037 (B.S. 1973)	17 boys
NS 1047 (B.S. 1983)	33 boys
NS. 1059 (B.S. 1995)	68 boys
NS 1073 (B.S. 2009)	83 boys

⁶⁰ According to the Thayapas of Itumbahal

⁶¹ According to the data available in the office of Itumbahal.

NS 1086 (B.S. 2022)	111 boys
NS 1095 (B.S. 2031).....	102 boys
NS 1107 (B.S. 2043).....	124 boys
NS 1121 (B.S. 2057).....	105 boys

The data shows the number of boys initiated is increasing in every twelve years, presently there are 438 initiated sangha members in Itumbahal out of 118 families.

The initiation celebration is important for it permits a new member to enter Kwapadya. Entry into Kwapadya is significant for it confirms the full membership of the Itumbahal sangha. After Initiation he will automatically become a member of any other Guthi, or sangha of the Itumbahal. The talley according to date of birth will be recorded for future responsibilities as a sangha member. Those who fails to attend the initiation (*Bare Chuyegu*) ceremony, his membership into Itumbahal sangha will be cut-off and relived from the all kinds of future responsibilities as a sangha members. There is no provision like mid-term initiations as in other viharas. Therefore, special pre-caution is taken for years, collecting household data and information, so that, nobody should left behind.

5.1.3 Pre- condition for Initiation

Itumbahal is one of the conservative vihara where some strict rules and regulations are followed. Until now, kids born out of inter-cast marriage are not allowed to be initiated. Similarly, those who are initiated in Itumbahal are considered as brothers with equal rights and responsibilities, therefore, marriage within the sangha is considered as marriage among brother - an illegal affair. Kids born out of such marriage are not eligible for initiations. Furthermore, the adopted childs are also

barred from initiations. The child must be below 12 years of age at the time of initiations⁶².

Recently with change in social belief and structure, pressurized the elders to alter some strict rules and regulation to allow the initiation of kids born out of intercast marriage within the Sangha members. With the growing number of inter cast marriage and kids born out of such marriages, the elders have had to think twice before allowing kids to be initiated in Itumbahal. The kids are brought into the folds of Buddhism, Buddhist way of life and values, they are allowed to become young bodhisatwoos, without any responsible duties as a sangha member. In the year B.S. 2065 (2009) a group of 13 kids born out of such intercast marriage are initiated in Itumbahal. All the process of initiation is done according to Buddhist rites and rituals, except the entrance into the main shrine of Kwapadya. The kids are made to be young Buddhist monks without any duties as sangha members. Indeed, they are initiated into Itumbahal, but they are not a member of Sangha. This new experimental initiation helped break some age old traditional strict rule and regulation and modify culture to changed modern society.

5.1.4 Acharyabhisekh “Acha luyegu”

After initiation celebration the Bajracharya kids will have to fulfill further initiation like *Achaluyegu* or *Acharyabhisekh*⁶³. The secret puja at *Agam Ghar* will follow the entry of newly initiated Bajracharya kids into *Agam*, where they make puja offerings and receive a rosary and special *Mantra*. The dates of Bajracharya initiations may take years after

⁶² The Thayapas of Itumbahal told me about these rules and regulations about initiation.

⁶³ According to the Thayapas of Itumbahal

'*Bare chiyagu*'. Those who fails to take Bajracharya initiations, considered only as 'Bare' not 'Bajracharya'.

5.1.5 Seating Arrangements

The seating arrangement during the initiation process is important. All the festivals, puja celebration in Itumbahal is headed by eleven *Thayapas* led by *Muthayapa*, *Chakreswar*, *Upadhaya*, *Chachapa*, *Sangha Thakuli* are different title given to the selected among top positions. The senior most *Thayapa* among eleven *Thayapas* is identified as *Muthayapa*, *Chakreswar* title is given to one who occupies the 6th position (the central one). The *Upadhaya* title is given to the 12th position- a senior preist (not thayapa).

All the puja at Itumbahal is done by *Chakreswar* - a Bajracharya priest on behalf of the eleven *Thayapas*, *Chakreswar* is actively assisted by *Upadhyas*. In absence of *Chakreswar* the *Upadhaya* assumes the position of main preist to conclude the puja celebration. For the limited time of puja celebration, the *Chakreswar* assisted by *Upadhaya* sits on the top of line up.

Therefore, the first position among equals of Itumbahal sangha is occupied by *Muthayapa*, then the four senior *Thayapas*, then 6th position is for *Chakreswar*, he is followed by five senior *Thayapas*. Thus completes the top eleven senior position, the *Upadhaya* sits on 12th position, on 13th the *Chachapa* (one who chants charya geet), on 14th the senior of the Gubhajus and 15th position senior of the '*sarva Sangha*' or '*Sangha Thakuli*'. No discrimination is made during the seating arrangement of Shakyas and Bajracharyas while initiations performance taken place, every body is seated according to age wise seniority. The top

five of newly initiated are given special treatment. This type of seating arrangement is necessary while offering alms or *panchadan* (*Baran Chuyegu*) after conclusion of Initiation ceremony.

5.1.6 Responsibilities

As a new sangha member, first job is to perform *Ba-Pa* or performing *Nityapuja*⁶⁴ inside Kwapadya. It will come serially turn- by-turn according to date of birth and seating during the initiation. For one week the new members will be allowed to perform *nitya puja*, four times a day, early in the morning at 6 AM next at 9 AM, then at 2 O'clock, in afternoon and in the evening at about 6 O'clock. Early in the morning the performer have to clean inside and outside the Kwapadya with broom, wash all the Puja materials, bring in sacred water form the nearby well and offer it to the Kwapadya. Besides, he had to perform *nitya puja* with *panchopachara puja*, chant hymens and mantras. Perform puja offerings brought in by other devotees. Walk around the Itumbahal complex by ringing hand bell twice a day -in the morning and in the evening. The other responsibilities of *Ba-pa* performer includes, performing *Nag puja* at the well nearby where *Jal Nag* resides; taking responsibilities of all the valuable inside Kwapadya. If situation demands he have to sleep inside bahal guarding the valuables.

For entire week he have to refrain from taking any meat /meat products; beans and cereals, beverages, touching any impure things (e.g. dogs, leathers), cook meals by himself and serve it without touching anybody i.e. by remaning separately. The meals can be cooked by other

⁶⁴ *Nitya Puja* is the compulsory daily ritual worship of kwapadya.

members of the family also albeit he/ she have to follow rules same like performer.⁶⁵

Nowadays, due to 'business' of modern days the '*Ba-Pa*' can be done by offering money to other members of the sangha. *Ba-pa* will come at about every seven years in one's life time, when the series of performers comes to an end, it will begin/ start right from the senior most top of the sangha members, with fresh cycle of performers.

5.2 *Thayapas*

As I have already mentioned, once initiated, he will automatically becomes a member of several Guthis of Itumbahal. He have to face and act responsively as a member of those Guthis. The term comes with seniority and age wise, one can move upto the level of *Thayapas*. *Thayapas* are the senior most top position both from religious and social point of view. *Thayapas* have had an overall access to social, religious and economic affairs of vihara.

Thayapas are the short form of *Thakalis*, meaning 'senior most one' they are also known as *Sthaviras*⁶⁶ or *brave disciples*. The tradition of *Thayapas* are believed to have been started by Keshchandra the founder himself, to run the affairs of vihara. There are altogether eleven *Thayapas* headed by main priest *Muthayapa* and his assistant *Chakreswar*. Both *Muthayapa* an *Chakreswar* are selected from family lineage with adequate qualifications like, top initiation (*Dekha*), seniority and perfect puja performer. Rest of the nine *Thayapas* are selected from the senior most brother of the descendent of nine families, provided he is ready to

⁶⁵According to *Thayapas* of Itumbahal.

⁶⁶ Edited by Swasti Ratna, Siddhi Ratna, *Itumbahal Abhilekh Sangraha*. Pub. By Itumbahal Samrakshan Samaj, Itumbahal, 2062. page no. 'kha'.

accept the position and act accordingly. Once selected, the official ritual process will run for about a week before enthroned on a appropriate, auspicious day as a '*Sthavira*' of vihara. The process of enthronement of *sthaviras* also known as *sthaviravisekh*, particularly because they have had received the higher qualification like *Kalasabhisekh*, *Bajrabhisekh*, *Ghantabhisekh*, *Muktabhisekh*, *Chatrabhisekh*, *Bastrabhisekh* and *Namabhisekh*. The ten *Thayapas* represents the *Dasa paramita*, the tenfold wisdom of Buddhist teaching and *Chakreswar* as the central god. The *Thayapas* have had separate seating (*Asan*) arrangement in the secret chamber of *Agam Ghar*. While performing puja they have had to sit on personal seating inside *Agam*.

For entire week during enthronement ceremony different pujas at different locations around Itumbahal is performed, the *Thayapas* enthronement must be reported at Hanumandhoka Royal Palace with 5 pc of betel nuts and betel leaves and coins. On the actual day of enthronement the fully dressed *Thayapas* are taken a short tour around the city including Hanuman dhokha Royal Palace. The *Sarvasangha* neighbours and well wishers are invited at feast in the evening of main event.

The *Thayapas* are venerated and respected by all and his orders are observed by all. The *Thayapas* are bound by vows to protect and defend the Itumbahal and sangha physically, verbally and mindfully. The first among the equals most of *Thayapas* is venerated as *Mu-thayapa*. The overall affairs of Itumbahal is carried on by those group of eleven *Thayapas* (see fig. 3), a mutual consultancy and discussion is necessary before taking any decision.

The current names of enthroned *Thayapas* are as follows:

1. Tri Ratna Shakya (*Mu thayapa*)
2. Vacant
3. Mimalal Bajracharya
4. Mani Kaji Shakya
5. Gyan Kaji Shakya
6. Hem Purna Nanda Bajracharya (*Chakreswar*)
7. Krisna Shakya
8. Surendra Shakya
9. Siddhi Bahadur Shakya
10. Vacant
11. Sanuman Shakya

Presently, with adequate modernization a group of young volunteers have formed an '*Itumbahal Sanrakshyan Samaj*'⁶⁷ to assist the group of *Thayapas* to run the affairs of Itumbahal.

5.3 Guthis of Itumbahal

Ever since the foundation of Itumbahal by Keshchandra in eleventh century, the number of guthi have become active in maintaining and running the day-to-day affairs of Vihara. Keshchandra had founded the trusts to look after the maintenance and smooth functioning of monastic affairs. The trusts are known as '*Guthis*' in local terminology. It contains a group of person organized to fulfill a common objective, and combined celebration. which ultimately leads to uplift people's living standards. Keshchandra has brought about 360 ropanis⁶⁸ of land in the Kathmandu Valley, the income from these lands financed the activities of Itumbahal.

⁶⁷ *Itumbahal Sanrakshyan Samaj* is recently formed body of volunteers from Itumbahal sarva sangha, headed by capt Chandra Bahadur Shakya, and it is registered at the Govt. of Nepal CDO office Kathmandu.

⁶⁸ Daniel Wright *History of Nepal* Pub. Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1877, re-print 1972, page no. 170.

There are several land donation, in much later years, all the donation were entrusted to the 'Trusts' or 'Guthis'. The Guthis were responsible for running all kinds of socio-religious activities of Itumbahal.

5.3.1 Swancha Guthi

After *Ba-pa* the new members are allowed into *Swancha guthi*. The term will probably come once in a lifetime around 40 years of age. Four persons are allowed to perform puja at the *Agam* and to organize a feast inviting all sangha members. During the *Swancha Guthi* the contribution fees are collected and the each and every members of sangha will be offered 5 pieces of meat *chue-la* equally to everybody present at the feast. *Swancha Guthi* will be performed every year on the 5th day of chaitra *sukla pakshya*. The 2nd Swancha Guthi of Ba-Sangha group is performed on *Luthi Punhi*, the full moon day of chaitra.

5.3.2 Sasu Puja Guthi

The initiated members of Itumbahal families (barring a few families) according to list of initiation are given the term of organizing *sasu puja guthi*, saraswati is the goddess of learning. The special deity of saraswati is worshiped exclusively by families of Itumbahal, is located at just below *Bijeswari*.

The legends tells us that many centuries ago, an idol of lord Saraswati was lying idle at the bank of river Bishnumati near Tamsipakha. No body came to own this idol, therefore the sangha members from Itumbahal took this Idol and respectfully established a shrine near Bijeswari. Every four members are given term to organize puja and feast on the spot of *Saraswatisthan*, on a particular day before

Pahancharey⁶⁹. A repousse figure of head of lord saraswati is brought on the spot for worship. This guthi is often called as *Bal saraswati Guthi*. During the guthi celebration about 90% of expenditure is incurred by crust, rest have to be collected from invitees.

For unknown reasons, a group of 13 sangha members founded a separate Sarswati guthi known as *Panchami Sewa* guthi. A separate repousse figure of gold coated lord Saraswati (about 2 ft tall) is brought on the spot for worship. This figure has been donated by group of sangha members in NS 1015 (BS 1952). A couple of Sangha members within this *Panchami Sewa* guthi is entrusted every year to organize this guthi on the same location of Saraswatisthan. Every four members are given term to organize puja and feast on the spot of saraswatisthan on a particular day before *Pahancharey*. About 90% expenditure will be given by guthi, rest have to be collected from invitees.

5.3.3 Salan pa Guthi

Every year during the sacred month of Gunla, the traditional display of gods and goddess, secret manuscripts, stupas and other treasures are performed. It is also known as *Bahi Dya Bowyegu*. The manpower to organize such display is fulfilled by every two members from, '*Sarvasangha*' and two members from '*Thayapa*', Altogether four person are given responsibilities to organize such display and take responsibilities in organizing. Earlier Guru Bajracharya from some of the Viharas are invited to study *Pancharakshya* and dine with sarvasangha. A muri of rice is given to each of the four guthi organizers in charity. However, this tradition has been dis-continued now.

⁶⁹ '*Sri Bal Saraswati guthi ya sanchipta parichay* - a report published by itumbahal Sangrakshyan Samj. 2064

Beside all these three guthis, there are other guthis where the head of the family must become a member. *Si Guthi* and *Tuta Guthi* are two of those guthis.

5.3.4 Si-Guthi

Si Guthi is the guthi of families, exclusively for helping bereaved family of guthiyar. When any death occurs in a family this Guthi will become active, right from the announcement of death to all member families. Every responsibilities of running this Guthi goes to the four *palas* appointed serially according to the list of members.

The responsibilities of Palas starts with informing death to all “member family” including awarding responsibilities, such as carrying dead body, carrying pot of funeral fire, carrying husk (straw), shopping for all necessary items, arrangement of funeral pyre, accompany eldest son of the deceased family to light funeral pyre, to oversee the burning of dead body, etc.⁷⁰

Soon after the announcement of death the *Palas* will check the list of attendance, checking attendance will be carried on for five times right from the announcement of death until the end of funeral pyre. Those who did not attend the funeral will face monetary fine. The amount of fine will double if funeral take place during the night.

Every year on the *lain charey*, which occurs specially during month of *magh*, the yearly term of *Palas* will end and handover to new *Palas*, according to list of members, on this day all the fines including membership fees will be collected; as usual a grand feast and puja is

⁷⁰ For detail, see. Ajay Kranti Shakya's, *The Shakya's* Pub. by Nepal Buddhist Development Research Centre, Kathmandu page no. 156.

performed, the tradition demands equal share of beaten rice and meat varieties. Sweets like *Patincha mari* and *Pahan Mari* is distributed from the families of those who have newly married and from the families where death has occurred, in the past year.

Si-Gu is one of the strict guthi, where age old tradition will be followed, any one who tries to make a slight variations on the age old tradition is objected, and heavy fines will be slapped if some one dares it.

In Itumbahal there is two separate *Si-Guthi* -old one and new one. The old *Si-Gu* has a few family members of about 16 families, and new *Si-Gu* has about 85 families. There is two separate yearly days of two *Si-Gu*, for old it is on the days of *Dasmi of Baisakh Krishnapaksya*, the new guthi's yearly day is on the *Lain Charey* in month of Magh. No Bajracharya members, (barring Nuche Guruju) are the member of new *si-guthi*, most of the *Gubhaju's* are either in old guthi or in outside guthis. The main deity of old *Si-Gu* is *De-Puja Agam Ghar*. However, the new *Si-Gu* members worship *Kang-Ajima* as a main deity of *Si-Gu*.

