

## Religious and Cultural Syncretism: A Study of Swoyambhu

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**Abstract:** With heterogeneous society extremely diverse religious and cultural people lives in Nepal. In terms of religions, There are two major religions. Hinduism is predominant followed by Buddhism. Although they differ in philosophical systems, but at practical level most of the cultural and religious tenets have been amalgamated, there by forming religious syncretism. This has been the most spectacular feature of Nepalese society. As a matter of facts, both the sections in the society share common features from one another. They worship same deities by different names and share various rituals and festivals. Swoyambhu as religious shrine attributed to Buddhism, which is one of the oldest religious and cultural syncretism shrines of Nepal. It is integrated with the origin of Kathmandu valley. In antiquity, Bodhisattva Manjusri has credited with starting habitation and establishing Swoyambhu through cutting a gorge to drain water from lake that had covered present Kathmandu valley. For Buddhism, it is proof of Buddhist traditions even before Gautam Buddha. However, it is equally important for Hindu communities also. There are various components within the Swoyambhu Stūpa, that forms the notion of cultural synthesis leading to develop syncretic features.

**Key words:** Syncretism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Swoyambhu, , shrines, deities, Bodhisattva

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Nepāl's religious structure is comprised of diverse religious groups making it heterogeneous society. In terms of religious behavior, Nepāl witness most significant characteristic, the religious syncretism. It has been a common feature of Nepalese society. Kāthmāṇḍu valley, a region ruled mainly by the Licchavis and the Mallas until it fell under the hands of the Śāhas, marked a civilized society that perfected in religion, culture and development of magnificent artistic heritage. Therefore, it secures a significant place in the history of the country particularly in terms of religion and culture. Various ethnic groups live within Kāthmāṇḍu and peripheral areas. Both Hindus and the Buddhist lived for centuries together in harmony. The Indo-Aryan communities and a larger section of the Newārs of Kāthmāṇḍu valley in Nepāl follow the Hindu religion where as the other smaller section of the Newārs and people from northern Himalayan region are Buddhists. These people have common shrines and adapted each other's religious beliefs to some extents. Chinese traveler Xuan-zang point out that Hindu and Buddhist temples are stand together. He also understands about religious harmony between Hindus and the Buddhists during his visit.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> JagdiśCandraRegmī, *PrācinNepāliSanskṛti* (Ancient Nepālese Culture), Lalitpur: SājhāPrakāśan, 2050 BS, p. 154.

The Newār people have rendered enormous contribution in the development of religion and culture especially, in the Kāthmāṇḍu valley. The tangible and intangible heritage of the Newār people attests the fact. From religious point of view, Newārs are mainly divided into two main religious groups either Buddhists or the Shaivites. They have preserved and maintained ancient practices and traditions intact up to the modern times.<sup>2</sup>

The notion of religious and cultural syncretism is especially fervent in heterogeneous societies like Nepāl. The religious structure of the Newār society and contemporary religious behavior has much to do with the conceptual base of religious and cultural syncretism. There are common practices and components that different religious and cultural groups share in common.



Buddhist Newārs of Kāthmāṇḍu valley is primarily the followers of Vajrayāna tradition. Vajrayāna is a religion that belongs to Mahāyāna Buddhism which has been considered the speedy path to enlightenment. They don't believe in the 'Creator God.' On contrary, Hindus have faith on the 'Creator God.' This is the big difference between Hindu and Buddhist belief systems. However, this notion too could not deny friendly exchange between the Hindus and the Buddhists in Nepāl. Hindus primarily repose faith on a powerful God who creates and cares. Hinduism teaches about liberty of the soul and welfare of sentient beings whereas the Buddha has taught about the sufferings and the path leading to the cessation of suffering without giving place to the 'Creator God.' Here it establishes itself as a humanistic religion.<sup>3</sup>

