

Purnachandi Temple Of Lalitpur

—Shobha Shrestha

Introduction : -

During the preparation of the Inventory of the Pagoda Temples of Monument Zone of Patan along with the city core area of the Lalitpur Sub - metropolitan Municipal Corporation I had an opportunity to see many temples of different style and design. One of them is this temple of Purnachandi, which fascinated me very much . It is richly carved, beautiful and attractive, I wanted to share my fascination with all the readers. This article gives the description of the temple along with the reference to the development of such type of pagoda temple in the valley.

Different types of temples have been constructed here over few hundred years. We have mixed type of temples, which is represented by multi-roofed temples known as Pagodas, Sikhara Style temples, Patis, Sattals and Buddhist stupas and Chaityas. Besides these monuments, the architectural remains of Buddhist monasteries. Phokharis, Dhungedharas and Palaces reflect a unified and comprehensive character. The most impressive characteristics of architectural complex in Nepal is represented by the monuments in

association with Palaces and residential houses. This character can be visualized in the Durbar Squares of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. One of the most beautiful Durbar Square is Patan, which occupies a central position in its cityscape. The city is designed in a circular chakra, the symbol of Vishnu and made it worthy of being the focal point of entire area. In 1928 Percival Landon very much appreciated this square and praised it "as an ensemble, the Durbar Square in Patan probably remains the most picturesque collection of buildings that has been set up in so small place by the piety and pride of an oriental man." The visual impact of this area with its towering buildings of different style is amazing. Most of the temples are raised in plinth giving high place to the deity and sufficient space is left for the religious functions. Many traditional dances are still performed here. All these aspects of our cultural and religious value have attracted the foreign tourists.

Here in Patan temples are constructed not only in the Durbar square but in its neighborhood also (Plan A) . Most of these temples were constructed by the kings, royal families and high ranking courtiers

and devoted public also . In case of the general public who was not financially very strong to construct a temple, they used to offer different religious items or the objects for the decoration and beautification of the temple.

History:

The three-storey temple of Purnachandi is located in the inner crossroad of Gabahal, ward no 20 of Lalitpur Sub-metropolitan Municipal Corporation. Inside the temple the Goddess is represented in a plain stone. It is believed that the Goddess worshiped here was found in Nekhu River, which used to flow from Tangal to Hakha and Mangal Bazaar. Now we do not find the remains of this river because it has been disturbed by the new building construction. This goddess Purnachandi is also worshiped as Siddhi Laxmi, the goddess of success. By the name of the goddess the area is also known as Purnachandi. The area occupied by the temple falls in the kitta no. 428 which is recorded in the sheet no. 102-1225-02 of the Malpot karyalaya register and Napi naksa. It is a sakti pitha and as the tradition of sakti pitha the temple does not have any iconic figure but the goddess is represented by a plain stone. It is living monument. The goddess is worshipped as Degudyo, the tutelary deity of many families of Patan. Every family worships its Degudyo once in every year. According to Devmala vamsavali this goddess was installed here according to tantrik ritual after the installation of god Machhendranath during the regime of King Narendra Deva in Kaligat 3676. As a tutelary deity (Degudyo) of Machhendranath also the goddess is worshipped every year even today. The annual festival of this goddess is celebrated on Aswin Krishana one. Guthi Sansthan provides Rs. one thousand four hundred and fifty one (1451) every year which includes the salary of the priest and other expenses needed for the rituals. The caretaker of the temple separately gets

one hundred and twenty (120) separately per month. The Rajopadhyayas of Gabahal and the Maharjan family of Puranchandi are the guthiyar. Though the support provided by the Guthi Sansthan is very little in the present context but its continuous support indicates that the temple might have some connection with the royal families . Because Guthi Sansthan generally provides financial support to those temple which falls under Raj Guthi or Chut Guthi.

The Temple: -

The temple of Purnachandi is located in the center of the crossroad of Gebahal (Location Plan). Once the deity was installed here after it was found in the Nakhu River as mentioned above, then the temple was constructed. It is a three storey temple which is richly carved and very beautiful (photo 1). It is very difficult to say that when this type of temple was constructed in the valley. The Chinese traveller who visited Kathmandu valley in seventh century expressed his view saying that the Nepalese style of multi roofed temples is new to him. Scholars believe that this type of temple existed in the valley since the beginning of the Christian era. So far the Changuanarayan temple is supposed to be one of the oldest multi storied pagoda in the valley. Though the icon of this temple supposed to be of fifth to seventh century the temple was built in seventeenth century. The original temple was destroyed by the fire and the present temple was built in the last quarter of seventeenth century. Some scholars believe that the temple was built by Viswa Malla, but the inscription clearly mentions that it was built by Queen mother Riddhi Laxmi along with her son Bhaskar Malla in 1704. This type of multi roofed temples are mainly confined in the Kathmandu valley and very rarely in the other parts of the country. In reference to this temple of Purna Chandi it is mentioned that the temple was consecrated (Pratistha) during the reign