5.3.5 Tuta Guthi

Every year on the sacred month of *Gunla* the *Guthiyar* members will encircle the Vihara complex chanting hymens also known as *Tuta-bone-gu*. Daily attendance will be recorded and those who absent are fined. The daily puja offerings to *Kwapadya*, is brought by guthiyar members according to serial listing. Every members of *Si-gu* are members of *Tuta-Guthi*. Accordingly, there are two *Tuta-Guthi* old one and the new one. The old guthi members chant hymens of prayers to *Kwapadya* early in the morning, the new members will do the same little later. There are two separate yearly dates for old and new guthi. The old guthi date falls on 8th

day after the end of *Gun-la*. The new guthi date falls on 10th day after the end of *Gun-la*. As usual at the gathering, the puja is offered at *Agam Ghar*, chanting '*charya geet*' and sharing the prasada among member. Distribution of '*Pandran*' (*Panchan dan*) is also performed followed by grand feast.

5.3.6 Gunla Bajan Khala ⁷¹

Itumbahal have had its own band of traditional music performers, familiar, with the name of '*Keshchandra Gunla Bajan Khala*', *Gunla Bajan* is a traditional band of music, played during the month of *Gun-la* comprising drum, cymbals and tingsya. On the sacred month of *Gun-la*, the people from Itumbahal will go to Swayambhu every morning with the band of music performers. For the whole month, the members of *Bajan khala* return from Swayambhu with *Gunla Bajan*, visits different parts of town, before ending at the Itumbahal. On the first day of second half of *Gun-la* (*sa-paru*), the sangha members of Itumbahal travel around the city's Buddhist viharas to observe gods on display. The visit is also known as *Bahi-dya-Swa-wanegu* or travel around, to see 'Gods on display.'⁷²

The membership of *Gunla Bajan* is open to all sarva sangha, neighbors and friends of Itumbahal. There is no membership fees, but one have to make some contributions and donations to run the *Bajan khala*. Any member of sarva sangha can invite '*Gunla bajan*' performers, to celebrate the special occasion like, *Chudakarma*, *Janku* etc. provided the invitees pay some fees.

⁷¹ In Itumbahal there are '*Khalas*' exclusively means a group of sangha members, formed for a specific purpose and its members are voluntary. The neighbors and well wishers of Itumbahal can be the members of this '*Khala*.'

⁷² *Gunla Bajan Bo jya 1118" Lumanti Pau*. Edited by Pratap Man Shakya. Pub. by Keshchandra Gunla Bajan Khala. Itumbahal, 2053.

5.3.7 Lain ken Khala (Samyek Guthi)

Every 12 years on the 1st day of Magh, *Samyek Mahadan Parwa* is held at the Bhuikhel (Swayambhu). On this particular day all the Dipankar Buddhas from Kathmandu valley are invited at Bhuikhel and offer *samyek mahadan* even King makes a visit on this occasion. For the ‘*Samyek Mahadan*,’ all the Buddhist communities of the valley are given some duties to make a particular offering. The duties of Itumbahal sangha is to offer *Lainken (Fermented raddish)*.

The Bhuikhel Samyek is jointly organized by sangha members of “Itumbahal, Lagan Bahal and Watu Bahal”, for this a Guthi has been formed to organize samyek on every 12 years. The volunteers form Itumbahal Sarva Sangha, who were organized for this community service is also called as *Lain ken khala*.

According to inscription found in Itumbahal, the samyek Guthi has been founded by Gudochandra, a resident of Taranani. The inscription of N.S. 714 reveals that *Gudochandra* has organized a samyek guthi accordingly he had donated several items to guthi.⁷³

Earstwhile, the samyek festival has been organized every four years at “*Burankhel*” 500 meter west of Itumbahal. After the invasion of Prithivinarayan Saha, the samyek has been celebrated every 12 years, Jointly with the *Watu Bahal* and *Lagan Bahal* at Bhuikhel near Swayambhu.⁷⁴

⁷³ Swasti Ratra, Siddhi Ratna, Itumbahal sangraha. pub. by Itumbahal Sangrakshyan Samaj. Kathmandu 2063 p. 5

⁷⁴ Bhuwan Lal Pradhan, *Kathmnadu Upatyuka ka kehi Sanskritic Chirka Mirka*, pub. by Sumitra Manandhar, 2064. page no. 137.

5.3.8 Bunga dya *La-chayayu Guthi*

The Bajracharyas of Itumbahal are specially dedicated to bring the water of well in Itumbahal, (where *Jwala Nag* resides) at the bathing ceremony of Bungadya. A guthi of 3 guthiyars has been formed with these responsibilities. The very highly ceremonial event of this Guthi however has been recently discontinued, mainly due to the internal feud among Guthiyars.

According to the Sanu Guruju (One of the Guthi member) of Itumbahal, the '*Nagraja*' in Itumbahal has been brought by the goddess White Tara of Itumbahal who came to Nepal from Tibet. Therefore to bring, water to Bungadya is an act of devotion of *Nagraja* to the Bungadya. The ceremony starts with worshipping the five clay pots (*nancha*), containing *panchamrit*, butter, honey, cow's milk, sakha (sugarcane malt) and water from well, in addition to 5 pots full of water from well. It will be carried ceremonially upto *Bungadya's Mahasnan* at *Ta-Bahal*, Lagankhel and mixed with the silver pots at the place of *Mahashan*. After the *Mahasnan*, the *Panjus* will give them ceremonial water, *Tika* and *Prasada*. The team will have some *Samay Baji*, at Pulchowk while retuning home. The *Mahasnan Jal* will be distributed among guthi members.

The ceremonial *Mahasnan parwa* which might have been continued right from the beginning of Bungadya's jatra, in Lechavi years, however, now it is facing an imminent end of ceremony, mainly due to

the internal feud among guthiyars.⁷⁵ The tradition must be revived at any cost.

5.3.9 Obsolate Guthis of Itumbahal⁷⁶

There are several guthis in Itumbahal which were, once upon a time, richly celebrated with pomp and gaiety, however, it has now become an obsolate and making its bare existence.

1. Ma-bu-Guthi

On the 5th day from *Chaitra Krishna pakshya*, i.e. 5th day after *Holi Purney* to 10th day, the *ma-bu guthi* is celebrated. *Ma-bu* is the short form of *maha bali* guthi. During this guthi celebration the entire complex is thoughtly cleaned, re-painted and a special puja is performed at *agam*. A bucket full of half boiled rice is worshipped as a representative of evil spirit and carried around Itumbahal complex before throwing at '*Ikun ga*' at Itumbahal. This guthi celebration is symbolic for feeding and expelling harmful spirits from the Itumbahal complex. Some Thayapas claim that this period is the birthday of Keshchandra or even the foundation day of Itumbahal

2. Pahan charey Guthi

Pahan charey guthi is exclusively performed by Gubahajus of Itumbahal. The purpose of this Guthi is to observe (a) *Pahan charey* festival at *De-puja Agam Ghar*, (b) welcome *Kanga Ajima* into Itumbahal's *De-puja Agam Ghar*, (c) perform secret tantric puja at *Kanga*, by burning the head of a buffallow, a night before *Ghode-jatra*.

⁷⁵ When I contacted one of the Gubhajus- he replied that the piece of land specially meant for this Guthi has been sold off, therefore there is no income to finance this ceremony.

⁷⁶ According to Thayaps of Itumbahal.

The internal feud among members of guthi, abandoned the celebration of this guthi.

3. Keta-Madu Dhalan Guthi

The *Keta-madu-Dhalan* guthi is observed on the day of *Gurupurney*, which falls on the month of *Asad*. The fasting ceremony is done at *Taha-matan-Agam Ghar*, any one from sangha members are welcome to observe this fasting ceremony. A day before, sweets are prepared, nothing eaten during the main day of fasting, however, one can take meal at their home in the evening. The entire day is spent in puja and story telling by *Thayapas* and *Chakreswar*, next day all the sarva sangha are invited to dine by those fasting members. Women are not allowed to participate in this fasting ceremony, therefore, it has been nick named as *Keta-madu-dhalan* or 'fasting without internal piece of garment' this fasting ceremony has been discontinued now.

4. Gurumapa-Ja-nukegu- Guthi

The *Jyapus* of *Kilagul* and *Pa-maye* (Pradhan's) are entrusted to observe the rice feeding ceremony to *Gurumapa* in the mid-night of *Holi* purney. The land allocated the finance this feeding ceremony has been sold off, therefore it's facing difficulty to observe this ceremony. A financial support from *Itumbahal sangrakshyan samaj* revived the guthi. The rice feeding is continued still today, but other activities like, *homa* at *De-puja Agam Ghar*, and feasting to *Thayapas* on the day after *Holi* purney, by the same guthi members are discontinued.

5. Disi-puja-Guthi

The newar Buddhist observed *Disi puja*, twice a year, on the longest day of the year and shortest day of the year. In Itumbahal *Disi puja* is observed at Agam Ghar by *Thayapas* and *Chakreswar*, However, it has been discontinued now, without any reason. Today, a token of small puja is offered in the name of celebration of guthi.

6. Mohani and Swanti Guthi

During the grand festivals of *mohani* and *swanti* (Dasain and Tihar) a special puja is performed at the *Agam Ghar*, including the *Mha-puja* (self-worship) by the group of *Thayapas* and *Chakreswar*. This guthi is still celebrated, but in a simple manner, without any grandeur.

7. Bicha Guthi

Bicha Guthi is a guthi observed by Sangha members with respect to the families of bereaved. If some one dies, the group of guthi members, will go to the bereaved families and observe sympathy and condolences. This tradition is discontinued nowadays.

5.4 Daily Rituals in Itumbahal⁷⁷

The performance of daily rituals in Itumbahal is related with the worship of Kwapadya. Every morning at 6 A.M. the attendant of Kwapadya offer holy water from the nearby well to Kwapadya. First, attendant must clean the shrine of Kwapadya thoroughly with broom, wash all the ritual vassels and offerings, light lamps and ring bells, then hit a wooden pole (*gaa thayagu*) 108 times standing just outside the

⁷⁷ I took an opportunity to perform, daily, ritual myself as a sangha member. This report is based on my experience as well as told by thayapas of Itumbahal.

entrance, then the attendant is free to stay or leave the shrine for about an hour. The 2nd phase starts around 9 AM. When the attendant makes a walk around Itumbahal complex ringing a bell in one hand and the keys of the shrine in the other (*Ti- Ti - yayegu*), then, hit the wooden pole again for the 108 times, offer “*Panchopachar*” puja and chant hymans. If some devotees want to offer puja at the well (*jwala nag*), he must go there and perform puja by ringing bells, on behalf of devotees. This concludes the 2nd phase of daily ritual to the Kwapadya. The 3rd phase begin around 2 PM in the afternoon, the wooden pole will be hit 108 times. The 4th phase starts around 5 PM in the evening with ringing bells around Itumbahal complex hitting the wooden pole 108 times, then final Arati of Kwapadya. Altogether, hitting a wooden pole in performed four time a day and ringing a bell around Itumbahal complex for two times a day. Panchopachar puja and *Aarati* in the evening once

The attendants of Kwapadya will come serially according to the list of roll of initiation, the term will be for a week, beginning sunday then term be pass on to younger person. The term can be performed by other person in lieu of money. Certain restrictions like abstaining from eating meat, intoxicant etc, and touching any unclean substances like leather shoes and dogs have to be followed by attendants.

5.5 Yearly festivals of Itumbahal

Many of the festivals of Itumbahal are now abandoned. Lack of resources to finance such feativals, make it hard to continue elebrations. The ‘*Guthi lands*’ a prime source of finance to invest in such festivals are sold off, only a few festivals are observed now a days. The internal feud among guthi members taking its tool. I will honesty recollect those

festivals which were observed currently, as well as those festivals which were observed a generation back.

5.5.1 Gun-la festivals

Gun-la is an important festival time in Itumbahal. *Gun-la* starts from the first day *srawan sukla* and ends with the first day of *bhadra sukla*. The month long festivals is an important event with respect to the fact that many social, cultural and religious exchange occurs during this month.

The youths of Itumbahal would pay a daily excursion to Swayambhu, with its own musical band of performers for a whole month of *Guln-la*. At Swayambhu the members of Itumbahal take a tour around hill top, chanting Buddhist hymens. The group come down from Swayambhu hill top with band of music (*Gunla bajan*) and visit different parts of the city before concluding at Itumbahal shrine, some volunteers would offer tea and bread to those group members. The rest of the guthi members who were unable to visit Swayambhu would gather at Itumbahal and chant Buddhist hymens, take a tour around the Itumbahal complex. The two groups of guthi members travel around the complex one earlier at 6 AM another group at 8 AM. The daily puja offering to Kwapadya will be met by members according to their names in the serial list, monetary fine will be levied to those who does not show up.

Another important event of month long '*Gun-la*' festivals is the display of '*Aaju Dya*' and valuable treasures of Itumbahal. The statue of founder of Itumbahal "*Keshchandra Aaju Dya*" is brought for display for next 15 days i.e. upto the 7th day, of *bhadra krisna pakshya*. Two *Thayapas* and two members from sarva sangha will stand guard for entire

15 days of display. This is also known as “*Swancha Guthi pa*”. On the 13th day of *Gunla* the valuable treasures of Itumbahal is displayed, which includes, the sacred books of *Pragyaparmita*, (written in gold and silver) and *Pancharakshya* books, wooden statues, stupas, water spouts and of course ! the ‘*pau-vhas*’, which were stolen now.

on the 14th day of Gun-la a ritualistic *homa* is performed at the entrance of shrine, in contemplation of smooth and flawless observance of Gun-la festivals. With *homa* the God of fire (*Agni-devta*) is provoked, to ensure the protection of wealth and health of Itumbahal monastery.

Earlier, the *Bajracharya*'s from different Buddhist monasteries of Kathamandu were called upon to recite the *pancharakshya* and *Pragyaparmita Texts*, for about a week. The ceremony will be concluded after a grand feast, by the end of the week. However, this ceremony is now abandoned about 20 years ago, for lack of finance and internal disputes with *Bajrachary* priests. A piece of land allocated for financing this ceremony had been sold off.

The display of treasures of Itumbahal is concluded at the 2nd day of *Bhadra Krisna*, when the living *Goddess Kumari* makes a visit into Itumbahal to observe the display of valuable treasures. Next day everything displayed on *gun-la* is packed off into the store room except ‘*Aajy Dya*’. Every year only a few and fewer items were put on display for lack of security and fear of theft. On the 7th day of *Bhadra Krisna* the ‘*Aaju Dya*’ is also shifted into store room.

On the first day of ‘*bhadra krisna pakshya*’ or “*Sa-Paru*”. the Itumbahal community will organize a joint visit into the different parts of the city’s *Vihara* where the treasures were displayed. The procession

starts around 2 PM with the band of ‘*Gunla-bajan*’ performers, after visiting different nook and corners of the city, it will end up in Itumbahal with a grand feast.

On the 13th day to *Bhadra Krisna* the festival of *Panchadan* is celebrated. All the *Thayapas* and sangha members are seated according to their seniority, rice grain and money is offered to all those present at the ceremony. A special hymen ‘*Dangatha*’ is recited by seniors which proclaims ‘thanks and best wishes’ to those who had offered donations. At the end of the day a *Chakreshwar* and *Thayapas* will travel around the Itumbahal area (*phu-Bare*) collecting all the residue of *Panchandan* around the area.

The *Gun-la* festival ends on the first day of *Bhadra Sukla*, in the afternoon of that day the sangha members will visit Swayambhu with band of *gun-la bajan* music performers. The members would recite ‘*strotra*’ and travel around the Swayambhu complex. A grand feast at Itumbahal (*paru Bhoe*) will conclude the month long *Gun-la* festival⁷⁸.

5.5.2 Guthi Gathering in Bhadra

On the 8th and 10th day of *Bhadra Sukla*, Guthi gathering “*Tuta-gu*” is performed at Itumbahal. It’s a special gathering of sangha members who have recited, chanting ‘*strotra*’ every morning during the month of ‘*Gun-la*’. There are two special Guthi-gatherings among the two groups of sangha members. The old group of sangha members celebrate Guthi on 8th day and the new sangha members, the large one, celebrate it on 10th day of *Bhadra sukla*. On that auspicious day a special puja at *Agam* will be followed by a grand feast. The fines will be collected from those who

⁷⁸ According to the *Thayapas* of Itumbahal

were absent during recitation of ‘*strotra*’ and the mandatory membership fees is also collected to fulfill the expenditure incurred. The members of *Si-Gu*, are also the members of ‘*Tuta Gu*’ therefore, all *Si-Gu* members are invited in this Guthi celebration.