According to Buddhism, ignorance, attachment and aversion are the three poisons that are the root defilements. One has to cut all such kinds of defilements to attain knowledge. The main goal of Buddhism is to overcome suffering that is to be free from the cycle of birth and rebirth. Especially, in Newār Buddhism ritual practices have become prominent. There are practices that lead to attain Buddhahood. Hinduism also practices Tantra. This means to stretch the self to the ultimate reality. It stretches to the extent that it reaches finally to the supreme Brahma. Buddhism takes Tantra as a process. Hindu Tantras related to non-dualistic principle. Buddhist deities are the emanation of the self of a practitioner. But in the Hindu Tantra deities are the supreme entity. While performing ritual in Newār Buddhism, a Vajrācārya acts as the ritual expert and leads all such performances. On contrary, rituals for Śaiva Newārs are performed by a Brāhmin called Deubhāju. In the periphery of such practices, the two groups of Newārs differ to each other in religious belief. However, both the religious groups are in harmony. Thus, syncretic features in the religious and cultural practices are noticeable. If we look at the subject within the periphery of Swoyambhu, a famous Stūpa standing on a hillock just west of Kāthmāṇḍu proper, religious and cultural syncretism in Hindu Buddhist dichotomy becomes clearer. This has been an important feature of religious practice in Nepāl since the ancient times. This is an example of religious syncretism.

### **The Complex of Swoyambhu Stūpa**

Swoyambhu complex is a famous Buddhist shrine situated in the western side of Kāthmāṇḍu metropolis. It was called by various names in different periods. It has been regarded as the 'Primordial Buddha'. It has very ancient history founded by Licchavī King Vṛṣa Deva. However, Swoyambhu Purana, a popular

<sup>2</sup> Rañjanā Vajrācārya, *Newār Bouddha Saṁskār* (Newār Buddhist Rituals), Kāthmāṇḍu: CNAS, 2065 BS, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> For Humanistic Buddhism see: Śaṅker Thāpā, "Master Hsing Yun of Fo Guang Shan and the Development of Humanistic Buddhism," In: Anitā Śarmā and Śrīmatī Cakravartī (eds.), *Taiwān Today*, New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2007, pp. 205-217.

Newār Buddhist text, traces mythological connections of Swoyambhu.<sup>4</sup> It has enormous religious significance for Buddhist Newārs as well as Tibetans.



Within the four sides of the Stūpa there are four ecclesiastical Buddhas and the fifth one vairocana is believed to reside in the dome. The other four Buddhas are Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Amoghasiddi and Ratnasambhava. The Stūpa is supplemented by a big Vajra and a DharmadhātuMaṇḍala. In addition there are several other shrines as well. The other shrine of eminence is that of Ajimā, the mother goddess located just western side of the Stūpa. There is also a NewārVihāra and a Tibetan monastery in the complex. The other spectacular monument is a cluster of stone Caityas.

In the western part of hillock, there is another small hill; there is the shrine of legendary Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva. Hindus venerate the shrine as that of Sarasvatī, the goddess of knowledge. Not only Buddhists, Hindus also equally venerate shrines within the Swoyambhu complex.

SwoyambhuPurāṇa discusses about mythological origin of SwoyambhuStūpa. However, historical evidences suggest that it was built by Vṛṣha Deva, a Hindu Licchavī King.<sup>5</sup>

Atīśa Dipamkara, a famous Paṇḍit from VikramśīlaMahāvihāra visited this place in 1041 CE. Famous Tibetan scholar Dhamasvāmin (Chāglotsawbā) came to Swoyambhu to study Buddhism stayed there for eight years.<sup>6</sup> Around 470 N.S. SamsuddīnIlias invaded Swoyambhu. After twelve years of that incident, MahāpatraRajharṣaBhallok of Kāṭhmāṇḍu renovated the SwoyambhuStūpa. An inscription dated 492 N.S. mentions:

There was a famous King ŚrīJairāja Deva who followed both Hinduism and Buddhism. At that time in the hill of Swoyambhu, there was the Stūpa which was made earlier where Śākyamūnī Buddha once resided.