of King Siddhinarasinha Malla in 1635. So it is very much confirmed that the temple must have been built during the reign of Siddhinarasimha Malla. The stone inscription inside the temple is very much weathered, as it is very difficult to read the details. After the temple was constructed many devotees supported to complete the temple and made it beautiful. The entrance to the Sanctum Sanatorium is made of three fold doorways with highly carved door pillars. Each entrance has equally carved torana above it (photo 2). These toranas have made the temple beautiful and attractive. The temple has three roofs all of them have metal roof. On the top of that it has gold coated copper Gajura. From the Gajura down to the first roof three long golden Patah is hanging. Each roof has wind - bell which makes sound occasionally and that soothes our mind and heart. In front of the temple there is a stone pillar with the statue of Lion, the vehicle of the goddess Durga. On the central entrance of the Sanctum there is also a pair of metal lion on either side. Same way two metal flags are put on either side of the entrance. The struts supporting the roofs depicts the figures of Matrikas and Bhairavs.

Donation by the Devotees: -

After the deity was installed here and the temple was constructed many devotees provided different items to complete and beautify the temple. Each of the items bears the name of the donors. It will be discussed here in brief. Originally the temple had traditional Jhingati roof which was replaced by the gold - coated metal plate in the subsequent years. The top roof was replaced in 1866 where as the second roof was renovated and replaced during the reign of King Mahendra in 1972. The last roof was also renovated and replaced with copper plate during 1972-1980 jointly by the donation of Gangadhar Maskey and Haribhai of Patan. The torana above the door were jointly offered by Raghu Singh Bharo, Krishna Lal Bharo and others. Among the three Patah, hanging from the top of the roof the first one was offered by Vasiva Guthi in 1900, the second one

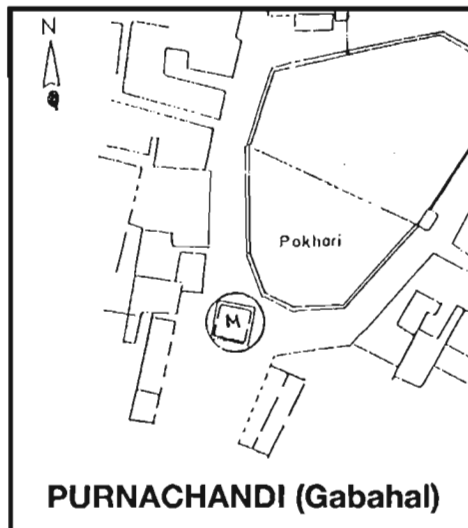
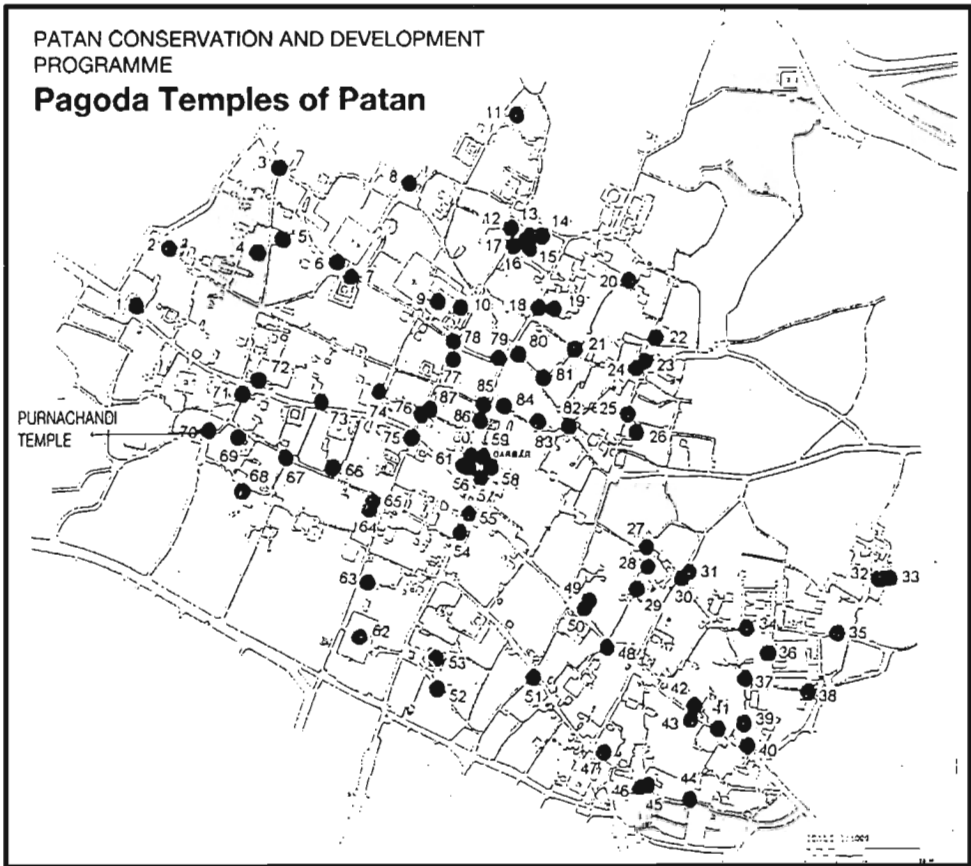
was offered by Hara Shrestha in 1980 and third one was offered by Balarama Shrestha in 1995. There is one statue of Narasimha Bharo in the temple which he devoted to the goddess in 1684. The two gilded lion statues kept on either sides of the entrance were donated by Laxmi Narayan in 1911. The big bell hanging outside the temple was offered in 1841 by the residents of Patan. The metal flags fixed on either side of the temple entrance were offered by Kulaman in 1865.

