

THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM IN NEPAL

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INTRODUCTION 1

The modern Theravāda movement in Nepal has been given little attention by students of Buddhism. It is mentioned only briefly by Gokhale² and Bechert³. Most of the written sources at our disposal consist of articles in Buddhist journals⁴ and references in the publications of the Dharmodaya Sabhā of Nepal⁵. The present account is based partly on these written sources, but mainly on observation and interviews carried out during several visits to Nepal beginning in 1973. Combining both types of information it seems possible at least to give an outline of the main historical events in the development of the movement. Without the willing cooperation of many Theravādin monks, nuns, and laymen in giving information, the history would have remained vague and fragmented.

It is less problematic to get acquainted with the present situation, although in cases of research of this kind it is always with caution that personal observations and interviews should be evaluated. We are dealing with a new religious community which is in a process of development and which is influenced and criticized from different sides. This also makes it difficult to draw any definite conclusions. Therefore we shall confine ourselves in this article to a description of the history and the present status of Nepalese Theravāda.

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- 1 Visits to Nepal between 1973 and 1977 have been made possible through financial support from the State University of Utrecht and the Prins Bernhard Fonds. I am grateful to the Venerable Amṛtānanda, Sumaṅgala, Śākyānanda Prajñānanda and Mahāpantha for their kindness to provide me with the necessary information. I am also indebted to the anagārikās of the Dharmakīrti Vihāra, and to Mr. Purnaharsa Bajracharya, Mr. Manik Tuladhar, Mr. Ratna Bahadur Bajracharya, Dr. M. Witzel and Mr. R. van Kooij. An earlier version of this report has been read at the 13th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, which was held in Lancaster, England, 15-22 August 1975.
 - 2 V. V. Gokhale, in P. V. Bapat (ed.) *Years of Buddhism*, 84.
 - 3 H. Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft*, I, Frankfurt/ M.-Berlin 1966, 160
 - 4 Especially the *Mahā Bodhi* and *The Buddhist*.
 - 5 The journals *Dharmodaya*, *Dharmakīrti* and *Lumbini*. See also Kularatna Dharma Tuladhar, *Buddhism and Nepal*, Dharmodaya Sabhā, Kathmandu 1956; Bhikkhu Sumangala, *Buddhist Meditation*, Lalitpur 1974.

THE THERAVADA MISSION IN NEPAL 1900-1946

At the end of the 19th century Buddhists in Ceylon began to revalue their own religious and cultural heritage. In line with a growing nationalism in the Buddhist countries the activists tried to fight European domination with a new emphasis on the traditional ideas and customs. The resulting so-called Buddhist modernism became influential in all Buddhist countries, especially in those countries that felt the pressure of Western political, economical and cultural dominance.

The development of this movement has been described in detail by Bechert⁶ According to him, one of the main characteristics of the movement is the emphasis that is laid on the rationalistic elements in Buddhist teaching, especially in comparison with Christianity. Another aspect is the importance of the lay organizations and the role of the laity in the whole of the movement, which is contrary to its modest position in traditional Theravāda. The modernistic movement could come into existence because of a series of previous developments and under the influence of several outside impulses. The interest of European scholars in the ancient Buddhist literature, philosophy and religion positively influenced Buddhist self-consciousness. A new interest in the scriptures and in the history of the ancient Buddhist cultures became another characteristic of Buddhist modernism. Both became venerated symbols of a glorious Buddhist past. Not only did this development promote a renewal of Buddhist religious practice, it also greatly contributed to the rise of a national consciousness in the struggle for independence.