5.5.3 Guthi Gathering in Magh

On the 13th day of *magh krishna pakshya* “*Lain charey*”. The annual guthi gathering (*Si -Guthi*) is organised. The list of those who died last year is prepared, expenditures incurred, the fines and membership fees are collected. A puja at *Kankeswari* and *Agam* is performed, as usual a grand feast in the evening will conclude the entire Guthi gatherings.

5.5.4 Festival in Phalgun

1. From the 5th to 10th day of Chaitra Krishna, immediately after Holi purney, it is believed to be the birthday of founder Keshchandra ‘Aaju’ or perhaps, the foundation of Itumbahal itself. A yearly festival of Ma-bu Guthi,. once observed in Itumbahal has been discontinued now.
2. On the night of full moon day of *Phalgun* while the *Hoil* festival is observed around the city, in Itumbahal special preparation is made for feeding *Gurumapa*. A mun of rice and a meat of a bufallow is cooked and carried upto *Tudikhel* (non-stop) for feeding *Grumapa*. The enthusiastic youths from neigh touring Itumbahal takes part in the rice feeding ceremony. The spirit of *Gurumapa* is still believed to be alive at *Tudikhel*, and eat those rice and meat offered to him. A special guthi is active to organise this ceremony. The *Jyapus* of *Kilagal* and sub cast of ‘*Pa-mays*’ are responsible for feeding *Gurumapa*. On the next day, the *Thayapas* are invited for launch

party, immediately after the *Homa* and puja at *Agam* of ‘*Dev-dya*’, which has been discontinued currently. Indeed financial problem is making difficulty in the smooth celebration of this event.

5.5.5 Festivals in Chaitra

On the fifth day of *Chaitra Sukla* “The *Swancha Guthi*” is celebrated, every four person according to seniority of Itumbahal sangha are called upon to celebrate the Guthi. A simple puja at *Agam* and feast in the evening is observed as usual. Every initiated person are invited to join in the feast, five pieces of ‘*Choe la- meat*’ is distributed among the every initiated persons of Itumbahal.

5.5.6 Pahan charey festival and arrival of Lord Kankeswari

On the 13th day to chaitra krisna paskshya, the ‘*Pahan charey*’ festival is celebrated around the city. This festival is celebrated for about a week by the ‘*Yen –mi*’ or Kathamnduites. On this particular day all the ‘*Ajima*’ gods are carried around the city. First they were brought into the Itumbahal, before moving into other places. Lord Kankeswari is worshiped in the Itumbahal compound near the shrine of Goddess of lineage (*Degu Dya*). ‘*Kanga Ajima*’ is specially related with the shrine of Itumbahal. There is a legendry story behind the arrival of ‘*Kanga Ajima*’ into Itumbahal, which I have described in section legends, chapter IV.

The night before the start of ‘*Pahan charey*’ festival Bajarcharya Gurus from Itumbahal would go to the shrine of ‘*Kanga Ajima*’ near *Visnumati* river, offer tantric puja including ‘*Homa*’, in the ritualistic puja, the head of a Bufallow is sacrificed into the ‘*Homa*’. The Bajracharya Gurus then secretly entrap the lord ‘*Kanga Ajma*’ into sacret vassel (kalash) and brought into the Itumbahal. The next day lord ‘*Kanga*

Ajima' is brought into the Itumbahal, carried in her palanquin offer puja, including *sagun* before moving around other parts of the city.⁷⁹

In Itumbahal, the festival heralding arrival of Lord kankeswari was practiced until a few years back, but now it has been dis-continued, without any reason.

5.5.7 Festivals in Baisakh

Soon after the '*Pahan–charey*' festivals on the auspicious 1st day of *baisakh krishna pakshy*, the lord *Bundgadya* is bathed in Lalitpur. The holey water from the well of Itumbahal (*I-Tum*) is brought in, for bathing ceremony. The sacred water including milk, honey, butter and sugar cane malt, are kept into a small clay pots (*gounp-cha*) and carried upto the *Te-bahal* of Lalitpur where Bungadya has been kept for a bathing ceremony. The water is mixed with the silver water vassels, ready for bathing ceremony. There is a special guthi to look after this bathing ceremony, unfortunately this festival is also discontinued mainly due to the internal disputes among sangha members⁸⁰.

With the arrival of new year *Baisakh sukla Pakshya* and ascendance of *Lord Bungadya* into rath for rath jatra. The members of Itumbahal starts the month long festival of '*De-Puja*'. The separate days has been allocated for the worship of 'gods of lineage' for a whole month from 4th day of *Baisakh sukla pakshya* upto 6th day of *Jestha krisna pakshya* (*Kumar khasti, Sithi nakha*). For this month the gate of '*De-puja - Agam Ghar*' is open for worshippers.

⁷⁹ Mani Ratna Shakya, A report published in "Gunla Bajan Bojya-Lumanti pau" published by Keshchandra Gunta Bajan Khala, Itumbahal. N.S. 1119.

⁸⁰ According to sanu Guruju of Itumbahal

5.5.8 Festivals in Asad

In the month of Asad Purney (*Guru Purney*) the senior *Thayapas* and sangha members have to observe the fasting ceremony known as “*Keta-madu-Dhalan*.” This ceremony is specially dedicated to please the snake god (*naga raja*) for abundant rainfall in the coming month women’s are not allowed to take part in this fasting ceremony.

This traditional fasting ceremony, pleasing of snake god has been discontinued, only a few seniors knew about it.

Thus, in Itumbahal there are many interesting festivals observed. But many of the festivals are now abandoned, probably, due to the scarcity of funds and internal disputes and lack of enthusiasm among Guthi members. Besides, all those monthly festivals on the evening of full moon days of every month the Guthi member would gather near *kwapadya* for recitation of Buddhist hymens, ‘*strotra*’. During the grand festival of *Mohani* and *Swanti* (Dasain & Tihar), and on the longest day and longest night of the year, (*Dis puja*) which is calculated according to Nepalese calendar, a special secret puja is performed at the *Agam Ghar* of Itumbahal.

5.6 Twelve yearly festivals in Itumbahal

5.6.1 Samyek Festival

In every Twelve years the ‘*Samyek festivals*’ are observed at Bhuikhel, Swayambhu. Itumbahal, Watu Bahal and Lagan Bahal actively takes part in the celebration of this festivals. Earlier, there were three different samyek festivals are observed by the three different vihars in every four years. But after NS. 888, With the occupation of Kathamndu

valley by *Prithvi Narayan Saha*, the festival is abandoned for some years. King *Prithvi Naryan Saha* himself took initiative to resume the Samyek festivals. He made new rules to observe Samyek festivals in every twelve, years, jointly by the three viharas in the open fields of Bhuikhel. Indeed, from the days of *Prithivi Narayan Saha* the Samyek festival is observed in every twelve year at Bhuikhel, instead of its earlier spot of Bhurankhel.

The credit for starting the samyek festival in Itumbahal goes to the gentleman known as “*Gudochandra*” in NS 714. The stone inscription at *Taranani* has been found with his name and ruling monarch as *Siva Simha Dev*⁸¹. He founded the *Samyek Guthi* and made large donations to the guthi. Even today, the generation of *Gudochandra* living at *Taranani* leads and represents the Itumbahal in the Bhuikhel samyek festivals.

The samyek festival observed on the 1st day of Magh every twelve years. A day before 1st Magh “*Keshchandra Aaju*” will be taken into the ‘Hanuman Dhoka Durbar’ for a day. Here all the invited ‘Samyek Gods and Dipankars are lined up, including Swayambhu Bhagawan, the next day on the 1st magh all those Gods and Dipankars will be taken into Bhuikhel in a long procession. In Bhuikhel they are seated according to their respective position and seniority. When the King arrive at venue the process of ‘*Samyek mahadan*’ is observed. Different kinds of foods, sweets, and drinks are donated to the King Gods, Dipankaras, Gubhajus, Bares present there. *Rice*, ‘*Fermented radish (Lain-ken)*’, ‘*Sakha - ti*’ (liquified sugar cane malt mixed with herbs). ‘*Mari*’ (sweets) are distributed by different groups of communitis from the Kathmandu Valley. Communities like Bare, from different viharas, *Udayas*, and *Sayamis* from different locations of the city, have had their respective

⁸¹ Swawti Ratna. Siddhi Ratra. *Itumbahal Abhilekh Sangrah*. Pub. by Itumbahal Sangrakahyan samaj. Kathmandu. 2063. p. 5

commodities to be offered at '*Samyek Mahadan*'. The people from Itumbahal are given responsibility for distribution of 'fermented raddish' (*lain - ken*) and they are known as '*Lain ken khala*'. For grand celebratuion this Samyek festival, people from Itumbahal goes to Bhuikhel ten days earlier and starts camping tent near police station.

The process of fermenting raddish starts with the establishment of temporary kitchen by the sangha members from Itumbahal. For the purpose of all kinds of cookings in Samyek festival, a big copper cauldron, '*khasi*' is brought into Bhuikhel from Itumbahal, then the kitchen is worshipped, all the Gods of Earth, Water, Fire and Air are invoked so that everyting goes smoothly, to flawlessly. *Thayapas* from Itumbahal ring bell around Bhuikhel as a sacramental *Bumi Sodhana*- a purification rite of areas around Bhuikhel. Every day many volunteers arrive in the Kitchen camp to help bring raw raddish and cut it into pieces. The rare herbs and medicinal plants are mixed with raddhis to prepare the special fermented raddish.

The festival ends with the departure of King and all the attendant *gods, Dipankaras* into their respective locations.

5.6.2 Initiation ceremony '*Bare chuyegu*'⁸²

In every 12 years the initiation ceremory '*Bare dhuyegu*' takes place in Itumbahal. Unlike other viharas where any one can be initiated into vihara any time as they wish, Itumbahal forbades these practice and initiation takes place only once in 12 years.

The dates for initiation in mutually fixed by a group of *Thayapas* and sangha members. It usually takes place during the month of magh.

⁸² According to *Thayapas* of Itumbahal

The huge ceremony lasts for about a week. Any child whose father are initiated in Itumbahal are eligible for “*Bare chuyegy*”. Adopted child, child born out of inter cast marriage, marriage within sangha are barred from initiation. The information for initiation is circulated among all sangha member a year earlier, so that no one should miss this opportunity, any one who are living outside the valley are also informed about the initiation.

The young boys are seated according to their date of birth and seniority. A series of *Gurumandala Puja* and *viara* is performed before they are cleanly shaven their head and donned with new robes of monks. The monks are awarded with ‘*Silaku and Gulupa*’ and allowed to enter the kwapadya. The newly ordained monks will travel around the city and have had to follow certain restrictions like eating meat, intoxicant salt, pulses, and visit at least seven houses begging alms. After four days of monk hood. they are dis-robed and return to normal family life.

Recently, Itumbahal sangha has changed some rules, so that child born out of intercast marriage are allowed to be initiated in Itumbahal vihara; provided their father are initiated in Itumbahal. Those child are barred from entering kwapadya and suspended from all kinds of mandatory jobs as a usual sangha members.

The process of initiation is important, for it allows one to become a full member of Itumbahal sangha and share the further responsibilities in the future as a sangha members.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF ITUMBAHAL

6.1 Introduction

Right from the establishment of Itumbahal by Keshchandra, in 11th century, he has managed to form many guthis and keep several plots of land as a source of income to run the guthis. In order to up keep with regular maintenance and repair, guthis are the only option to run and regularize the Vihara. Keshcnandra has donated several hundreds of ropanies of land, to make Itumbahal one of the economically strong Buddhist Vihara. It has been said that altogether about 360 ropanies of land in Kathmandu valley is owned by Itumbahal.⁸³

After Keshchandra there came several other donors, through the ages who added more prosperity to Itumbahal. The faithful devotees donated many art objects, statues, gold and silver jewelleries and sometimes a house and plots of land, which added more richness into the wealth of Itumbahal.

There are innumerable socio-religious activities and corresponding guthis and plots of land allocated to run the guthis, the proper study of inscriptions around Itumbahal will reveal all those donations and formations of guthis.

Every socio-religious activities in Itumbahal is bound by guthi's and its being run by the mandatory community service of guthi-palas. The guthi palas source their finance- partly from the land allocated to run the guthi's and partly from raising some fees from the general members.

⁸³ Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal* Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1877. re-print 1972. page no. 170.

Earlier, many guthi members complain that there is absolutely no fees levied from general members, enough income is raised from the crops of land allocated to run the guthi's, but now, most of the land has been sold off and there is very little revenue to run the guthis. Some of the important socio-religious activities has been abandoned owing to the fact that there is no source of income to finance the expenditure incurred in the process.

6.1.1 System of Koji-Buu⁸⁴

All the land (immovable) properties meant for running particular guthis of Itumbahal are not counted as individual property but a common property of all sarva sangha. This type of arrangement has been, believed to have made by founder Keshchandra himself. The *Thayapas* are responsible for affaris of land properties. The *Thayapas* are entrusted with the income from the plots of land as a reward for their services in Itumbahal shrine. Similarly, *guthi palas* of a particular guthi, received income from plots of land specially meant for running a particular guthi. Sometimes it happened that, the government revenues are also paid in the name of *Thayapas* and *guthi palas*. However, it does not mean that the immovable property belongs to *Thayapas* or *guthi palas*. It's absolutely not a personal, or hereditary property, according to system of *Koji Buu*, such land properties will automatically transferred in the name of another *Thayapa* or *palas*, who replace them. The particular plot of land and its revenue, which has been enjoyed by present *Thayapa* does not transfer in the name of his generation, but to another *Thayapa* who replace him after his demise.

⁸⁴ According to the *Thayapas* of Itumbahal

Many legal disputes arose between sangha and generation of *Thayapas* and *palas*, those who refuse to hand over said land property in the name of sarva sangha. Many guthis once celebrated with glory were abandoned now, because of such legal disputes. Itumbahal sarva sangha still possessed about 137 ropanies of land in Kathmandu valley in the name of different *Thakalis* of Itumbahal Sangha. Many of those lands are disputed, being refused to hand over to sarva sangha by generation of *Thakalis*. Some lacks proper documents, some encroached by land mafias. The ultimate result of such disputes make itumbahal sangha weak and poor, and percolates the erosion of cultural heritages of Nepal as a whole.

6.2 Donations to Itumbahal Sangha

If we closely study the chronology of donations in Itumbahal we find that the tradition of erection of inscription along with the mentioning name of donors and motives behind such donations is started by the Madanram Vardan in NS 502. Although, Jaysthiti Malla was a ruling monarch during those days he does not mention the name of the King in his inscriptions Madanram Vardan and his wife Jayatralakshmi were devout Buddhist who had established the shrine of Tara.⁸⁵ After Madanram Vardan we find that the gentleman named Gudochandra founded Samyek Guthi in NS. 714 is a remarkable event.⁸⁶ He established the tradition of celebration of Samyek in every four years on the 1st day of Magh, at Bhurugkhel. The charity of Gudochandra is a landmark event in the history of Itumbahal. His generous donations to the Sangha, encouraged the later donors, following the widespread donations, repair

⁸⁵ Bhuwan Lal Pradhan, *Kathmandu Upatyaka ko kehi Sanskriti Chirka mirka*, pub. by Sumitra Manandhar, 2064, page no. 128.

⁸⁶ Ibid. page no. 133.

and maintenances, and beautification of Itumbahal were carried on for about a century from N.S.747 to N.S.840:⁸⁷

6.2.1 Chronology of Donations to Itumbahal⁸⁸

N.S.502: The earliest Inscription yet found in Itumbahal describes about, Dipankar Buddha being offered by ‘Mandanram Vardan’ to the Itumbahal. Similarly his wife Jayatralakshmi, a Buddhist from Laganbahal constructed shrine for Goddess Tara. She donated the golden statues of Goddess Tara into the shrine, with good wishes of spread of Buddhist teaching and general welfare of all human being. Ever since, the whole compound of Tara shrine came to be known as *Taranani*.

N.S. 654: On the full moon days of *Srawan*, A resident of Itumbahal Jayataju, invited acharyas to dine and read ‘*Lakshyabagawati*’, (Pancha rakshya) he has also donated “Jyana-mu (?)” and 2 ropanis of land of silatochora. The Income incurred from, land of ‘silatochora’, will continue the tradition for years to come. He has also mentioned in the copper plate inscription that if some one tries to impound, such donated items will offend the five great sins.

N.S. 672: On the 7th day of *Asar Suklapakahya*, a resident of Itumbahal has erected the votive stupa with four standing Buddhas inside Itumbahal shrine and also wishes for increase in health and wealth of the people.