Conclusion: -

This temple of Purnachandi is a beautiful temple and is a living monument. In different occasions people gather in the temple and do bhajan and recite many religious songs (photo 3) This cultural and religious activities should be continued to make the monument more lively. The government and the Guthi Sansthan should consider on these matter and provide the support continuously. If the Guthi Sansthan can not increase its contribution it should at least find ways in such a direction that the temple can remain as a living monument. Otherwise it will also be deserted like many other monuments of the valley.

References: -

- Banarjee, N.R., *Nepalese Architecture*, Agam Kala Prakashan Delhi-1980.
- Bernier, R.N., *The Temples of Nepal*, Educational Enterprises, Kathmandu-1970.
- Bernier, R.N., *The Nepalese Pagodas*, S. Chand and Company Ltd., New Delhi-1978.
- Korn, Wolfgang, *Traditional Architecture of Kathmandu Valley*: Raina Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, 1979
- Sanday, John, *Monument of Kathmandu Valley*: UNESCO-1979.
- Slusser, M.S., *Nepala Mandala*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey-1982.



Purnachandi



Photo No. 1

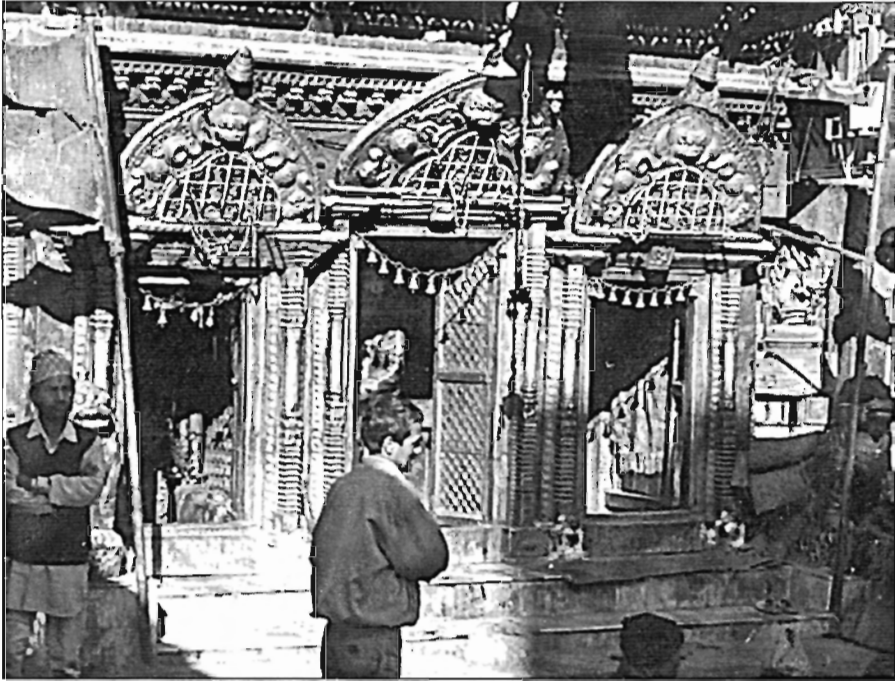


Photo No. 2



Photo No. 3