One of the leading figures of the modernistic movement was the Anagārikā Dharmapāla (1864-1933), who established a strong link between nationalistic feelings and Buddhist renewal. In 1891 he founded the Mahā Bodhi Society, whose primary aim it was to unite all Buddhist efforts for the restoration of the place of pilgrimage in Buddha Gayā, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment. The society was the first international Buddhist organization and in the course of years became the centre of Buddhist missionary work. The Mahā Bodhi Society was the active force behind endeavours for renewal and supported various new directions in Buddhist thinking and social action. Its main purpose was the propagation of Buddhism. But this was combined with nationalistic and social-revolutionary ideals. No wonder that the traditional Rana regime in Nepal had its doubts regarding the contacts of Nepalese Buddhists with the Mahā Bodhi Society in the thirties and forties.

The success and the zeal of the Mahā Bodhi Society impressed the few Nepalese Buddhists who came into contact with the society in India in the beginning of this century. And throughout the history of Theravāda in Nepal contacts remained strong. That is the main reason that characteristics of the revivalist movement can also be

⁶ See Bechert, o. c. 37-109

found in Nepalese Theravāda. Modern Theravāda emphasizes the rationalistic elements in Buddhism and the first Theravāda monks who became engaged in preaching in Nepal tended to point at the rationality and purity of their Theravāda practices in comparison with the rituals of the Newars. This led to public debates, in which the monks' ardour in defending their views often aroused the antipathy of their Newar listeners, who saw their religious customs attacked. This way of preaching of some of the first monks has resulted in some cases in the emergence of a Mahāyāna counter movement, led by Vajrācāryas. Some Newars avoided the monks for this reason. Later the Theravādins became aware of the offending aspects of this way of preaching and they started more and more to discuss the ideas they have in common with the Newars, without much criticizing the laymen's attachment to Mahāyāna ceremonies.

Another characteristic of reviving Theravāda is the new interest in ancient Buddhist history. This aspect is also found in Nepal. Reference to the prosperous times of the ancient Buddhist kings frequently recurs in the speeches and writings of the leaders of the movement. In this connection we find that Aśoka is often compared with present Nepalese kings, who 'did everything possible for the propagation of the cause of Dhamma' (King Tribhuvan) and who 'in tradition with the ancient Buddhist kings took a lively interest....' (King Mahendra).⁷ Frequent mention of Nepal as the country of birth of the Buddha as well as the activities to make Lumbini a main centre of pilgrimage are also results of this interest in the past, as is the fact that many Theravāda authors refer to the importance of the Sākyas who formed the first Buddhist nation in an area which is now part of Nepal.⁸ Aśoka not only represents the model of a righteous king, but also is said in his lifetime to have shown an extra interest in Nepal. In this connection the stupas of Patan, which tradition attributes to Aśoka, are mentioned, as well as the memorial pillars erected by him in Lumbini and Kapilavastu and the Cārumatī Vihāra (Chābahil) built according to tradition by his daughter Cārumatī. The important place given to the laity is also a feature of Nepalese Theravāda. From the very start laymen have played an essential role in the organization and development of the movement. In this context we should also consider the fact that in Newar Buddhism the place of the laity is already more prominent than in traditional Theravāda. The Newar priests, unlike celibate monks living in monasteries, participate in everyday social life and do not distinguish themselves from those who have no priestly functions. Following the Mahā Bodhi Society, the Dharmodaya Sabhā, when founded in 1955 in Sarnāth, comprised monks and nuns as well as laymen without giving special privileges to the

⁷ *Report of the Fourth World Buddhist Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Kathmandu, 1956, 9.*

⁸ See e. g. *Dharmodaya* No. 35

monks. In fact the management of the Dharmodaya Sabhā has mostly been in the hands of laymen.⁹

At the time of the first contacts with the Theravāda movement in India, Nepalese Buddhists could hardly study Buddhism in their own country. India was for a few intellectually interested the only place where they could go for further study. An important propagator of Buddhist revival in this time was Dharmāditya Dharmācārya, a Nepalese Buddhist scholar, who was the editor of *Buddhist India*, and one of the organizers of the All-India Buddhist Conference.¹⁰ In the twenties he and a few others had been in India, Sri Lanka and Burma for education and for the purpose of finding support for their increasing concern to protect Buddhism in the country of its birth. Among them was Dharmāloka Mahāsthavira, who left us a short description of this first period of the Buddhist revivalist activities in his *Mahāchina Yātra*.¹¹