N.S. 679: On the 13th day of *Srawan Jyotiju* and Gunaju has donated a pair of stone lion outside Kwapadya.

⁸⁷ *Itumbahal Abhilekh Sangraha*, pub. by Itumbahal Samrakhyan Samaj Kathmandu, 2062. p. 5-16.

⁸⁸ Ibid

N.S. 714: On the 13th day of *Vaisakh* Gudochandra of Itumbahal has established a guthi to celebrate the Samyek Mahadan on every 1st day of Magh. For this purpose he has donated copper puja materials, like *Anti, Sankha, Karuwa, Golden rings* etc to be kept at Kwapadya.

N.S. 747: On the 11th day of *Asara*, the stone lion pair outside main gate has been established by Dhamasinga, and Jayarakshya Sakyabhiksu. In the same year the same brothers also donated the Torana of the main entrance gate.

N.S. 752: On the 2nd day of *Asara*, Bitusing Rawat of yetkha donated the Torana, and pair of singha at main entrance of '*Agam Ghar*', which, he himself made it.

N.S. 762: On the 15th day of *Poush*, Sakyabhikhu Thaypa has donated wooden Torana and pair of stone lion at the main entrance of '*De puja*' shrine.

N.S. 771: On the 5th day of *Jestha*, a Baniya named Govindaraja has donated stone water tank inside the Vihara.

N.S. 783: The wall of main entrance is extensively repaired by group of Shakyas and Bajracharyas from different Viharas.

N.S. 788: The central portion of Itumbahal has been extensively repaired by group of *Thayapas* of Itumbahal.

N.S. 794-95: The three families of '*Ganacha Prabhakar, Padam Singh, and Haku,*' donated the wooden window at the 2nd floor of Taha matan Agam Ghar.

N.S. 795: On the 8th day of *Asara*, Jini Singh and his family donated the big metal caste bell, located near the entrance of Kwapadya.

N.S. 805: On the new moon day of *Magh*, Jini Singh and his family donated gold to be plated at different places.

N.S. 812: The chaitya at the center of Itumbahal is repaired, by Gwambu Bharo and group of devotees.

N.S. 832: A big tantric puja has been performed for a whole year on the 13th day of every month, followed by the establishment of a big figure of Akshobhya Buddha which has been donated by group of devotees.

N.S. 837-38: On the different dates of *Jestha* and *Srawan*, many struts wood has been donated. In the year NS 837, 2nd day of *Jestha*. Bekha singh donated the struts wood with the figure of *Indrabhuti*. In the year 838 N.S. 8th day of *Srawan*. Dhanasingh donated one struts wood. Similarly, In the year 838 Jayadev donated 8 struts wood and 2 corner struts wood (*Kun-sala*), in the name of his dead father Dhandev.

N.S. 840: The Inner compound of Itumbahal is plastered with polished brick and outer compound with sized rock pieces. The inscription outside Itumbahal Vihara mention that “the group of 3 person, Balsingh Bharo, Dhanju Bharo, Sukajit Bharo, with best wishes to enrich Vihar has done this social service.”

N.S.920: On the 2nd day of *Jestha*. The gajur (pinnacle) of Kwapadya is enshrined with the help of sangha.

N.S.924: On the 2nd day of *Chaitra*, decorated metal flower, a top main gajur is donated by Sangha.

N.S.953: On the 9th day of Chaitra, The *Tahamatan Agam Ghar*'s main door of brass and a pair of lamp donated by group of 31 devotees who had accomplished the *Astamibrata* for whole year.

N.S.970: A family living near 'Na-Sima-Ko' of Itumbhal donated the big metal bell outside Kwapadya.

N.S.983: On the 6th day of *Falgun*, a devotee has donated and established the five gajur of Kwapadya and repaired the roof top.

N.S.1051: On the 8th day of *Magh*, A pair of brass lion has been donated by family of Mankaji, located at just outside the gate of Kwapadya.

N.S.1052: The three figure of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is been donated, (located just outside the Tahamatan Ghar) by Kulman Singh and family. Those 3 figures has been established right after the repair work of Taha Matan, which has been destroyed by heavy earthquake of 1990. B.S.

N.S.1058: The repousee square figure of Gurumapa eating a child, Gurumapa eating a pot full of rice and two figures of Dipankar and Sa-kyamuni is donated and plastered by Jeet ratna.

N.S.1068 (2006 BS): Buddhiman Shakya has repaired the *asan* of Kwapadya.

Many old, original artifacts and structures were widely replaced, repaired and established a new. The original structure, which has been founded by Keshchandra might have been partly destroyed by earthquake, termites or some other natural disasters. It necessitated the repair and maintenance work, which has been carried on for a span of

centuries (NS. 747 to 840). The later repair works done with the foundations of guthis, to sustain, the repairs and maintenances, which has been proudly engraved in inscriptions.

6.3 Land Donations

There are inscriptional evidence of land donations and land revenues being awarded to run the guthis.⁸⁹

-) In the year **N.S. 654** a resident of Itumbahal Jayataju has donated two ropanis of land from 'Silatochora' to guthis and also called for the revenues from the said land be utilized to read '*Lakshyabagawati*' (*Pancha rakshya?*) and serve a free dinner to *Acharyas* and members of guthi every year on the full moon days of srawan, The said guthi is no longer exists now.
-) In the year **N.S. 714**, Gudochandra has founded the Samyek Guthi. In an inscription of Taranani he has mentioned the donation of gold and other puja materials to Kwapadya. There is no mention of land donations, still there are some land in the name of Samyek Guthi.
-) In the year **N.S. 840**, the inscription just outside the Itumbahal has clearly mentioned about the formation of a new guthi. It mentioned about two ropanis of land from '*Thatu Kawa*' and 2.2 ropanis of land in '*Khotu lhuti Kawa*'. Similarly, cultivable land of five ropani from '*Tichhodwar*' has been awarded to the guthi. The community land has been handed over to the eleven *Thayapas* and *Bajracharyas* as a common property of Itumbahal; not to be inherited, as personal property. Two pathis of unhusked rice be given to the sweeper of Itumbahal; and 1/4th of the income from

⁸⁹ Itumbahal Abhilekh Sangraha pub. by Itumbahal Samrakhyan Samaj Kathmandu, 2062.

said land be spend on yearly days of the 4th day of Chaitra to feed the Sangha including *Thayapas* and *Acharyas* (*Swancha Guthi*).

J) In an another undated inscription located near the main entrance in Itumbahal it has been mentioned that a guthi is celebrated on ‘*Dinla punih*’ or Guru Purnima (*keta madu dhalan guthi*) by lighting the butter lamp in and around Kwapadya. Next day all the *Thyapas* and *Acharyas* and *Sarva sanghas* are invited to Samyek Mahadan and feast, for this purpose the founders of guthi Jayarayaju and family has donated numbers of cultivable land ‘1.3 ropanis 2 Dharaka’? rice field. 2 ropanis of *Hakutwa* rice field. Similarly, a house near Itumbahal measuring 14 hand by 6 hand (*hath*) has been donated to Itumbahal’s guthi. All the initiated members of Itumbahal should be given donations, until every one of them are alive, and the Inscriptions also warns about, if someone tries to impound it, he will face the ‘five great sins’. This guthi is no longer exists now days.

6.3.1 Comments on land Donations

Thus, here we find innumerable donations by faithful devotees and Guthi members in Itumbahal, which make it one of the richest Viharas of Kathmandu Valley. According to Daniel Wright, Keshchandra has brought and donated about 360 ropanis of land in Kathmandu Valley .All those lands are common property of Itumbahal sarva sangha and not to be inherited individually. Currently, Itumbahal sarva sangha possessed about 150 ropanies of land in different part of valley which is still disputed and legal battle is going on, for the ownership of those lands.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ According to capt. Chandra Bahadur Shakya, Itumbahal possessed 63.12 ropanies + 44.6.2 ropanies + 37 ropanies with different thakalis of sangha.

According to Buddhist teaching, all the material donations, land donations and voluntary community service to guthi and Vihara is considered as a *Dharma*. Buddhist consider donations in the name of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha as a most righteous one, since it helps more merit accumulation by encouraging more donations and charities.⁹¹

Unfortunately, in recent years owing to the growth of population in Kathmandu Valley encroachment of guthi lands by individuals, the indifferent govt laws, lack of proper documents of guthi lands, lack of faith among guthi members, forced to sell off most of the guthi land. The little money thus acquired were stored in financial institutions, and occasionally utilized for some repair and maintenance. Thus, It happened that one of the financially strong Buddhist monastery of the Nepalese Buddhism being collapsed into a poor Vihara, with little financial resources.

⁹¹ According to Buddhist text like Pragyaparmita.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF ITUMBAHAL

7.1 Viharas in Ancients Days

In ancient days the entire complex where Buddha spends most of his time among *Bhikhus* and performs most of the socio-religious activities is called as '*Arama*'. The famous *Aramas* of Buddha time are '*Jethvanarma*', '*Ghositarama*', '*Purvarama*', '*Nighodharama*'.⁹² The entire complex of *Aramas* may consists of one or more Viharas, hostels where *Bhikhus* resides, halls for preaching *Dhamma*, rooms for meeting people. Passage for '*Chakramana*', bathrooms, gardens, clean and peaceful environment.

During Buddhas time both *Aramas* and *Viharas* are mixed terminologically, sometime *Aramas* has been referred as *Viharas* and *Viharas* as *Aramas*. The whole structure was called as Sangharam, or community's rest house later on, the word Vihara came to assume the meaning of Sangharam.⁹³

The very word Vihara has been derived from the word '*Viharati*' (i.e Place where Buddha resides) which has been mentioned in ancient Buddhist text books, e.g. "As I have heard once upon a time, lord was residing at Jethavana's Anathapindaka Vihara in relaxed mood...."⁹⁴ This clearly defines the Vihara as a place where lord Buddha spends most of his times. The special room where Buddha resides is known as *kuti*, it is

⁹² Bhaiksu Sudarsan "*Nepa Ya Baha Bahi Ya Bisesta*" Pub by Nepal Bouda Pariyati Samiti, 2061. page no. 2

⁹³ Basanta Bidari "*Lumbini- A Heaven of sacred refuge*". (Pub. by self 2001), page no. 207.

⁹⁴ "एव मे सुतं/एकं समय समय भगवा सार्वत्ययं विहरति जेतवने अनाथ पिण्डी कस्य आरामे ..."

full of fragrance of flower and incense. Later the place also came to be known as *Gandhakuti*.⁹⁵

The archaeological evidence of ancient Viharas clearly highlight about the complexness of Viharas and Aramas. The basic principle of Buddhist Viharas is to propagate Dhamma. It's a hotbed of socio religious activities, a place where public relations among priests and laymen flourishes; Vihara is a place of learning and gain knowledge a place where sick and weak takes refuge, rich and famous donate part of their income to highlight their social status, Infact, Vihara projects the status of the society.

According to Buddhist text there are about 14 Viharas during Buddhas time. Jethavanaram is a famous Vihara where lord Buddha spend most of his '*varsavasa*' and gave sermons. Most of the Aramas and Viharas are donated by famous merchants and rich deciples.⁹⁶ Veluvanaama, Nighrodarama, Jethavanarama, Purvarama, Ghositarama, Amrapalivana are important Viharas during Buddhas time. Similarly, Ajanta, Nagarjun Konda, Nalanda. Vikramsila are famous Viharas, founded by Buddha's disciples in early millennium. A.D.⁹⁷

7.2 Buddhist Viharas in Ancient and Medieval Nepal

Vihara is a Buddhist monastery where celibate monks and nuns reside. The concept for the Buddhist Viharas (Baha) of Kathmandu valley has been drawn from the Viharas of Buddhas time, with additional features of Mahayana rituals and tantric practices. The very word Vihar

⁹⁵ Bhiksu Sudarsan. Op. cit page 2.

⁹⁶ P.V. Bapat, '*2500 years of Buddhism*' by Ministry of in foundation & Broadcasting, Govt. of Inda, 1956, page 23.

⁹⁷ Ajay kranti Shakya. '*The Shakyas*', pub. by Nepal Buddhist Development and Research Center "Kathmandu 2006, page 38.

has been modified as: Vihara > Vahara> Bahara>Vahala> into modern Bahal and Baha.⁹⁸ The modern Newari word Baha has been derived from Vihara. The initiated monks of Viharas are known as *bhikshu* or *sakyabhiksu*. In medieval days they are known as ‘*Bande*’ which is the sanskritised form of ‘*Vante*’ of Theravada Buddhist Monks.

Buddhist monasteries in Nepal has been introduced during 2nd century B.C., when king Asoka's daughter charumati visits Kathamndu valley and established the 'Charumati Vihara'. (Chabahil)⁹⁹ During Lechavi days there are about 20 Buddhist Viharas, as it is evident from the Lechavi inscriptions. We find maximum growth of Viharas during medieval periods upto Malla era. Most of the current Buddhist Viharas are established during medieval period. Presently there are about 307 Vihara's (including Baha, Bahai and Kachabaha's) in the Kathmandu valley.¹⁰⁰ However, only a few Viharas are active like true Buddhist monastery.

7.3 Characteristic Feature of Viharas in Kathmandu Valley¹⁰¹

- a. Viharas are always square in shape.
- b. Rooms positioned according to the swastika shape.
- c. Rooms without partition at the ground floor of Viharas.
- d. A separate room for Kwapadya, (Buddha and Bodhisatwo).
- e. The ‘*Agamghar*’ with the provision of separate ‘*Guhye puja*’.
- f. Kwapadya must be a Akshobhya Buddha or Sakyamuni.
- g. Kwapadya always facing East.
- h. Main entrance in to Vihara located in front of Kwapadya

⁹⁸ John. K. Locke. *Buddhist Monastries of Nepal*, pub. Sahayogi press, Kathmandu 1985. page no. 3.

⁹⁹ Hem Raj Shakya. ‘*Sri-Swayambhu Mahachaitya*’, Translated by Min Bahadur Shakya. 2061. (2004). Page no. 77-78.

¹⁰⁰ John K. Locke. ‘*Karunamaya*’ pub. by Sahayogi press, Kathmandu 1980. page no. 13-14.

¹⁰¹ Bhiksu Sudarsan, op. cit. f. No. (2) page 3.

- i. A chaitya or stupa on the top of the roof above Kwapadya.
- j. Back side door, to exit towards gardens or compounds.
- k. Raised foot path around the inner circle of Vihara.
- l. Provision for parapet around Vihara to circumvent it.
- m. A pair of Lion and Torana placed at the main entrance.
- n. Mahankal and Ganesh located on both side of main entrance.
- o. “Phalaincha” or rest place at the both side of entrance.
- p. Vihara are usually made of two storey.
- q. The slanting roofs are supported by decorated struts woods.
- r. Clay, wood and bricks are used for construction of Vihara.
- s. Both wall and frame structure basis used for Vihara construction.
- t. A ‘well’ near the Vihara for supply of water.
- u. Open space, compounds, or Gardens (nanies, chukkas and gullies) around Vihara.
- v. A temple like structure or stupa in the center of the compound.

7.4 Architectural Features of Buddhist Viharas

7.4.1 Square in shape

Almost all the Buddhist Viharas in Kathmandu valley are perfectly square shaped in accordance with the mandala of mahayan Buddhist teaching. A big square mandala where 121 gods of mahayan pantheon are invited in its 121 different squares created at the Vihara courtyard.¹⁰² With all those invited Gods Vihara is believed to be a perfect place for religious activities. It’s a big *Vajra dhatu mandala*. The rooms of Vihara are created in such a fashion that it looks like big swastika a symbol of

¹⁰² Manik Ratna Shakya. Thesis report on Buddhis studies. Title. “*Nepal Mandal ko vihara Vaskukala*”. Buddhist studies dept. Kirtipur. 2063.

infinity and righteousness. The graphic symbols of swastika and mandala combined, resulted into a square shape of Buddhist Viharas.

There is always a stupa at the center of the courtyard - a symbolic feature for the importance of stupa in Mahayana Buddhism all the images of gods around courtyard are facing at the stupa. It's a tradition which has been inherited since the ancient days of Buddha, when Buddha asked all his bhikus to face him while taking rest at aramas. In the absence of Buddha, a stupa is positioned at the center of courtyard and *bhikus* faced stupa in remembrance of Buddha.¹⁰³

7.4.2 Open Long Rooms

The ground floor of viharas have had open long rooms, on the both sides of Kwapadya. Those open rooms are particularly used for *bhajans*, guthi gatherings, storage resting place for night guards, sometimes feasting place for guthi members. In some occasions particularly in the month of '*Gun-la*' this place is used for displaying rare *Dipankaras* and artifacts of viharas.