<sup>4</sup> See: MīnBahādurŚākya, *SvayambhūPurāṇa*, Lalitpūr: Nāgārjuna Institute of Exact Methods, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> He is mentioned as *SugataSāśhanaPaṅsapātī*(Follower of the teachings of the Buddha), Also see: DhanbajraBajrācārya, *LicchavikālinAbhilekha*, Kāṭhmāṇḍu:INAS, 2068 B.S., pp. 154-158.

<sup>6</sup> ShankerThapa, *Newār Buddhism: History, Scholarship and Literature*, Lalitpur: NāgārjunaPublications, 2005, p. 18-47.



Swoyambhu was renovated in different times. The Hindu rulers were very generous to restore and renovate the Stūpa. Malla Kings as well as other people generously contributed in renovation acts. The Shah King Prithvi Narayan Shah donated for renovation. Similarly, King Rana Bahadur Shah endowed *Guthi* for Shantipur. In 1801, King Girvān Yuddha Bikram Śāha offered golden pinnacle to goddess Hārīti in around 1818. King Rājendra Bikram Śāha also contributed in renovation. These activities attest the fact that Hindu rulers and la people were always in harmony with Buddhism. Therefore, Hindus also venerate the sacred shrines within the Swoyambhu complex. This is a unique example of Nepāl's indigenous mode of religious syncretism.

### The Hārīti Temple

Hārīti temple stands in the western side of the Stūpa. This artistically decorated temple is dedicated to mother goddess Hārīti Ajimā. This is the only pagoda type temple structure in the complex. Inside this there is a black-stone statue of a woman carrying five children unkindly. The mother goddess is related to well being of children. Vajrācāryas attend as priests in the temple. Not only Buddhists, Hindu folks also visit the shrine and offer worship. This is done for the welfare of children. For both the Buddhists and Hindus believe that Hārīti is a common deity who is related to children. The devotees offer worship to protect children.



When Buddha told her that, 'you lost a child among five hundred children eventhough you are hurt, in how much pain may be those children parents were.' After that she ask for forgiveness for her wrong work. It is believed that Buddha has ordered her to abandon all such wrong doings and take care of children.<sup>7</sup>

### **Mahākāl**

Mahākāl has been regarded as a protector god. Buddhists in Nepāl believe Mahākāl as the protector. Hindus also venerate Mahākāl as the wrathful emanation of Shiva. Thus the Hindus also believe in Bhairava and goddess Hārīti. They are the saviors. Here Bhairavi is called Ajimā among the Newārs. In vernacular Newārī, Ajimā means grand-mother. Protective rituals are performed at her shrine. In the north-west corner of Swoyambhu Stūpa, there is the very magnificent temple of Hārīti Ajimā. The wooden struts at the temple depict images of multiple deities. At the same time, images of Vajrasattva, four heavenly Kings, five protective deities, religious symbols etc depicted within the temple structure. Various Pujas are performed by the Buddhists and the Hindus alike. The shrine priest is a Vajrācārya but Hindus equally attend various Pujās at the shrine for the welfare of children. Both Buddhist and Hindu pattern Pujas are offered by the patrons at the shrine without sectarian differences.

Hārīti has various stories popular among the people that help people from both religious groups repose faith for family welfare. It has been a popular belief that the goddess had five hundred children. When she had problem to feed them, she fetched children in the city streets to feed them. As city children started to get lost, the city folks started searching them but in vain. So, they went to the Buddha. When he found out that this was the work of a Yakṣinī's work, he captured her most loved son named Dhanbhāju at a time she was out in search of food. At her return, she didn't find her son. So, she started crying without eating and sleeping. She was compelled to visit the Buddha for help and find him. The Buddha asked her why she was so anxious about her one son among five hundred who was lost. She started moaning that he was her dearest child. Then, Buddha said

'When you are this sad to lose one child among five hundred children? How sad others are losing their only child or one among only a few.'