Dharmāloka mentions the establishment of a small monastery (vihāra) at Kindol at that time, which gradually became a centre in the Kathmandu valley. The visits of the Indian scholar Rāhul Sāṅkrtyāyana to Dharmāloka and the small group of activists strengthened their relations with the Indian Buddhists. Kindol Vihāra became a centre of study, of public debates and of regular religious ceremonies. The monks who were engaged in this had no special ties yet with the Theravāda Buddhists. Most of them were Newars and followed Mahāyāna customs. What made them stand apart was their concern for the future of Buddhism in Nepal. In their wish to revive Nepalese Buddhism they also kept in touch with Tibetan Buddhists and Lamas, to form a united front. And this is a period in which the expectations for the survival of traditional Newar religion were considered small¹² as was the tolerance of the administration towards them.

Dharmāloka states that he was the first Nepalese monk to wear the yellow robe. After a visit to Ceylon he brought yellow robes and a begging-bowl with him. Having returned to Nepal he stayed at Kindol Vihāra and began using robe and bowl, while following some special religious observance. The number of people taking part in the religious activities in the Vihara then increased rapidly. At that point the police started to keep an eye on the activities of the group. In November 1931 a number of Buddhists, including Dharmāloka, were arrested. Some of them were

9 *Dharmodaya*, No. 108 (1956) gives the names of the Dharmodaya Sabhā working committee members: only five of the seventeen members are monks.

10 *Dharmodaya*, No. 35

11 *Mahāchin Yātra*, Kalimpong 1950; translated (excerpts) in the *Regmi Research* series 9. 3:33-41 and 9.4:49-51 (1977) as 'A Journey to Great China'.

12 Cf. e. g. the remarks of S. Lévi, *Le Népal*, 2 vols, Paris 1905, 26; H. A. Oldfield, *Sketches from Nipal*, 2 vols, London 1880, II, 72.

expelled, others were fined for distributing pamphlets and begging for food. The Venerable Mahāprajña, like Dharmāloka Mahāstavira, had travelled in many Buddhist countries to study and on his return to Nepal associated with Dharmāloka. He had to face expulsion in 1926 together with five other monks, on the accusation of causing communal disturbances. The venerable Chandramaṇi, Burmese Nāyakathera of Kuśinagara, is often mentioned as the original philosopher, instigator and guide of the Theravāda movement in Nepal. Born in 1876 in Arakan in Burma,¹³ he entered the Order at the age of twelve under the name of Chandra. He came to India at the request of Dharmapāla to assist in the revival of Buddhism. After further study in Burma, leading to higher ordination (upasampadā) which he received in 1903, he returned to India and took up residence at Kuśinagara. In Kuśinagara he worked for the restoration of ancient Buddhist monuments, which were in ruins. In 1929 he started a school, the Chandramani Free School, for the village and later, with the help of Indian Buddhists, a secondary school and a Buddhist college.

The first Nepalese Theravādin monks all became active propagators of Theravāda after studying under Chandramaṇi in Kuśinagara. Most Nepalese monks, novices (*samaṇera*) and nuns (*anagārikā*) were initiated by him and advised to continue their studies in Burma or Sri Lanka. Many went to Burma for higher ordination. In the early thirties Chandramaṇi introduced and supported a group of Nepalese Buddhist women who went to Burma for study and ordination.¹⁴ He also inspired the translation of Buddhist Canonical texts and other materials into Newari. This work was first begun in Kuśinagara by the Venerable Dharmāloka after a journey to Burma in 1932.¹⁵ As the teacher of the first Nepalese Theravādin Chandramaṇi remained the leader of the Theravāda mission in Nepal and the director (*dharmānuśāsaka*) of the Dharmodaya Sabhā, founded in 1944. He kept his residence in Kuśinagara, making occasional visits to Nepal, until his death at the age of 96 in 1972.