The both side of main entrance of viharas, right in front of kwapadya, we find open space with fixed bench, which is used as resting place for pilgrims, gossiping and discussing. It is a socializing place; locals call it, as '*Dharmagar*'.

7.4.3 Raised Parapet

A raised parapet around inner compound of vihara is specially meant for reaching the main shrine of Kwapadya, from main entrance while circumnavigating. During the rainy season, to avoid slippery

¹⁰³ Ibid

ground, people used to walk along the raised parapet to reach Kwapadya. In fact the raised parapet reminds a special features of ancient Buddhist monasteries too, it's used as for circumnavigating (*Chakra man sthan*), along the main shrine. The concept of *Charkmansthan* has been inherited into present day Buddhist Viharas of the Kathmandu Valley.

7.4.4 Traditional Structure

The multistory vihara of kathmandu valley are constructed out of locally available material like wood, bricks and clay. There are two basic process of construction of vihara - frame structure basis and wall structure basis. In the frame structure basis the strong wooden pillars, horizontal beams and thresholds were joined together by different types of wooden bolts, locks and crosstie. These frame structures bear the loads of multi storey structure. In the wall structure basis, the re-enforced clay joins the different types of bricks like *Ma-Apa*, *Dachi-Apa*, *Lohan Apa* etc, to raise the wall, which ultimately bear the load. Both of this process is used to construct vihara. Wall structure basis is utilized in the outer boundary, and frame structure process is utilized in the inner part of Vihara.¹⁰⁴

The combination of these twin process of construction resists, vihara's from earthquake to some extant. The abundant use of traditional materials like properly baked bricks, reinforced clay and hard woods make Vihara more durable than other traditional houses.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

7.4.5 Separate Room for Kwapadya

A separate room for Kwapadya (a short form of *Kosta pal Devata*)¹⁰⁵ is an important feature of Buddhist viharas. Even during the Buddhas time, Buddha used to live in a separate room known as '*Kuthi*'. The fragrance of incense burned at '*Kuthi*' in later days came to be known as '*Gandhakuthi*' (a room of fragrance). The fragrance of burning incense, fresh flowers, and lights of butter lamp; and the water vessels are important during Buddhas time.¹⁰⁶ Even now in Kwapadya, the burning incense, fresh flowers, butter lamps, water vessels are kept ritualistically along with the ringing bells, yaks tail, (fly whisk) and fresh fruits. Those offerings are part of the daily rituals at Kwapadya.

7.4.6 Main Entrance

The main entrance into vihara is always at east, located just in front of Kwapadya, also facing east, but kept at the western part of the vihara. The main entrance is highly decorated with *Tympanum* and blind windows on both side. There are numerous doors around viharas, some exist towards, gardens, chukkas, nunnies. One can reach 2nd floor of vihara from inside the complex with numerous doors on four corners.

7.4.7 Multi Storey of Vihara Shrine

The typical Buddhist Viharas of the valley are of two storeys. The ground floor is mainly used for activities concerning public relations, such as community gathering, bhajans, exhibitions, godowns, storage, squatting, holding feasts, offices, story telling etc. The 2nd floor is mainly dedicated to *Agam Ghar*- a place for secret tantric pujas where nobody is

¹⁰⁵ Samati Bajracharya "*Chatiya Ra Stupa*", Pub by Mahayan Boudha Samaj". (Kathmandu, 2007). page 29.

¹⁰⁶ Bhikhu Sudarsan Op. cit. page no. 12.

allowed to enter except '*Thakalis of Vihara*'. The secret pujas, and initiations are performed at 2nd floor.

In some Viharas there are multiple storey of 3 to 5 storey, on the top of Kwapadya. The multiple story of Kwapadya is symbolic for *chattrawali* or parasol, therefore an object of high status and respectfulness.

7.4.8 Open Spaces

Open spaces like "*Chukkas, nunnies, kyabas*", are always a part of Vihara complex. These open spaces, compounds are utilized for gardening, which supplies fresh flowers into Vihara. Gardening symbolizes the peace and serenity of the entire complex. Nowadays, there are very little open compounds, every piece of land has been lost, due to encroachment.

7.4.9 A Well near Vihara

A 'Well' is an another feature of Vihara complex. The purpose of 'Well' near Vihara is to fetch holy water and perform *Nitya puja* to the Kwapadya. Even in the ancient Viharas of Lumbini, Saranath, Kusinagar, we find the 'well' near Vihara, it fulfills the necessity of water, to the Vihara and the community as a whole.

7.5 Artistic Features of Buddhist Vihara

7.5.1 Sakyamuni

The main shrine of Kwapadya is occupied by the figure of Sakyamuni or Akshobhya Buddha always facing east. In some places there is Dipankar Buddha, and two devout disciples like '*Sariputra*' and

Maugadlayani on the both side of entrance. In the tympanyum above Kwapadya we find the figures of Vajrasatwo, flanked by two Lokeshowars, symbolizing the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

7.5.2 Stupas

The Buddhist Viharas in Kathmandu valley are dotted with numerous votive stupas in and around the Vihara complex. Many of those stupas are commemorative and offered by disciples living in and around the Vihara complex. Beside stupa there are *Vajradhatu Mandala* carved on the stone and placed in front of Kwapadya. Offering stupas, votive chaitya to religiously important places in the name of deceased one is considered to be meritorious act' according to Mahayana Buddhist teaching.¹⁰⁷

Sometimes we find small stupas placed at the right above the roof top of Kwapadya, replacing a pinnacle. The number of pinnacles are placed along the top of the roof, varies according to the size and status of Vihara.

7.5.3 Struts wood

The slanting roof of Viharas are supported by the strong sloping vertical wooden beam placed at the joints of outside wall and horizontal beam of 1st floor. Those beams are highly decorated and artistically carved. The highly carved struts wood are the typical features of Nepalese temple and monastic architecture. There are fixed rules and regulation to place gods around the Vihara. Usually five protective deities are placed at top of the Kwapadya. Many tantric deities, *Bodhisatwoos*, *Siddhas*, *Chaturmaharajas* carved on those struts woods are placed both in side

¹⁰⁷ Sunuti Bajracharya op cit. page 22.

and outside the Vihara. The strut wood served the twin purpose of supporting the slanting roof and the artistic presence of respective deities.

7.5.4 Toranas

The Toranas or Tympanyum is a semi circular decorated wooden or metal board placed right above, at the main entrance of Vihara, as well as at the main entrance of Kwapadya, Agam Ghar, and at the top of the window. The highly carved *Torana* features the different Gods and Goddess, *Chepus*, *Nagraja*, *Protective* deities etc. The figures carved at torans represents the main god inside the Vihara. Torana is like a 'sign board' of a company, it highlights the essence of Buddhist teaching and shrine itself. If sometimes when the door is closed, people will just pay respect at the main god carved at Torana and leave.

7.5.5 Ganesh and Mahankal

The figures of both Ganesh and Mahakal are placed at the both side of main entrance. They are considered to be the protective deities' who avoids evil and welcomes peace and happiness. Sometime those figures are placed at resting place inside main entrance.

7.5.6 Pair of Lion

A pair of lion at the main entrance of Buddhist Vihara is a chief features of Nepalese Buddhist Viharas. In some places there are multiple pair of lions of both stone and metal. Those lions are donated by devotees in different times of establishment. The winged pair of lion are symbolic for its power to fly and speed. The carved stone pair of lion, with curly hair are identified as 'Snow leopard'. Legends tells us about the lions used to guard the places where Buddha gave sermons. The presence of

lions is Buddhist Vihara is symbolic for the protection, and defending the entire complex from evil. Pair of lions grace all the Buddhist Monasteries of both Theravada and Mahayana, pantaeon, even king Asoka use lions in his Asokan edicts and pillars.

7.6 Architectural Feature of Itumbahal

Like many other Buddhist Viharas of Kathmndu valley, the main shrine of Itumbahal is perfectly square in shape with around 24.95 meter, longitude. The square shape of Buddhst Vihara represent the mandala of Vajrayana Buddhism which accommodates the entire circle of Buddhist deities and Bodhisatwoo's.¹⁰⁸

The shrine of Itumbahal is two storey with sloping tiled roof. The structure is 14 ft wide 82 ft long, span's around north, east, south, west. A temple like structure with single roof is located right at the center of compound (fig. 2). 'The Temple' has enshrined stupa and 'Varanda' around it.

The Kwapadya is facing east as usual and the main entrance is located at the eastern part of the shrine. The ground floor of northern section has open exhibition hall. The southern section has 3 different rooms with purpose of storage, pharmacy and toilet. The shrine is closed from all three sides and opens only from the main entrance. The second floor of eastern section is occupied by office of '*Itumbahal Sanrakshyan Samaj*'. Both 1st floors of northern and southern lounges are '*Agam Ghar*' or resident of secret deities, only those persons with higher initiations are allowed to enter. The '*Agam*' of northern wing is known as '*Taha matan Agam*' and '*Swaya Madu Agam*' for the *Agam* of southern wing. The 1st

¹⁰⁸ Manik R. Shakya. op. cit.

floor of Kwapadya shrine is empty. There are different stairs which connects the 1st floor of different wings, from inside the rooms of ground floor. ‘*Bhutu Keba*’ or Kitchen complex is located behind the northern wing. The exit door at north east corner connects ‘*Bhutu keba*’ with main compound (see sketch 2).

The elaborate structure of Itumbahal shrine is made of traditional building materials like clay, bricks and woods, both frame structure basis and wall structure basis is utilized for the construction of Itumbahal, no cement is used for, preservation of its traditional looks. Itumbahal has been repaired and renovated several times, down the ages of history, but almost care is taken for preservation of its traditional Buddhist monastery structure.

Being a major Vihara (Maha Vihara) among eighteen major Viharas of Kathamndu valley, its main purpose is to propagate Buddhist teaching and the socialization of its subjects. The architectural design of Itumbahal has been designed with sole motives of socialization and to propagate Buddhism. The ground floor of Vihara is a big place for social activities. The daily rituals of Kwapadya, gatherings at *phalincha*, chanting hymens, feasting, exhibitions, festivals are the part of social activities. The rooms of 1st floor are reserved for senior initiated persons only and these rooms executes the Vajrayana Buddhist teachings, initiations, secret rites and rituals. Therefore, the entire complex of Itumbahal is constructed solely with the motives of propagation of Buddhism and to facilitated Buddhist way of life. Indeed, the discovery of several Buddhist manuscripts, which contains the full sanskrit name of Itumbahal and its resident. Significantly proves that vajrayana form of

Buddhism is well practiced and studied at Itumbahal during the medieval days of Malla period.¹⁰⁹

The innumerable gods and goddess carved in and around Vihara have had its artistic, ritualistic and architectural value. The fine carving of *Pancharakshya* gods above Kwapadya have twin purpose of artistic decoration and archaeological value of supporting the sloping roofs. There must have been similar carvings around Vihara from inside and outside the compound, but most of these woods have been stolen, lost due to negligence.

The traditional carved artistic long window with five niches, above kwapadya is symbolic for essence of *Pancha Buddhas*. The central window is highly carved and decorated with *tympanyum*. The vajrayana Buddhist deities like *Vajrasatwoo*, *Satakheri Lokshwar*, *Pragyaparmita* are carved in *tympanyum*. On the top of Kwapadya there are five pinnacles with gold plated, symbolizing the Pancha Buddhas.

Except northern wing all the rooms of 1st floor have traditionally carved long window with five openings. All the windows have been placed right above the every door of ground floor, which is decorated with small blind windows on both sides of door (Sketch 3). The entrance doors located at the corner, too have had blind windows on both sides of entrance. Above those entrance there are traditional windows with three openings, instead of five openings at the center. In the northern wing there are three sets of carved windows facing the courtyard. The brass repousse work of Gurumapa eating a child, eating pot full of rice and two Dipankar figures, are placed in between those three windows. In the corners there are single lattice wooden windows. The outsides periphery

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix III

of south, west and north is window less, there is only one exit door at left side of western wing. In the eastern face (main entrance) there is wooden window with five openings, and a beautifully carved wooden tympanyum, (fig. 11) which is now kept at store room for security reasons.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ART OBJECTS OF ITUMBAHAL

8.1 Introduction

Itumbahal has a rich collection of art objects. Art objects of both paintings and sculptures can be found in Itumbahal. Many of the paintings and sculptures were donated by devotees, through the ages.¹¹⁰ Once, itumbahal has a best collection of art objects, but now many of the art objects has been lost, theft or simply ruined by carelessness of guthi members. The stolen art objects are re-surfaced in American museums¹¹¹ and into the hands of the private collection of European art collectors. Some of the art objects which has been kept among the responsible members of guthi are deliberately lost, for they refuse to return items or simply, deny having taken it at all. Similarly, many items are laying idle at the dirty corners of Bahal consumed by moths, and termites. Lack of awareness among members taking its tool, the precious art and architectural heritage of Vihara, is fast eroding the very existence of Vihara.

Here, I will deal with the art objects of paintings and sculpture which has existed earlier, now stolen and other art objects which still, existed in Vihara.

¹¹⁰ See Chapter six.

¹¹¹ *Restoration of Itumbahal*, Progress Report, pub. by Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. Kathmandu. 2003, page no. 56.

8.2 Paintings

8.2.1 Introduction

The traditional newari painting on canvas is known as '*pau-vhas*'. Ancient newari '*pau-vhas*' are significant for their picturesque display and varieties of information about religious and social condition of those days. The pau-vhas contain the characteristics features like gods-goddess, secondary gods and goddess, Buddhist symbols and mandalas, ritual items, social events, disciples, name's of disciples, dates of paintings, and of course, the narrative techniques of these painting's. The sketches and hand gestures in the paintings explains some of the social events and Buddhist social values and rituals then existed in the society.¹¹² Unlike modern 'Thangka painting's', which are commercially manufactured to attract tourism, during ancient days the single paintings tells the entire cultural events happened in those day. Such paintings provide important information about clothing, ornaments, dress and appearance of the period, tools, ritual objects, occupation, historical events, clues about architectural techniques. A close examination of such paintings gives us valuable information about cultural life and living styles of contemporary period. Therefore, the study of ancient newari painting is important, for it portrays the distinct historical and cultural values. We cannot ignore the value of paintings in the study of Nepalese culture.

8.2.2 Scroll Paintings of Itumbahal

A long scroll painting (also known as '*Bilan pau*' in newari) which was proudly displayed at the hall of northern lounge during the festivals of gun-la has been theft or lost, very little is known about it. The elders,

¹¹² Mary Slusser. '*Art & culture of Nepal: selected papers*. pub. by. Manadala Publication 2005, page no. 319.

tells us about the long scroll which picturesquely describes the story about legendry, Keshchandra and Gurumarpa, it's a histography of Itumbahal as a whole. Scholars like Daniel Wright, John K. Locke, and Mary Slusser, when they visited Itumbahal for research has seen the long beautiful painting's with telling stories of Gurumapa and Keshchandra. The paintings is out of display and simply vanished from Vihara. An unconfirmed report says that someone in sangha still possessed those paintings but publicly deny it.

Mary Slusser had some good information about Itumbahal's '*Bilan-pau*'.¹¹³ She says that '*Bilan Pau*' is probably painted in the eighteen century and restored in the nineteenth century. It bears a clear date of V.S. 1280 (A.D. 1233). The date is certainly not that of the present paintings which, however, may be the most recent of a succession of faithful copies of series of earlier paintings, which did bear a corresponding date; at that time. The existence of earlier painting is confirmed by the existence of a very old tattered painting, which must have served as the model for later paintings.

The banner tells about the story of founder and foundation of Itumbahal. In this painting, as a minor episode among many events, Keshchandra makes a pilgrimage to Gosaikunda (fig. 8). Here while he was bathing, he encounters the pig's head at scared place like Gosaikunda, and there upon, he forbade all his offsprings and sanghamembers to visit Gosaikunda.¹¹⁴ '*Bilan-Pau*' also describes about the event of plunder of Kathmandu valley by king Mukundasena from

¹¹³ Ibid page no. 518.

¹¹⁴ Ibid page no. 30

Palpa in NS 646, and how does the Itumbahal has been spared from disaster.¹¹⁵

Mary Slusser gives us an information about, at least two banner paintings, which is however, not present today a great loss to Itumbahal.