Now Ajimā realized her mistake and vowed to correct herself. Then, Buddha asked her to choose her favourite children and remaining others other to send to a monastery and take care of them.<sup>8</sup> She was also advised to take care of all children. After that she started living with her five children who are depicted in the main statue at the main shrine of Hārīti temple. Both the Buddhists and the Hindus believe this kind of story.

### **MañjuśrīCaitya**

MañjuśrīCaitya is a very important shrine situated within the Swoyambhu area. Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī has eminent place in the Buddhist culture of Kāṭhmāṇḍu valley who has been credited with starting habitation through cutting a gorge to drain water from the lake that had covered present Kāṭhmāṇḍu valley. He is believed as the Bodhisattva of wisdom. He is the source and the icon of knowledge and intelligence.<sup>9</sup> The iconography of Mañjuśrī depicts a sword in his hand which symbolizes cutting of darkness of ignorance and spreading the lights of knowledge. The sword is literally known as 'Candrahāsa'.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> BadrīRatnaVajrācārya (ed.) *Hārīti Ma*, Nep tr. Ven. Paññāmūrti, Kāṭhmāṇḍu: Ven. Paññāmūrti, 2071 B.S., pp. 7-12; Pradhān, *op cit*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>8</sup> Hāratikāvādāna mentions that among the five hundred children her favourite child's name is 'Priyaṅkara'.

<sup>9</sup> LīlāBhaktaMunakarmī, 'ŚrīPañcamīMahattva (importance of ŚrīPañcamī), *Bhaktapur Monthly*, 14:2, 2042 BS, pp. 24-25.

<sup>10</sup> HemrājŚākya, *NepālSanskṛtiyamunlukha*, Lalitpur: Chandralaxmi Devi Shakya, Ne.Sa.1098, p.81.



This belief system has eminent role in the cultural structure of the Newārs. There is another small hillock west of SwoyambhuStūpa where MañjuśrīCaitya is located. This place is venerated both by the Buddhist and the Hindus. This is the shrine of legendary Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva for the Buddhists where as this is the place of Sarasvatī, the goddess of knowledge for Hindus. R̥gveda has a hymn attributed to goddess Sarasvatī. She is the protector of mind and knowledge. The Mañjuśrī shrine is said to have been built even before the tradition of making idols and images was started.<sup>11</sup> There is stone platform and a Stūpa dedicated to Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva. Various images of Mahāyāna deities have been depicted on the walls of the Caitya. People visit the shrine on the day of *BasantaPañcamī*. Hindus also visit the shrine on the same day with their children and start learning alphabets from there ritually and beg for good education for their kins. This is very interesting that for Buddhists, Mañjuśrī is a Bodhisattva where as for the Hindus she is a goddess.<sup>12</sup> The foot prints depicted at the shrine are regarded very sacred to venerate. People take care of the footsteps with offering oil massage while they visit the shrine.<sup>13</sup> This sort of belief pattern has very significant importance in religious and cultural syncretism. This type of religious and cultural syncretic behavior is common in Nepāl that has helped mould Nepalese culture in being harmonious among all existing religious and cultural groups. Each religious performance either Buddhist or the Hindu has such features. This has been prominent feature of the Nepalese society.

<sup>11</sup> For additional information see: RukmiṇīWanta 'KāṭhmāṇḍuUpatyakākāSarasvatīMūrtiharuraPujāParamparā, Kāṭhmāṇḍu: Nepāl and Asian Investigation Centre, 2061B.S.

<sup>12</sup> ŚrīkāntPrasoon, *Ma Saraswati: Goddess of Knowledge and Wisdom*, Paṭnā:PustakMahal, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Wanta, *op cit.*, p. 40.

### **Ordinary Shrines and Syncretism**

There are other sections within the religious and social performances that incorporate the notion of syncretism.