The opening of the Mūlagandhakuṭi Vihāra by the Mahā Bodhi Society in Sarnāth in 1932 was seen as a symbol of the success of Buddhist revival and created enthusiasm all over the Buddhist world. The Nepalese regarded the event as a turning-point in the history of Buddhist restoration. Meanwhile, more monks and novices were becoming educated in Burma and later also in Sri Lanka. Among them were the Venerable Aniruddha, Amṛtānanda, Mahānāma, Subodhānanda Śākyānanda and Buddhagoṣa. On their return to Nepal they became active in preaching and promoting Buddhism.

13 *Dharmodaya*, No. 45, 1951.

14 See *Mahāchin Yātra*, Excerpts, p. 36.

15 He started with a translation of the Sanskrit *Buddhacarita* of Aśvagoṣa; see *Mahāchin Yātra* (Excerpts), 37.

The Venerable Amṛtānanda returned to Nepal in 1941 from a period of study in the Vajirāma in Colombo, under the guidance of Nārada Mahāthera, a well-known and active Sinhalese monk. He became involved in the work of the Nepalese Buddhists on several occasions and used his diplomacy and reputation to the advantage of the Theravāda cause. Amṛtānanda, through his zeal and enthusiasm, was the most important leader of the movement for the following thirty years. His preaching, through which he became popular, resulted in a rapidly increasing number of sympathizers, mainly from the Newar part of the population. Some other monks joined him at Kindol Vihāra, where religious meetings were regularly held. Dharmāloka Mahāsthavira, impressed by Amṛtānanda's popularity, urged him to write down his sermons and to publish books on Buddhism in Newari. This led to a very successful series of publications and translations of Buddhist literature in Newari, after the earlier attempts of Dharmāloka and the Newari Buddhist journal¹⁶ of Dharmāditya Dharmācārya had failed for lack of financial and editorial assistance. Amṛtānanda often preached at a place near Svayambhu, where Dharmāloka lived in a hut. At this place some laypeople started building what was later to be the Ānandakuṭi Vihāra, now one of the main centres of Nepalese Theravāda.

In 1944 the Venerable Candramaṇi came to Nepal at the request of his disciples and presented the Ānandakuṭi with a marble statue of the Buddha which was to be brought from Kuśinagara by Dharmāloka. On his way back to Nepal he found out that the Rana government was considering measures against the Theravāda monks. On the 30th of July 1944 the Prime Minister Juddha Shamsheer gave them notice to cease preaching, ordinations, performing ceremonies and observing festivals and to stop printing books in Newari. He also ordered the monks and nuns to return to lay-life. Those who refused had to leave the country. The monks were to leave immediately; the nuns were allowed to stay till the end of the rain-retreat (*varṣavāsa*).

Again about a dozen monks left for India. This time protests were sent to the Nepalese authorities from several Buddhist countries. First the monks went to Kuśinagara, where with the financial assistance of the Nepalese businessman Maṇiharṣa Jyoti accomodation was provided for them as well as for the nuns who would join them soon. After the period of the rain-retreat, the Mahā Bodhi Society offered them hospitality in its Sarnāth headquarters. The monks who stayed there were advised to form their own, Nepalese, Theravāda organization. Thus on the 30th of November 1944 the Dharmodaya Sabhā was founded with the Venerable Candramaṇi as president and the Venerable Amṛtānanda as General Secretary. The organization included monks and nuns as well as laymen.

¹⁶ Its name was *Buddha Dharma wa Nepāl Bhāshā*. The journal was printed in Calcutta, the books in Varanasi. Transport problems made distribution even more difficult: *Mahāchin Yātra* (Excerpts), 49.