8.2.3 The Pauvha's

- i. There are three important paintings which has been stolen from Viharas and now in the possession of Arthur M Sackler Gallery in Washington D.C.¹¹⁶ The first one measuring 166.4 x 139.7 cm has been dated to 1704 A.D. It describes the four *bhairabas* pleading before the divine couple, may be requesting for some favor (fig. 9). From the painting's it is clear that the painting has been re-painted in 1704, in replacement of decayed original paintings.¹¹⁷ The '*pauvhas*' is certainly related with the founder of Itumbahal, the legendary figure of Keshchandra and Gurumapa.

The narrative techniques is the prime features of ancient newari '*Pauvhas*' In this '*pauvhas*' too the divine couple are seated, adorned with highly decorated princely outfit with abundant jewellery, were interacting with four demon gods may be *Bhairabas*. The *Bhairabas* are demanding or pleading something from the divine couple. The wife of divine male is turning away her head as if she does not like to hear what is being discussed among divine male and *Bhairabas*. The divine couple half surrounded by artistically decorated arched gateway topped by the figure of garuda. The seated celestial figure above cloud is blessing

¹¹⁵ Ibid page no. 319.

¹¹⁶ Op. cit. *Restoration of Itumbahal*. page no. 56.

¹¹⁷ Ibid page no. 57.

the divine couple. The *pau-vha* is highly decorative and narrative, surprisingly, in the colophons, it does not mention, who he was, but certainly it has been made in replacement of decayed original one in 1704 A.D. and dedicated to the monastery of Itumbahal.

- ii. The another painting describes the divine couple of *Chintamani Lokeshwara* offering gold and Jewelleries hand picked from the trees. The highly decorated figures of Lokeshwar and wife (?), standing below the *Chintamani Briksh:*. where gold and Jewelleries are ripen like fruits, *Chintamani Lokeshwar* and wife plucking those jewelleries and distributing among the poor and old people. No inscription is found in the *pauvahas* but it has been dated in between 1700-1725 A.D. by P. Pal and it measure 164-143.5 cm.
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- iii. Yet another portrait of *Gagansingh Bharo* princely dressed with dragger, conversing with his two wives, dated 1450-74 A.D. size about 191.8 - 161.9 cm. The painting portrays the traditional Newari puja utensils like '*Jwalanahyakun*', '*Sinamu*', '*Karuwa*', '*Aunti*', *Kharga* etc is culturally significant, for its use in the then society of 15th century. Here *Gagansingh Bharo* seems to be a rich merchant and arguing with his wives for some charity, donations etc.¹¹⁹

8.3 Wooden arts in Itumbahal

8.3.1 Introduction

There was a time when, Itumbahal has been highly decorated with the masterpieces of wooden art. It comprises of *tympanum*, *struts wood*,

¹¹⁸ P .Pal. *Himalayas, An Aesthetic Adventhure*. Pub. by the Art Institute of Chicago, 2003, (page 82).

¹¹⁹ Ibid. page no. 69.

stupas, wooden statues, boxes, decorative doors and windows, blind windows, wooden masks etc. Many of the wooden items are replaced originals. There is no guarantee that many wooden artifacts has remain intact since the foundation of Itumbahal. The study of some of the inscriptions tells us about the donation of wooden struts, either replaced or newly donated by devotees. Similarly, the wooden statues are donated to vihara in the name of deceased person. However, most of the artifacts of Itumbahal are lost, broken, stolen or damaged beyond repair. A big wooden mask of *Kirtimukh Bhairab* (average height-100cm), once proudly displayed above the entrance of *bhutu keba* in north east corner of vihara has been stolen about 20 years back (fig. 6). Similarly, many strut woods are stolen, besides there is two unsuccessful attempts to steal wooden tympanum located at main entrance. The poor state of the art in Itumbahal has been due to negligence among the guthi members. Here, I will take account of remaining pieces of art.

8.3.2 Toranas (Tympanum)

Torana is a semi-circular decorative panel over the entrance of a shrine. The *Torana* represents the 'Essence' of the shrine. The figures, gods/ goddess carved in the Torana describes the gods and goddess inside the shrine. In some places the celestial form of the gods inside the shrine is depicted.

Toranas are placed over the main entrance of the shrine, above Kwapadya's door way, above the entrance of *Agam Ghar*, sometimes above the windows. Toranas are made of wood but in some places been made with metal repousses and gold polished (like in Swayambhu). Torans are the typical feature of Nepalese architecture common to both Hindu and Buddhist shrine.

The common art figures in a *Toranas* is of *Cheepu* grasping nagas or flying *garudas* with its feet firmly holding the pair of *nagarajas*, *makaras* spouting precious gem stones (*Ratnas*). In the center we find the celestial figures of main god inside the shrine. There are many figures representing *Buddha*, *Dharma* and *Sangha* the triple gem of Buddhist philosophy, Buddha by *Akshobhya*, *Sakyamuni Buddha*, or *Vajrasatwoos*. Dharma by *Namasangiti*, *Pragyaparmita*, (*Satacheri*) and Sangha by *Lokeshwara*¹²⁰. Sometimes the tympanum also describes the real life encounter of Lord Buddham like *Mara Vijaya* and *Lumbini Vana Bijayagu* etc. The figures of Buddha in the center is surrounded by *Pancharakshya* deities; which according to *Pancharakshya sutras*, it is liable to the ultimate protection of Buddhas and the shrine from all kind of disturbances and evils. The semi circular *Toranas* is topped by three tire *chattras*, symbolizing the victory and glory.

In Itumbahal there are all together five *Toranas* (i) at the main entrance of Itumbahal (ii) above the entrance of Kwapadya (iii) at the Agam Ghar (iv) at the Depuja Ghar. (v) windows above Kwapadya.

The wooden *Torana* located at the main entrance of Itumbahal, is about one meter long at base. This *Torana* has been donated by *Dharmasangha* and *Jayarakshya Sakyabhiksu* in the year 747 N.S. (fig. 11). The tentative date written on the piece of copper Inscription has been broken and we have to guess the date according to the donors name and date written on the inscriptions at the base of a pair of stone lion at the main entrance as both the donor's name is same.¹²¹

¹²⁰ John K, Locke. *Buddhist Monastries of Nepal*. Sahayogi Press Kathmandu 1985. Page 7.

¹²¹ *Itumbahal Abhilekh Sangraha*. Pub. by. Itumbahal Sangrakshayan Samraj. kathmandu, 2008, page no. 6.

In the *Torana's* copper inscription it has been mentioned as '*Marabhanga Torana*'. The wooden carving on *Torana* imminently describes the Buddhas win over *mara* (the evil one). The Buddhas determination to win over the evil and acquire enlightenment is elegantly carved in the *Toranas*. Similarly, the *Pancharakshya deities*, *Garudas*, *Nagarajas* and *Makaras* are beautifully carved. Many celestial figures and motifs carved in a meter long *Torana* itself is a praiseworthy for a craftsmen's skillfulness. This is the only *Toranas* in entire Nepal where the *Mara Vijaya* described from the page's of *Lalitvistara*, the Buddha's biography.

In NS. 752 a resident of *Yatu Baha* (Yetkha Baha?) *Bitusing Rawat* has donated the *Torana* at *Agamghar*. Similarly, the *Torana* at the *Depuja Ghar* has been donated by *Jakshya Putra* together with the pair of stone lions in the year 762 N.S. The *Torana* is full of picturesquely carved *Pancharakshya* deities and *Vajrasatwoo*. The *Torana* outside *Kwapadya* is little smaller in relation to other *Toranas*. No dates has been found here, but it may be the oldest one with the carving of *Vajrasatwoo*. Another small *Torana* is located at the center of five fold window located above *Kwapadya*. Three figures of *Lokeshwar*, *Vajrasatwoo* and *pragyaparmita* is carved at this *Torana*.¹²²

8.4 Struts wood

8.4.1 Introduction

Struts wood are piece of vertical beam supporting the slating roof of the vihara. In ancient days, it was plain supporting pillar beholding the sloping roof, but later craftsmen use to carve these angular beam to

¹²² Ibid. page 6,7.

highlight the presence of gods and goddess in and around the shrine. Initially, it was a decorative piece but later it was placed in different direction in accordance with the philosophy of mandala of tantric Buddhism.

8.4.2 Struts Woods in Itumbahal

At present there are altogether fourteen struts woods remaining in Itumbahal. There might have been complete circle of struts wood in and around the Itumbahal when it was first constructed by Keshchandra. The number of struts wood their specific locations in and around the Vihara is dealt with according to the mandalas of Tartaric Buddhism, for the Vihara itself is considered as a big mandala where the locations of gods and goddess, chaityas, entry and exit doors were positioned according to graphics of mandala drawings. But in later periods with the repeated ruins and re-placements, the original struts have been either distorted or dislocated.

In the course of extensive repairs in the year N.S. 837-38 devotees like *Bekh sing*, *Dhana singh*, *Jaydev* donated 12 struts wood, including two corner horse shape struts wood (*Kun-sala*) located around the Vihara.¹²³ Except *Indrabhuti* other struts of goddess are broken and some of them are beyond recorngnization (fig. 10). The base of those struts woods is engraved by figure of siddhas like *Kukuripa*, *Samadhupa*, besides *Khodasa Lasya Mudra* and the figure of the doners. To re-identify the figure of struts wood, must take an initiative to make comparative study and identify the gods from the struts woods figure located in other Vihars of the Kathmandu valley.

¹²³ Ibid page no. 15, 16.

The beautifully carved six struts wood facing east, right above the kwapadya are believed to be of *Pancharakshya gods* (fig. 1) in standing positions. The dates of these struts woods are not known, not mentioned any where on these woods, but scholars believe that it may have been constructed around 13th century.¹²⁴ Among the six struts woods, five are believed to be of *Pancharakshya Gods* in female form, one of them is definitely a male figure. Buddhist scholars like Pd. Badri Ratna Bajracharya says that it is of *Maha Akshobhya* - the tartaric form of *Akshobhya Buddha*. The standing figures with multiple arms and multiple heads represents the five protective deities with the complete protection of Vihara from all kinds of evils and dangers including natural disasters.¹²⁵

In Itumbahal the *Pancharakahya gods* are identified, from extreme left as (i) *Mahapratisara* (ii) *Mahamayuri* (iii) *Maha Ashobhya* (iv) *Maha Sahasra Pramardani* (v) *Maha Sitavati* (vi) *Mahamantranusrani*. The figures are exposed to wear and tear, many tools and hand gestures of those gods are missing, posing a great difficulties in identifying the mudras and symbols they carry. In my course of study, I found the complete set of hand gestures and tools supposed to be carried by those gods,¹²⁶ which is explained as below:

i) Mahapratisara (fig. 1. c)

Mahaprastisara is the incarnation of lord *Vairochana*, she is of white colour with four face and eight arms, her left hand side arms bear the tools like, *Pasa*, *Bana*, *Trisula* and *Pa*, her right hand bear the tools

¹²⁴ John K. Locke Op.cit. page 286.

¹²⁵ According to the pancharakshya sutra, the pancharakshya deities are the secret embodiment of pancha Buddhas with its protective power.. Each of these Gods are excel in special power to defend and protect the disciples.

¹²⁶ Pd. Divya Vajra Vajracharya, *Pancharakshya Katha Sar*. 2037

like *Kharga*, *Dhanu*, *Vajra* and *Chakra*. Her main colour is white, the right face is of *blue* and left face is of *green* colour and back face is of *yellow* colour.

In Itumbahal (in the figure of *Mahapratisara*,) the two arms out of eight and all the hand tools are missing, there is a small swayambhu stupa on the top of the head of *Mahapratisara*. She is standing over the small figure of lion.

ii) Mahamayuri (fig. 1.d)

Mahamayuri is the incarnation of lord *Ratna sambhawa*. She is of yellow colour facing south with eight arms and three face. Her left hand holds the tools like *Ratna Dhoja*, Bell with *Viswa vajra*, *Peacocks feather*, *Pinda Patra* and her right hand hold the tools like *Kharga*, *Vajra*, *Kalash* and *Varad Mudra*. Her main body is of yellow colour with blue face on the right and red on the left.

iii) Emanations of Akshobhya. (Hevajra Nairatma). (Fig. 1 a & b)

There are couple of identical figures at the center above Kwapadya. The twin figure with *Vajra hunkar Mudra*, in expressive mood (a facial expression of both compassion and anger). Draws many controversy among scholars about the identification.

According to Pd. *Badri Ratna Bajracharya*, the two identical figures of center are of *Maha Akshobhya* (the male figure) and *maha Shasra Pramardani* (the female figure). *Maha Sahasra Pramardani* is one of the *Pancharakshya* deities. It carries the tools like *pasa* (lasso) *Pa.* (Axe). *Dhanu* (Bow) and *Lotus flower with Jewel*, on the right hand it carries tools like *Kaharga* (sword) *Bana* (Arrow) *Ankusa* (Hook) and

varad mudra. Originally, *Maha sahasra Pramardani* has four head, the main figure is of blue colour with distorted mouth. All those tools and figures, however, does not tally with the two identical figures on strut wood, in Itumbahal

In course of my study of *Hevajra Mandala*, described in *Benoytosh Bhattacharya's Buddhist Iconography* and *Nispannayoyawali*,¹²⁷ there is a sixteen armed *Hevajra* with sakti *Nairatma*, described as both of them are identical in all respects. *Hevajra Nairatma* is the emanation of Lord *Akshobhya*, blue colour with eight faces. Accordingly, with the study of still remained hand tools and gestures of these twin gods, I arrived at conclusion that the original tools carried by those gods should be -

Male figure: -	White - Blue - Green faces
(still present)	Patra ----- Raised Index figure (Bindu).
	Vajra ----- Ghanta with Vajra head
	Chakra ----- Ankusa (still present).
	Trisula ----- Khatwanga.
Female figure -----	White - Blue - Yellow
	Mani ----- Lotus (Still present)
	Kharga ----- Pa (Axe)
	Dhanus ----- Ban.
(still present)	Varad mudra ----- Tarjani Pasa

iv) **Maha Sitawati (fig. 1. e)**

Maha sitawati is the incarnation of lord *Amoghsiddhi*, she is of green colour with three face, white on the right and red on the left. She had six arms. Her left hand holds the tools like *Bajra ratna*, *Dhoja*,

¹²⁷ Benoytosh Bhattacharya "Buddhists Iconogrpahy " Pub by K.L. Mukhopadhaya. Calcutta 1968. page no. 157-158

Dhanu and *Pasa*. Her right hand holds the tools like *Bajra*, *Bana* and *Abhay Mudra*.

In Itumbahal 3 out of 6 arms are missing and standing with crossed leg over twin garudas, the symbol of *Amoghsiddhi*.

v) Maha Mantranusarani (fig. 1. f)

Maha mantranusarani is of red colour and the incarnation of *Amitabh Tathagata*. She is of three face with twelve arms, her right face is of blue colour and left face with green colour, two pairs of her hand express the *Dharma Chakra mudra* and *Samadhi mudra*, the other four hands on the left holds the *Dhoja*, *Ghanta*, *Peacocks feather* and *Patra*, her right hand holds the *kharga*, *Vajra*, *Kalash* and *Varada Mudra*.

In Itumbahal the figure *Mahamantranusarani* is in poor conditions, with 8 arms missing out of 12 arms and it shows wide cracks. She is standing with crossed leg over the pair of peacock.

8.4.3 Comments

Except central figure of emanation of *Akshobhya (Hevajra Nairatma)*, all the *Pancharakshya Gods* have compassionate, expressions. The central figure of *Maha Akhsbhya* have had an expresion contained a blend of both anger and compassion. Even though all the *Pancharakshaya Gods* have their respective position of north, west, south, east and center, they are positioned to face east, it might be because of main shrine of Kwapadya, inside, which is also facing east.

With recent restoration project the struts woods of *Pancharakshya* are repaired, repainted, and re annexed the missing arms and tools. But the recent repaired version does not talley with the original source of

Iconography of Pancharakshya Gods. It needs some minor changes so that gods remain in original form with perfect mudras and tools.

8.5 Art objects displayed during Gun-la

During the sacred month of Gun-la (July, August) the precious treasure's of Itumbahal are displayed for about a week at the open halls of northern wing. The valuable collection of art objects are possessed by Itumbahal sangha for many generations. Most of those artifacts are denoted by devotees through the ages. Many valuable items like '*Pauvhas*' '*bilan-pau*', '*Statues*' displayed during *Gun-la* are stolen. The remaining few items are displayed with maximum care for a few days only citing security reasons.

The big red figure of the Keshchandra, (fig. 4) the founder of Itumbahal is an important item on display during *Gun-la*. The highly decorated figure with abundant Jewellery is made of clay with bamboo structure from inside. This statue is exclusively designed, so that a person fits inside it, while carrying it at the invitation of samyek festivals.