#### **Maṇḍapa** (Platform for ceremonial performances)

This is the round stone which is in the starting two branches meeting place in the eastern stair-case of Swoyambhu. But according to scholars of history it was there to feed boiled wheat to cows in the belief of procuring child for those parents who failed to have one. There is the tradition of feeding boiled wheats for cows annually. GuthiSansthan provides wheat to observe this ritual.<sup>14</sup>

#### **SikhalLoha**(Chain stone)

In 1043 B.S. when there was drought during the time of King Guṇakāmdeva, a tantric ritual was performed with the help of Śāntikarācārya who is said to invite the eight Nāgas. According to the story, when Karkoṭakadidn't agree to come, the tantric compelled to cooperate in the ritual using tantric means. Karkoṭakais said to rest on the stone tied with chain. The stone is called the chain stone.

#### **Gaṇeśa and Kumāra**

In Swoyambhu's eastern section near by the stair-case, there are the images of Gaṇeśa and Kumāra. According to tantric practices, Gaṇeśa and Kumāraare installed in the entrance. Hindus believe that Gaṇeśa and Kumāra are the sons of Śiva-Pārvaī. Hindus begin working with the pray to Gaṇeśa and after him Kumāra for successfully completion of their works. From the ancient times, both the Hindus and Buddhists worship Gaṇeśa and Kumāra before venerating other deities. Gaṇeśais believed as the god of success. There are popular stories about Gaṇeśa. It is also believed that that King Indra, King Nalaki, Queen Damayantī and Yudhiṣṭhir also got success after they had worshipped Gaṇeśa. If we observe iconography, Gaṇeśa has four hands, a big stomach, strong body and an elephant's head. Gaṇeśa travels on mouse. One of his long teeth is broken. He is said to break tooth during the fight with Parśurām. Another story depicts that he gave his one tooth to MaharṣiVyās to write Mahābhārat. Śrīsvasthānī elaborates about how Gaṇeśa got elephant head instead of his own. He has two wives Riddhī and Siddhī are his wives.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> BhuvanlālPradhān, *op cit*, p.37.They says that this tradition is rarely practiced now adays.

<sup>15</sup> BāsudevKarmācārya, *Introduction of Valley's Famous Gaṇeśas*, Kāṭhmāṇḍu: CandeśvarīKarmācārya, B.S. 2067, p. 8; Vidyānāth, *op cit.*, pp. 108-109.



Gaṇeśa's head has been regarded as the symbol of knowledge. His vehicle mouceis taken as the form of 'Pratyutpannamatī'. In different descriptions, Gaṇeśahas been elaborated to be of sixteen to thirty-two types. In every Hindu ritual, his is assigned with the foremost position. His big ears and long nose symbolize due listening and listening to others and not to do unprestigious jobs. And the big belly is the symbol of digesting all the good and bad things. His four hands hold attributes such as axe, sweets, and flower. His position is in *Varadamudrā*. These probably represent kindness, punishment, softness and sweetness. Hindus specially worship Gaṇeśa on Tuesday and on the day of GaṇeśaCaturthī.<sup>16</sup> Buddhists in Nepal also lay importance to Gaṇeśa. The NewārVajrayānists believe Gaṇeśa helps to complete penance. There are Gaṇeśa shrines in Vihāras as well. Gaṇeśa also has prominent place in Newār Buddhist rituals. Mostly in medieval Vihāras such shrines are eminent. Buddhist Vajrayāna followers respect and worship five headed Gaṇeśa as 'HerambaGaṇeśa'. Buddhists visit Gaṇeśa temples and offer worship. They believe believe that Śākyamūnī Buddha entered in the womb as the white elephant. The white elephant descended from the heaven and entered into the womb of Māyādevī. Thus, the white elephant is the symbol of the Buddha, therefore, much respect and importance is attributed to it. In fact, Gaṇeśa has prominent place among the Buddhists as well.<sup>17</sup>