THE HISTORY OF THE THERAVADA MOVEMENT FROM 1946
TILL THE BUDDHIST CONFERENCE IN 1956

In 1946 Amṛtānanda instigated a Goodwill Mission from Sri Lanka under the leadership of the Venerable Nārada Mahāthera and with himself as a member, to get permission from the Nepalese authorities for the exiled monks to return.¹⁷ Nārada visited the Rana Prime Minister Padma Shamsheer, who gave this permission. During his visit Nārada also suggested making Buddha Jayanti on Vaiśākhā Full Moon Day (Vesak) a national holiday. He also asked for the Buddhists to be allowed to open Buddhist schools and to teach Buddhist children. At this same visit, he laid the foundation for a Buddhist library at Ānandakuṭī, the Ānanda Pustakālaya. In the same year he came again to be present at the ceremony at Vaiśākhā Full Moon when six Buddhists laid the foundation stones for a Stūpa at Ānandakuṭī, which was unveiled two years later as the Lankārāma Stūpa. At time a *simā*¹⁸ was established at Ānandakuṭī and a sapling of the Bodhi-tree, brought from Anuradhapura, was planted on the same site. The visits of the Venerable Nārada continued over the years and resulted in the growth of strong contacts with organizations in other Buddhist countries.

After the return of the monks in 1946 a number of new viḥāras were built in the Kathmandu valley¹⁹. But although the monks had been allowed to return the Prime Minister did not permit the Dharmodaya Sabhā to have its seat in Nepal. Therefore in 1947 the organization moved from Sarnāth to Kalimpong, where Maṇihar-ṣa Jyoti bought a building for its headquarters and financed the journal *Dharmodaya* as well as other books and pamphlets in Newari and Nepali. In the 1950 issue of *Dharmodaya*²⁰ the Theravādins expressed their wishes for the future. They listed eight main points of action which were also presented at the World Buddhist Conference in Sri Lanka in 1950:

- (1) to open Buddhist schools all over Nepal;
- (2) to build a viḥāra in every city or village where the majority of the people are Buddhist and to have one or two monks live there to give religious instruction and free medical services;
- (3) to publish translations of Canonical texts as well as other books on Buddhism in Nepali and Newari;
- (4) to educate Nepalese to propagate Buddhism;

¹⁷ See *The Mahā Bodhi*, 56, 1948, p. 262 ff.; *Dharmodaya* 1948 and 1950.

¹⁸ *Simā*, lit. 'boundary', is a ritually delimited area which belongs to a monastery. All the monks within the area have the obligation to attend the uposatha (full moon day) ceremonies at the monastery.

¹⁹ *Dharmodaya*, No. 35, 1950: in Palpa, Tansen, Butwal, Pokhara, Kathmandu and Bhojpur.

²⁰ No. 35

- (5) to publish two journals, one in English and one in Nepali;
- (6) to persuade the Nepalese authorities to take the necessary steps to preserve the ancient Buddhist monuments (Lumbini, Kapilavastu);
- (7) to encourage Buddhists of other countries to visit Nepal and to offer facilities to Buddhist scholars;
- (8) to guard against institutions active in converting people to other faiths (mainly meant against the Christian mission). For the realization of this programme they asked the assistance of other Buddhist nations, especially in providing scholarships to Nepalese students and in giving moral and material support.