The Itumbahal sangha members call him as a '*Aaju dya*' or '*Lord forefather*'. The statue is brought down for display on the 7th day of first half of *Gun-la*. During the 12 year festival of *Samyek Mahadan*, the statue is taken out for display first at *Hanuman Dhoka* then at the *Bhuikhel Swayambhu*.

Keshchandras' both hand positioned as '*abhaya*' and '*Vara*' mudra. His slightly bowed head signifies the sign of possession of '*sila*' perceptes of '*Dasaparamita*', Buddhist teaching. While taking out in a procession Keshchandra will be endowed with a three tire parasol '*Chatravali*', symbolising his supremacy over other Samyek deities.

Another big statue of Dipankar is placed at right of Keshchandrt. This statue of Dipankar is believed to be donated by ancestor of 'group of families living at chokachen gulli' who's forefathers have organized a samyek Mahadan and donated this statue to be displayed during *gun-la* and samyek festivals, for a few days.

There are numerous wooden artifacts displayed during the *Gun-la* festivals. There are two small wooden chests with three niche of about 25cm and 15cm height, one of the wooden chests is beautifully carved with small tympanum. The wooden chests are used to place a small personal family deities inside it for ritual purpose. A wooden Jewellery Box (H. 15cm) a small wooden Elephant (H. 11cm) a dragon head - a part of wooden chest's. Those wooden artifacts are believed to be donated to Itumbahal sangha by childless couples, to be remembered for endless years to come.

Besides those persona; items there are numerous wooden statues of 'Sari-putra', 'Vajrasatwo', 'Sitala Maju', 'Jhyalincha'. 'Harati', 'Singhini' 'Chatur Maharaj' etc. A beautiful wooden statue of 'Jamana Gubhaju' is stolen about 20 years before.

There are two miniature stupa of wood (*Kastha-chaitya*) one of them is covered by gold polished copper plates, height about 80cm, standing upon four small lions, another one is of complete wood, beautifully carved stupa, height about 65.7cm. A small replica of 'Mahaboundha temple' Patan, height about 45cm is also there for display. According to Buddhists text book like *Saddharma pundarika* sutra, the construction of *Kastha chaitya* (also known as sthavar chaitya) has great value in terms of merit accumulation. A construction of *sthavar chaitya*

has equal value of making one thousand *Lakshya chaitya*. Therefore it bears the great religious merit.¹²⁸

The sacred Buddhist Text of '*Astahasrika Pragyaparmita*', *Pancharakshya*' written in gold and silver is displayed for a few days. Earlier, a team of Bajracharyas are called upon from several Viharas to recite those sacred texts, during *Gun-la*. However, due to the internal disputes, the recitation has been discontinued for years. A team of two *Thayapas* and two members from sarva sangha are entrusted to guard those treasures, while it was displayed during *Gun-la*. Due to security reasons photography has been prohibited.

¹²⁸ Sumati Bajracharya "*Stupa Ra Chaitya*", Pub by Mahaya Bouddha Samaj. Kathmandu 2007 Page 26

CHAPTER NINE

RECENT RESTORATION PROCESS

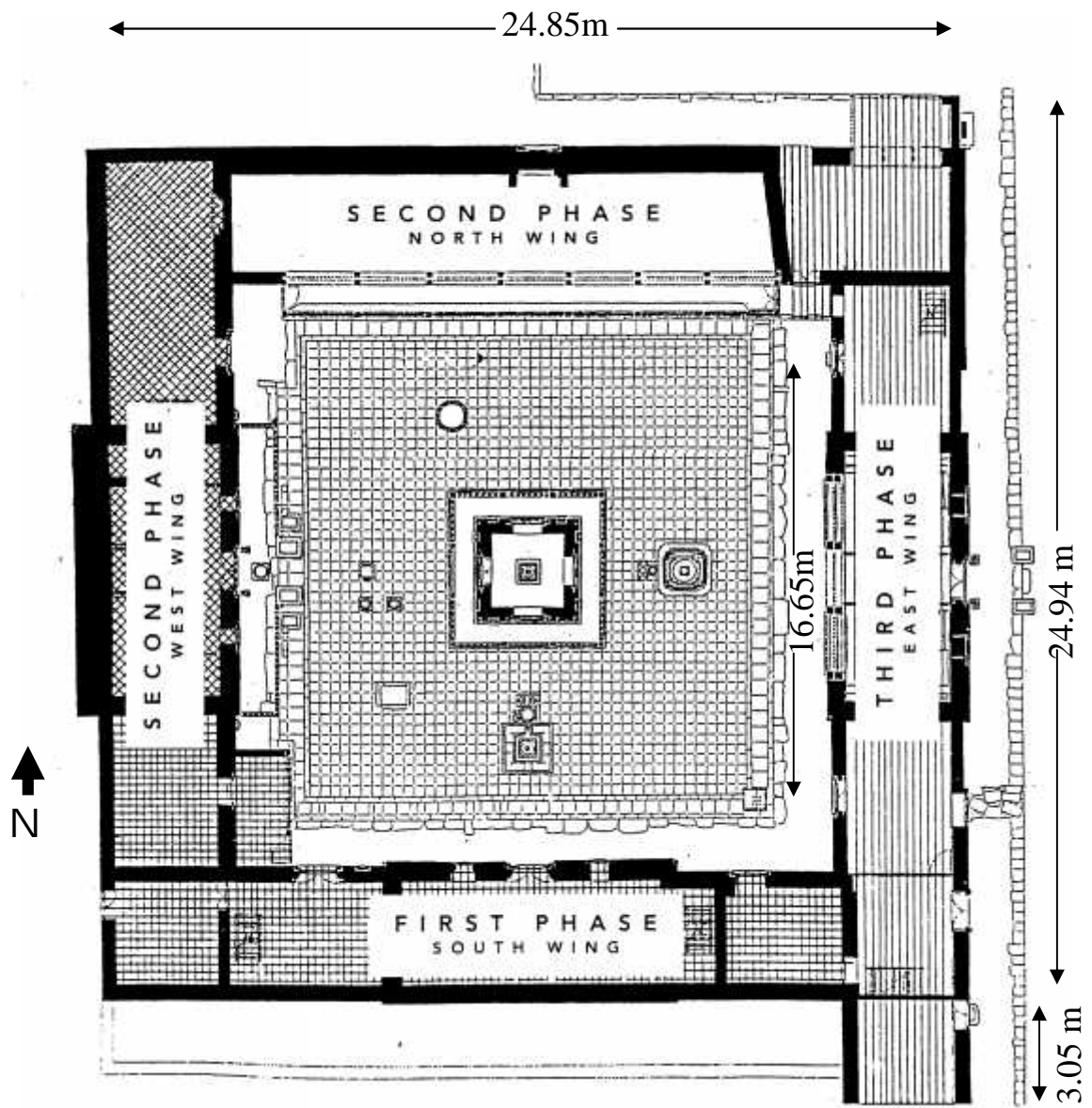
9.1 Condition Before Restoration

Itumbahal is one of the richest and oldest Buddhist monastery with rich social and cultural heritage. Down the ages of history Itumbahal is famous for its golden roof and pinnacles surrounded by master piece of arts and crafts around Vihara.¹²⁹ Keshchandra had brought and donated 360 ropanis of land to Itumbahal for timely maintenance and repair.

Those are the golden days in history, but now Itumbahal is facing a slow death, struggling for its bare existence. With the advent of modern days the process of dilapidation is fast happening. The trusts and guthi lands entrusted to look after the repairs and maintenance were encroached, sold upon or withheld by members themselves. The govt apathy and vague laws of so-called 'land-reform' deprived the Itumbahal guthi with its vast plots of land. There is no fund to finance the repairs and maintenance and expenditure to meet guthi gatherings, resulting severe pressure on social structure of Itumbahal. The roofs of the southern wing collapsed, the rain water tickle down from other sides, the beams and decorated doors and windows show wide cracks, wear and tear, there is an urgent need for repair.

With the boom in tourism business, the values of antiques, arts and crafts increased, consequently, thieves were encouraged to steal antiques that were lying scattered in and around Vihara. In Itumbahal the golden pinnacle were stolen, the thieves entered Kwapadya and stole a statue, so does the ancient *Bhairaba* mask, strut woods and ancient paintings.

¹²⁹ According to Swasti Ratna Shakya's, article in the Rising Nepal. "*Renovation of Itumbahal: A Good Beginning*" 2-12-2005.



Sketch 2

First phase: South wing: restored (4th - Feb- 2003- Feb 2004)
 Second phase: West wing: restored (26 July 2004 - 21 July 2005)
 Second Phase: North wing: restored 2002-2007
 Third Phase: East Wing Due to be restored.

Thieves make twice attempts to steal the '*Torana*'. Thanks to watchful locals, they were unsuccessful, even while I am writing this thesis the two strut woods near main entrance were stolen. Thieves have virtually robbed Itumbahal of its precious treasures, by taking good advantage of weak old structure, every stolen treasure found its way into Europe and America.

A couple of family of Itumbahal sangha have occupied the rooms of south eastern and south western corner with a minimum nominal rent, they were adamant and were forced to evict on the pretext of repair of Itumbahal. Similarly, the entire lounge of northern wing is controlled by a group of people within sangha as their own hereditary property and want to repair it on their own, without approval of sarva sangha.

9.2 The Process of Restoration

The German expert Mr Niel Gutchow, took much initiative on the preservation and restoration of Buddhist viharas in Kathmandu valley. He founded the '*Buddhist Kathmandu Campaign- Baha initiative 2002-2005*'- a campaign for preservation of Buddhist heritage sites in Kathmandu. It's a joint venture project initiated by 'Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust' in collaboration with 'Kathmandu Metropolitan city, office, Department of Archaeology (HMG Nepal)' and the 'Sangha of the Itumbahal'. The projects were financed by German Embassy in Kathmandu and the peoples of Germany.¹³⁰

Under the Buddhist Kathmandu campaign, the '*Chusyabaha*' was repaired and restored from 1999-2001, and the *Agam Ghar* of *Yet kha*

¹³⁰ Progress Report, *Restoration of Itumbahal- the Buddhist Kathmandu campaign*, Baha Initiative 2002-2005., Kathmandu Valley preservation trust. 2003, page 3.

Baha was restored in 2002. The project of restoration of Itumbahal was carried out in 2002, with the signing of the Joint agreement between, ‘Kathmandu Valley Presentation Turst’ and the ‘Sangha of Keshchandra Paravavta Mahavihara, Itumbahal, on 19 July 2002, in the presence of His Excellency The Ambassador of Germany, Rudiger Lemp and representative of Kathmandu Metropolitan City office. Accordingly the project will be divided into three phases, the first phase is defined by the Southern wing, the second by the Western wing and the third by the Eastern wing. (sketch 2). The most of the Northern wing will remain untouched by this project. Capt Chandra Bahadur Shakya and his team headed the Itumbahal Sangha for restoration projects. His great energy and enthusiasm made this project a success.

9.2.1 Southern Wing

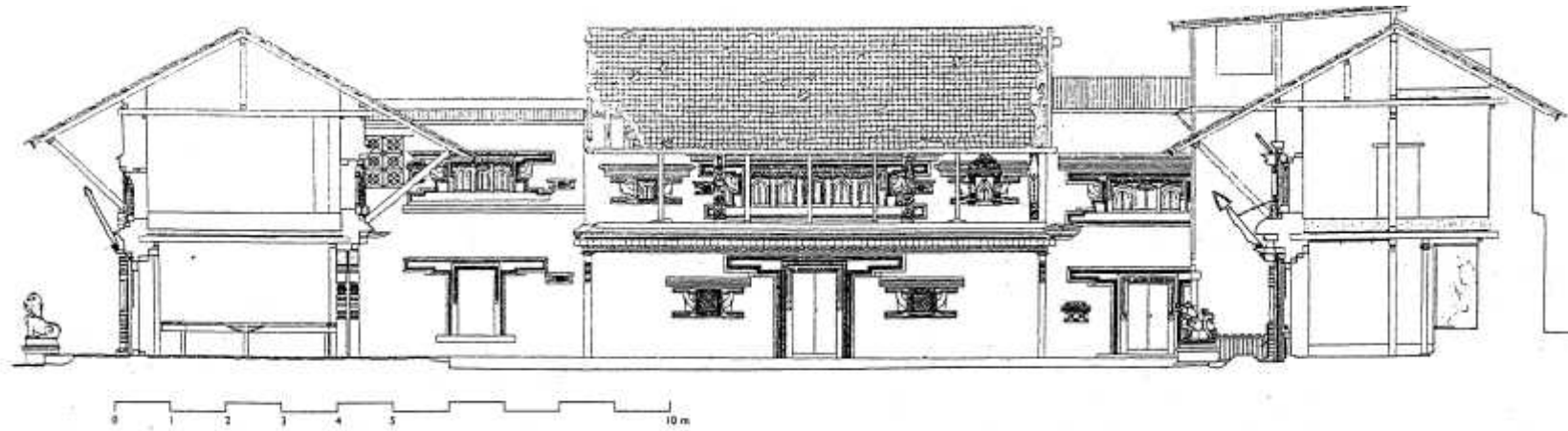
Immediately after signing of agreement the necessary permission were acquired form Department of Archaeology and Kathmandu Metropolitan city office, before starting the work. Firstly, the southern wing, with its old collapsed roof were completely demolished and freshly started repair work (sketch 3). The foundation ceremony or *Jagpuja* was performed on 14th Feb 2003, the tools of masons and carpenter’s and 5 heaps of bricks were worshipped, and placed at the four corner and center of the foundations.

The unrotten wooden beams, bricks, were re-used as far as possible, rest of the materials were freshly purchased. The old carved windows, doors were thoroughly repaired, in some places re-carved, cleaned and put on its original place. No cements were used, only reinforced clay were used to join bricks and plaster the rooms-inside, for its original looks. The fresh bricks of ancient “*Ma-apa*” (4 x 13.5 x 20cm

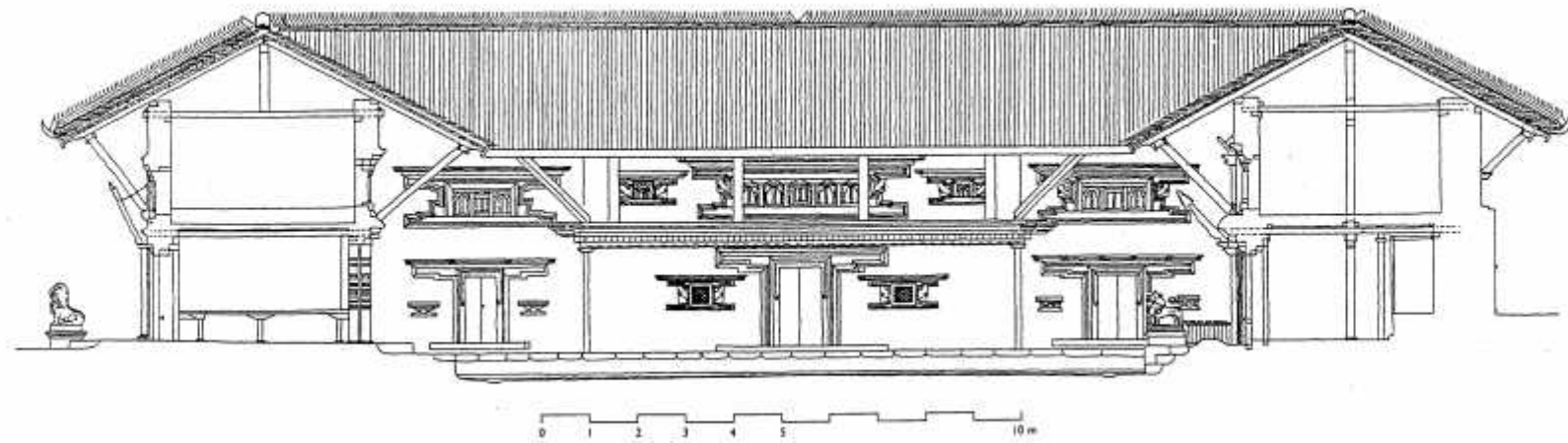
size) were ordered and sorted along with old bricks. The historic struts woods were cleaned, repaired and put on its original place, only four struts woods were remain for repair work.