Specially, in Kāṭhmāṇḍu valley, there are very famous shrines of Gaṇeśa. They are Ashok Vinayak (MaruGaṇeśa), CandraBināyak, KāryaBināyak, SūryaBināyak, JalBināyak. Likewise, Kumāra (Kartikeya) who travels on peacock is worshipped with ahpe that he helps overcoming fear, innocence and help increase knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

### **Bhairava, Bhairavī and Mahākāl Statues**

In the eastern entrance of Swoyambhu and around the hillock minor shrines of different gods and goddesses are situated. They were erected for safety of Swoyambhu. In MahāyānaBuddhism, they are believed to be the protector of Buddhism. Hindus believe them as the form of power. The ritual of Bhairava, Bhairavi and Mahākāl is mostly performed through tantric processes by tantric priests. Likewise, lion, elephant, horse, peacock, and garuds have been installed around the eastern stair-case as the vehicals for the five eccleciatikalBuddhas. They have special importance in Hinduism as well.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-12. Robert L. Brown, *Gaṇeś: Studies of an Asian God*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991.

<sup>17</sup> Karmācārya, *op cit*, pp. 1-12.

<sup>18</sup> GehendraMānAmātya, *Religious life in Nepāl*, Kāṭhmāṇḍu: Amātya Publishers, 1998, pp. 243-247.

<sup>19</sup> Pradhān, *op cit.*, p. 38.





Bhairava is the wrathful form of Śiva. The iconography of Bhairava is structured as such. Therefore, he has large red eyes and fearful face which makes Bhairava wrathful. Shiva's south face is venerated as the Bhairava. An image of 'UnmattaBhairava' has been installed southern corner of Paśupati temple to mitigate negative impact if any arises from the southern face.

Bhairava is called *Chetrapāl*, the protector of the country. Thus, images are erected in various directions. In the Śaiva tradition, there is special importance of worshipping 'Cakra.' While performing this type of rituals in Kāthmānḍu valley, alcoholic beverage in big earthen pots are dedicated. In that pot little bamboo pipe is inserted to help Bhairava drink through it. Later, it is taken as auspicious drink that helps to protect from diseases, ghosts and other obstacles. All the Tantric rituals associated to Bhairava are led by the Vajrācārya priests.<sup>20</sup>

ŚivaPurāna depicts wrathful form of Śiva. The term Bhairava is of ancient origin. It attests antiquity of the deity. Even he is also taken as the god of farmers. Farmers in India especially in Vārāṇasī, Mumbai and central and south India perform rituals attributed to Bhairava. He is popularly known as Bhairu or Bhairo in India.<sup>21</sup>

In the central India there is a tradition among the Hindus to worship him as 'M.rda`ngavādakadāngabādaka' who wraps snake around the waist.

In the Kumāun – Garhwāl region, Bhairava is called Bhairu or Bhairav. Newārs people in Nepal call Bhairava as 'Bhailadyo'. On the full moon day a regular Pujā is offered to Bhairava in the Paśupatināth temple complex. As mentioned in the Himavatkhanda, UnmattaBhairava, Anandabhairav and Chandra bhairav are located in different corners of Paśupatināth complex.<sup>22</sup>

In the Indian tradition, it is believed that Bhairava started killing other gods. So, Śiva cursed him to turn into a tree. He, then, turned into tree named 'Damanak.' The *Damanak* or *Tatiri* trees are worshipped in India to symbolise his form. Śiva also blessed him to be worshipped as in the form of *Chhetrapāl*. As Chudamanitantra elaborates, Māhadeva was carrying dead body of Satidevī, when parts of the body started to fall to the ground and Bhairava originated in each place. It describes about fifty one pīthas. In the Nepalese context, evidences attest that Bhimsen is a form of Bhairava. In one of the medieval manuscript related to Bāghbhairav dated NS 107, it is mentioned that Bhairav is synonymously called Bhimsen. Bāghbhairav in Kirtipuris also called Bhimsen.<sup>23</sup> In the Kāthmānḍu valley Bhairava has special significance and worshipped every where. There are several prominent Bhairava shrines in the Kāthmānḍu valley. Several rituals, Pujās and festivals are celebrated in their name on various occasions.<sup>24</sup> Various tantric Pujās are structure to venerate him. Bhairavas from different parts of Kāthmānḍu valley may vary in iconography. However, it is characteristic that

<sup>20</sup> Kul Chandra Koirālā, SvetaBhairava (ŚarabhaMukhaBhairava) HanumāndhokāKṣetra,' Nepal, Year 22, No. 6, 2049 VS., p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> RājvalīPaṇḍey, *Hindu Dharma Kośa*, Lakhnau: Hindi Samiti, 1978, p. 482.

<sup>22</sup> JagdishChandra Regmi, *Paśupati-GuheśvariMahātmaya*, Kāthmānḍu: naiprakashan B.S. 2053, p. 84.

<sup>23</sup> Hariram Joshi, *Hindu Devi Devta*, Kāthmānḍu: Shree 5 koSarkarSuchanaMantralaya, B.S.2040, p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> JitBahadurMānandhar, *Kavrepalanchowkka Devi Devtahu*, Kāthmānḍu: Tara Devi, B.S.2053, pp. 46-48.

there is always a moon on his head. This is perhaps the influence of 'Soma Siddhāntasampradāya'<sup>25</sup> Dog is the vehicle of Bhairava. In the sketch of thirteen headed Bhairava, animals such as are designed as his helpers such as dog, deer, pigeon, boar, parrot, crane, duck, tiger, and horse.<sup>26</sup>

The Hindus and Buddhists worship and respect Bhairav in their own way in Nepāl. There various Bhairavas such as – Ākāśa Bhairav, Kāl Bhairav, Mahākāl Bhairav, Kīrtimukha Bhairav, Unmatta Bhairav, Sweta Bhairav, Pachali Bhairav and Bāghbhairav. Each of them has special significance in the religious and cultural lives of the Hindus and the Buddhists of Kāthmānḍu valley.

Jātrāsare organized for different Bhairavas in different times. Especially, Bhairav mask dances are very important performance in which Bhairava and other deities perform dances together; one of the important chariot festivals of Bhairav is celebrated in Bhaktapur during Nepali New Year. These are organized in Bhaktapur as well as thimi and Bode as well. During Indraajātrā festival in Kāthmānḍu Ākāśa Bhairav is worshipped and jatra celebrated. Similarly, Pacālī Bhairavjatra and various Pujā rituals are also performed. Ajimā and Kumārī are also related to Bhairavjātrā. Bhairav is equally important and festivals are observed in traditional Newār settlements outside Kāthmānḍu valley.<sup>27</sup> In which Both Buddhists and the Hindus participate.

## II. CONCLUSION

A religious shrine integrated with the origin of Nepal: Swoyambhu attribute to Buddhism and is equally religiously significant to Hindu communities. Especially Swoyambhu is regarded as the shrine of Mahayana Buddhism, still within Swoyambhustupa, there are various religious embodiments that are significant for both Hindu and Mahayana. Looking deep into the history of establishment, construction, reconstruction and management of Swoyambhu and its archeological components shows the involvement of both religion's kings and peoples. This shows Swoyambhu, the most ancient religious solemn pilgrimage has preserved Nepal's religious, cultural and traditional amalgamate forming syncretism.

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<sup>25</sup> Jagdish Chandra Regmī, *Nepālko Dhārmik Itihās*, Kāthmānḍu: Nepāl Rajakiya Pragyapratisthan, B.S. 2030, pp. 47-48.

<sup>26</sup> Bīnā Poudel 'Bhairava Bhaktapur Sadashiva Chowkka Bhairav Murti haru', *Pragya*, Nepāl Rajakiya Pragyapratisthan, Kāthmānḍu, B.S. 2060, pp. 24-38.

<sup>27</sup> Gahendra Mān Amātya, *Religious Life in Nepāl*, Kāthmānḍu: Amātya Publishers, 1998, pp. 205-223.