During the course of restoration, it was discovered that in last renovation (1924) the courtyard was extensively repaired and raised the plinth level by remodeling the historic brick paved surface. It has been found that courtyard pavement raised by 43 cm and plinth by 34cm. The insufficient drainage may be the reason behind the raising plinth level. All the 3 doors were fixed 13 cm higher then their original position at their respective location. All the lost door thresholds were replaced and damaged door jambs repaired. Accordingly, heavy pine timbers were laid at every 6 inch distance to support the 2nd floor and tie inner and outer walls together. The roof above the attic is first covered with thick plywood then water proof sheet, before its being covered by custom made terracotta bricks. The historic roof strut were restored by re-carving missing parts and carefully grafting it to the original. The exact replica were made for some rotten strut wood woods beyond repair and put on its original place. The inner rooms, walls were plastered by reinforced clay for its traditional looks. The floor is covered with sorted tiles. The old wooden stairs were replaced by new one, all the rooms were illuminated by electric bulbs. Utmost care was taken to make it traditional looks.¹³¹ The first phase project of southern wing was completed within the stipulated time of Jan-Feb 2004.

¹³¹ Ibid page no. 31.



a. South wing before restoration



b. South wing after restoration
Sketch 3

9.2.2 Western Wing

The Department of Archaeology and Capt. Chandra Bahadur Shakya made agreement on 2061-04-11 (26 July 2004) to start the repair work of west wing, the second phase of construction. The span of about 30 ft, including the rooms, hosting Kwapadya was partially demolished, the precious Strut wood, Tympanum were carefully removed, the entrance of Kwapadya was kept as it is and walls around the entrance were repaired. The old soiled bricks and wooden beams were replaced by new compact bricks and beams. The decorated windows were carefully repaired and missing parts were re-carved and carefully repaired joined together with original one.

During the course of its repair disputes arose between the sangha members, particularly about the entrance of un-initiated out-cast work men at the Kwapadya and disruption of modatory daily rituals of Kwapadya. A dissident group of sangha member's even approached the dept of Archaeology and complained about the repair works of Kwapadya's, *santum santorium*. They want to stop the repair works. However, the determination of Capt. Chandra Bahadur Shakya make the repair work an uninterrupted, undeterred by any complains, the work progressed for successful end.

A small room with plywood partisan is created within the '*santum-santorium*' of Kwapadya., so that outsiders could not enter and touch the sacret rituals objects including the statue of Kwapadya. The total height of the west wing is kept in comparison with south wing. The lost 5 pinnacles above Kwapadya is restored in its original place with gold coatings. To purchase necessary gold, the faithful sangha brothers, Man

Bahadur, Setiman, Gyanendra Man resident of *Tamugal* donated Rs. 2 lakh, another 44 thousand collected from the sangha members. Thus, about 2-5 lakh were spent to purchase gold. With the completion of gold coating a final puja was performed at the time of restoration of pinnacle, heralding the conclusion of restoration works. on Srawan 6th 2062 (21 July 2005).

With much difficulty and objections of dissident groups of sangha members the repair work concluded on stipulated time.

9.2.3 Northern Wing

Meanwhile, the dissident groups of sangha member known as '*Ba-sangha*' were busy in reconstructing the northern face of Itumbahal. They are repairing their part on their own without consulting the major sangha. The repairs of northern wing started in 2002 and completed at 2007 A.D.

The entire northern wing with its connecting portion of north-east and north west is repaired from its foundation by the '*Ba sangha*' group of 7-8 families. They claim that entire repair work is done by their own financial resources -no outside financial grants were taken, although they hesitate to disclose their resources.

The group has been recognized by 'Dept of Archaeology', they are successful in approving the necessary documents and other legal matters with the 'Dept of Archaeology', However, no interaction and co-operation were taken with the majority of sangha members who were busy in repairing the southern and western wing. This indifference towards sangha members brought, an unfortunate disputes, including verbal abuses.

The uniform square shape of Vihara showed some tapering of roof at the meeting point of Western wing (repaired by sangha) and Northern wing (repaired by Ba-sangha). The matter was taken before the 'Dept of Archaeology', both the parties had started work and laid foundation according to the scales approved by 'Dept of Archaeology, but how does the tapering of roof evolved? officials in Dept remain in mute silence. Sangha members were satisfied that there is an obvious 'negligence' among the govt. official of 'Dept of Archaeology'. A note objection was submitted against the officials by the sangha.

In the course of repair the entire northern wing was demolished to the ground, new foundations were laid, old decayed wooden beams were replaced by new one the unsoiled old bricks were re used according to the instruction of 'Dept of Archaeology'. The four repousse figure of *Gurumapa* eating child, *Gurumapa* eating rice, and *Dipankara Buddhas* were placed on their respective positions but the small brass metal plates with three figures of Buddha, is shifted to north west corner. The space for lost *Kirtimukha Bhairaba*, above the entrance of kitchen complex (*Bhutu Keba*) is also replaced by a small carved window.

The Iron Bars in the halls of ground floor (Sangasala), where the gods and artifacts were displayed during *Gun-la*, is replaced with wooden lattice work. The old wooden stairs were replaced with new one. The entire '*Taha Matan Agam Ghar*' is maintained as before, nothing major has been changed. The *Bhutu Keba* (kitchen complex) behind the northern wing is also repaired, with stone pavement, toilet and drainage facilities.

9.2.4 Comments

Now, with the completion of three sides of western, southern and northern wing only the eastern part remain to be repaired, which according to Capt. Chandra Bahadur will be started very soon. After conclusion of all the repair works there are some plans to establish a museum in the south-west corner rooms, with the exhibition of valuables, sculpture and paintings possessed by Itumbahal. An entry fee to foreign visitor will be charged accordingly to sustain itself. A small medical clinic has already been started within Vihara with raised donations from guthi members. It opens only on saturday morning to help the sick neighborhood. A library with the collection of Buddhist literature may take place in the near future. Indeed the future of Itumbahal is bright, with many plans and ideas, provided it remain united, with clear vision and no disputes take place among guthi members. Let all the guthi members remain sincere.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

Itumbahal is centrally located at the heart of the Kathmandu city. Surrounded by many *Nannies* and *Gullies*. It remained isolated from busy life of a modern city. No vehicles are allowed inside the compound. It remained at peace and serenity. Infact the peaceful atmosphere is a necessary factor for the proper understanding and execution of Buddhist teachings.

Once a richest monastery, with gilded roof and pinnacles decorated with exotic arts and crafts. The 360 ropanis of land is entrusted to proper execution of duties and responsibilities of innumerable guthis of Itumbahal, is now in a depleted state of affairs. All the lands are gone, succumbed to the so-called, 'land reforms' of Govt. of Nepal. Which virtually dragged, rich Guthis into a poor minority, resulting a poor state of affairs in the once rich Viharas. No funds for even a minor repair, make it most vulnerable to the thieves and buglers, many historic master pieces of fine arts were stolen, - a great loss to the Vihara as well as to the nation.

The elders of Itumbahal used to say that when king *Mukundsen* of Palpa plundered Kathmandu Valley in NS 646, he never touched Itumbahal obviously, amused by the rich and splendor of Itumbahal. When he turned back, the *Thaku king of Watu*, charged with jealousy, attacked Itumbahal and burnt it down. The molten gold flowed everywhere in the compounds of Itumbahal. The gold were re-collected and Itumbahal was fully renovated, many pieces of land were also entrusted to maintain guthis. Yet, in an unpublished document of late Thayapa, Moti kaji Shakya, the ancient name of Itumbahal is *Subarna*

Maha Vihar named after golden roof and pinnacles. Keshchandra repaired it and re-named as *Bhaskar deva Sanskarita Keshchandra Krita Parawarta maha vihar* in 11th century.

There are many interesting legends and personalities related with foundation of Itumbahal. The legendary figure of Keshchandra-the founder of Itumbahal and king Bhaskardeva are both historical personalities. Its interesting to note that the name of Keshchandra has been mentioned in colophons of Bhasavamsawali. During the reign of *Gunakamadeva* (late 10th century) immediately after founding the Kantipur and Lalitpur city in 1st half of the 11th century, Keshchandra was one of the successful marchant who had returned from Tibet and founded the Itumbahal. The period of foundation of Itumbahal happened during the reign of *Bhaskardeva* (1047-1050). The dates of Keshchandra might be between 990-1070 A.D., my calculation of dates are related with the fact that Keshchandra might have been alive for at least 10 years after the foundation of Itumbahal. His name mentioned in Bhasavamsawali as a merchant returnee from Tibet, immediately after the reign of Guna kamadeva (Late 10th century). Keshchandra might have went to Tibet and returned with enough wealth to be spent leisurly with gambling before he met Gurumapa and thought about founding Itumbahal.

Gurumapa was one of the legendary figure related with the foundation of Itumbahal. Gurumapa was a *Kirtimukha Bhairab- a Bodhisatwoo*, who helped Keschandra to establish Itumbahal. The legendary figure of Gurumapa was an ugly faced, dangerous demi god, who devoured, according to legends, the live children, make Keshchandra displeased by his behavior, ultimately, he was thrown into a open field of Tudikhel.

According to Tibetan sources Gurumapa (Gurumarpa) was a historical personality a devout disciple of Guru Naropa, who traveled thrice into India via Nepal. He was born in 1012 A.D and died around 1096 A.D. According to Tibetan's he was a Bodhisatwoo, -a siddha and founder of *Ka-gyu-pa* sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Gurumarpa as a tantric, can transfer his consciousness into a dead body and use that body as his own. His biography tells about his poetic ability and translation works. In his youth, he was of ill tempered and possessed whatever he wanted. His parents sent him to study Buddhism to calm down his hot behavior. Influenced by many notable teachers, he decided to visit India and meet Gurus like *Naropa*. For this purpose, he collected enough gold to spend on his way towards India. He arrived in Nepal and stayed at Swayambhu for three years, on his way towards India.

Calculation of dates and timing according to his biography it comes around 1042-45. AD., Gurumarpa stayed at Swayambhu, in his first journey to India, altogether he spent 18 years in India and Nepal in his 3 journey's. However, he never stayed at Swayambhu in his 2nd and 3rd journey. Strangely, dates and timings of Keshchandra, Bhaskardeva and foundation of Itumbahal is same as dates of Tibetan Guru Gurumarpa, he had stayed at Swayambhu and surprisingly, according to legends Keshchandra met Gurumapa at Swayambhu. Some thing did happened at swayambhu's forest. Keshchandra might have discovered the hidden gold's brought in by Gurumapa and quarrels erupted between them, perhaps Keshchandra was able to tame Gurumapa and bring home both Gurumapa and gold into Itumbahal, with conditional agreement. While Guru mapa was in Itumbahal deadly disease might have spread killing many infants, and blame was showered upon stranger called Gurumapa, even the only son of Keshchandra became a victim of deadly

disease (Leg ends: Keshchandra's son was killed by Guru mapa). The untimely death of Keschandra's son disheartened him very much. Ultimately, he renovated his resident into a Vihara, and gave it to sangha, for greater benefit of the mankind. Indeed, Gurumapa was guru of Keshchandra too! Gurumapa showed the way for construction of Vihara. He named this Vihara as a '*Paravarta Mahavihara*', with dedication to pigeons, Thereupon, in Itumbahal pigeons are most welcome and respected.

Until and unless, there is not any conclusive proof about Guru Marpa of Tibet and Gurumapa of Itumbahal, one cannot say that both personalities are same, even though the both of them are contemporary and chain of events of their lives ascertain that both of them are same person.

Itumbahal is one of the ancient Vihara with many Guthis and full activities of Sangha. The mentioned name of Itumbahal in Gopalraj vamsawali in NS. 361. and in subsequent inscription's as well as in the colophones of Buddhist manus cripts proves that Itumbahal is one of the fully active Mahayana. Buddhist Vihara, with vast Sangha, from the earliest days of its foundations in history.

My research on Itumbahal sufficiently proves that in Itumbahal the higher vajrayana initiation and vajarayana practices were carried out in medieval years. The religious debut of personalities like Keshchandra, Gudochandra, jayataju, Gangansingh Bharo, Bekhasingh, Dhanasingh, Jayadev, Balsingh, Dhanju, Sukajit Bharo, Bitusingh Rawat, etc. and a tantric Guru named Ja-mana-gubhaju who resided in Itumbahal were significant. The higher secret tantric pujas were carried out by Bajracharya gurus in the premises of Itumbahal. A direct official

relationship were made with then ruling Malla court of Hanuman Dhoka (Layaku- Darbar), an unconfirmed report says that even king Pratap Malla paid a visit to Itumbahal. All the land properly were officially registered at Malla court. With the advent of the Saha dynasty the Itumbahal Buddhist heritage showed a slow decline.

In Itumbahal there is a mixed sangha of both Shakyas and Bajracharyas. There are 118 Shakya and a few Bajracharyas families, altogether there are about 438 initiated members of Itumbahal *sarva sangha*. Numerous guthis has been established to run the affairs of *sarva sangha*, headed by the executive body of eleven *Thayapas*. Among eleven *Thayapas*, nine are from Shakyas and rest from Bajracharyas. The *Thayapas* are headed by *Chakreswara* and *Muthayapa*, beside those two post there is another post of *Sangha Thakuli* appointed according to seniority in the sangha excluding eleven *Thayapas*.

Groupism within sangha and dissention is causing a major problem in the smooth functioning of socio-religious activities. A group of 7-8 families within *sarva-sangha* known as *Ba-sangha* withhold its control over northern halves of vihara complex, they disobeyed the major decision of *sarva sangha*, and are acting on their own. *Ba sangha* posed a major problem in the renovation, and series of legal wranglings erupted. While the process of renovation progressed, *Ba-sangha* members refused to assimilate the uniformity of slanting roof corner at the meeting point of back side of western and northern wing, causing a slight variation in renovation works, consequently there are clearly distinguished two type of slanting roof, even if both the parties had registered their architectural design papers at the Dept of Archaeology, separately and executed under the supervision of Govt. officials.

For, the solution of legal disputes and other legitimate activities, compelled the sangha to form a working body, whose activities are recognized as legitimate by *sarva sangha*. The '*Keshchandra Mahavihara Sangrakshyan Samaj*, was formed under the chairmanship of Capt. Chandra Bahadur Shakya with majority of initiated members of sangha as a member of this *samaj*. All the legal disputes, property, restoration and renovation is carried on by this *samaj* on the behalf of '*Sarva Sangha*.'

The repair and restoration works of Southern and Western wing has been completed with financial support from the peoples of Germany; similarly, the repair works of northern wing, has been completed by *Ba sangha*. The members of *Ba-sangha* worked on their own financial resources, no outside donations are taken as claimed by *Ba-sangha* members. The eastern wing is due to be repaired in near future for its restoration. After completion of repair work the '*Keschandra Maha Vihara Sangrakshyan Samaj*' plans to establish a museums in its south-west corner rooms of vihara, with all its valuable master pieces of Arts and crafts, and paintings. Until then those rooms are now occupied by a medical clinic, which opens every saturday morning with free medical check-up. The *samaj* also intents to established a Buddhist Library in the future. A small primary school with around 50 students managed by 'Education Dept' is still running at the basement of Northern wing.

Itumbahal sangha have had to adopt the change in the modern society. The initiation of children born out of intercast marriage is quite impossible in the past has been table turned. Recently, about 13 children born out of intercast marriage are initiated, which is significant mile stone in the adoption of changed social structure, in fact buddhism teaches about cast-less society.

Solidarity of sangha members is necessary for smooth functioning of socio-religious activities of sangha. Unity of sangha must be prevailed at any cost, without which the splendid socio-religious, arts and architectural heritage of Nepal will be liquidated in no time. Therefore, unity of sangha is a must for preservation and secure future of Itumbahal, for coming generation.

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APPENDIX I

स विजय जुव, जात्रा याडा लास्य वया हाथार । सम्बत् ३६१ जेष्ठ शुक्ल अष्टमी
यमुबु याटुम्बहार क्वाठ चाल्यका, यहं कीर्तिपाल भारोस ।

In N.S. 361, Jyestha Sukla Astami, Kirtipal Bharo of Yarha broke
into the fort of Yatumbahar (Itum Bahal) in Yambu (Kathmandu)

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Appendix -II

संवत् ४७८ भाद्र शुद्धि १० लक्षाभगवती संपुर्ण दिवस महायान यायिनः परमधार्मिक परम
सर्वज्ञशासनिक श्री कोलियगामीय श्री भास्करदेवरस्कारिस श्री केशवचन्द्रकृत
महाविहाराधिवासिन शाक्य भिक्षु बुद्धाचार्य श्री राजब्रम्ह

Gyan Mani Nepal, *Nepal ko Purva Madhyakal Ko Itihas*, Pub by Nepal
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