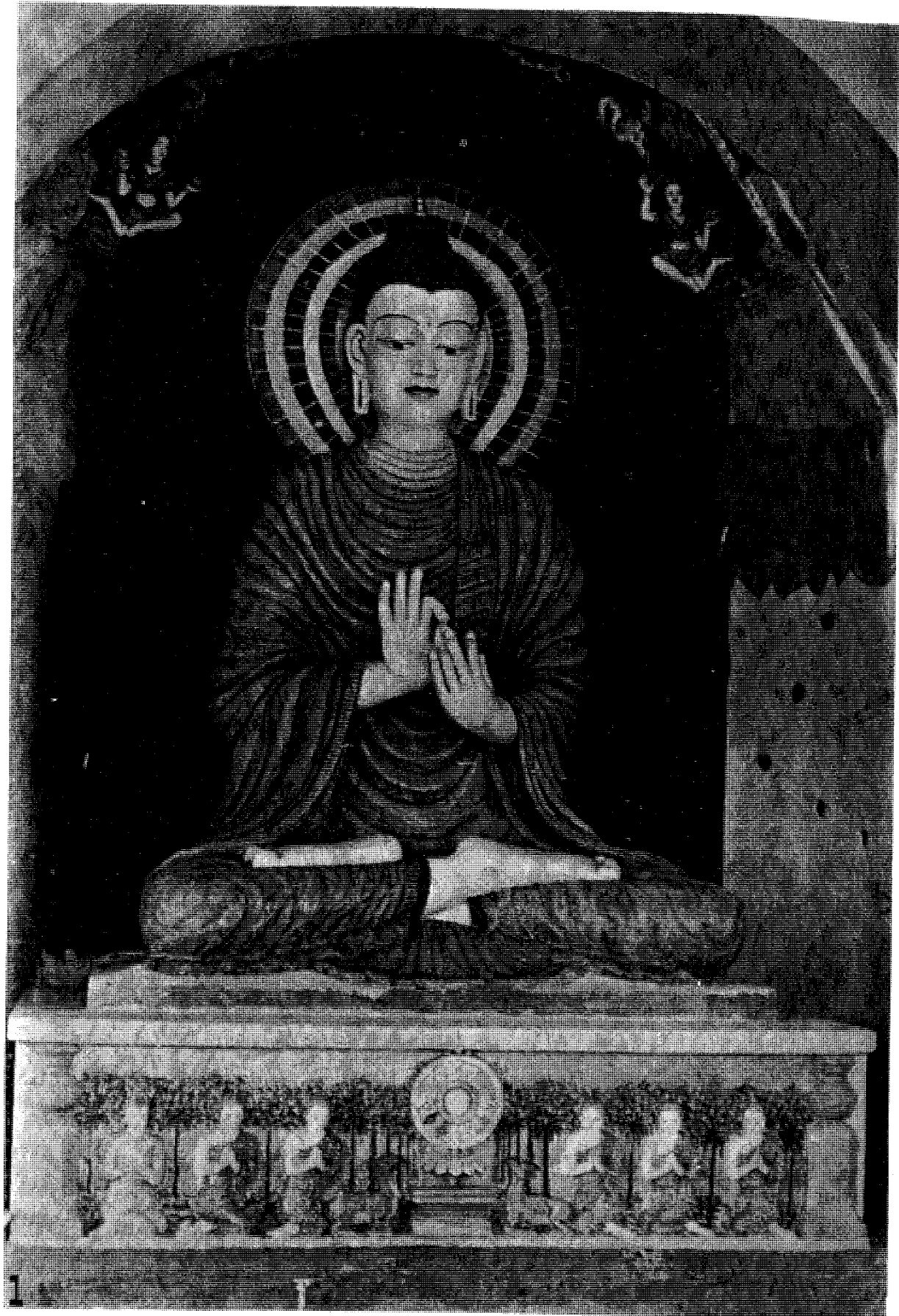
After the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950 the Buddhists were able to organize all activities freely. Their freedom was demonstrated by King Tribhuvan by his participation of the Buddha-pujā on Vesak-day in 1951, thereby abandoning the tradition which forbade the Gurkha rulers to worship the Buddha. At the same time this day was declared a national holiday. It also led to the permission for the Dharmodaya Sabhā to move its headquarters from Kalimpong to Nepal.

The year 1952 became important because of the celebrations accompanying the visit of a Sinhalese delegation, which made a tour with the relics of Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana.²¹ The delegation was received by the King and the relics carried by him to the palace, before they were brought to different places for worship. On this occasion the King and Queen invited all monks for a traditional dana.²² In the same year Amṛtānanda founded a Buddhist school at Svayambhu, the Anandakuṭi Vidya-peeth. In this year the number of monks was estimated at twenty. The number of nuns seems to have been about thirty.

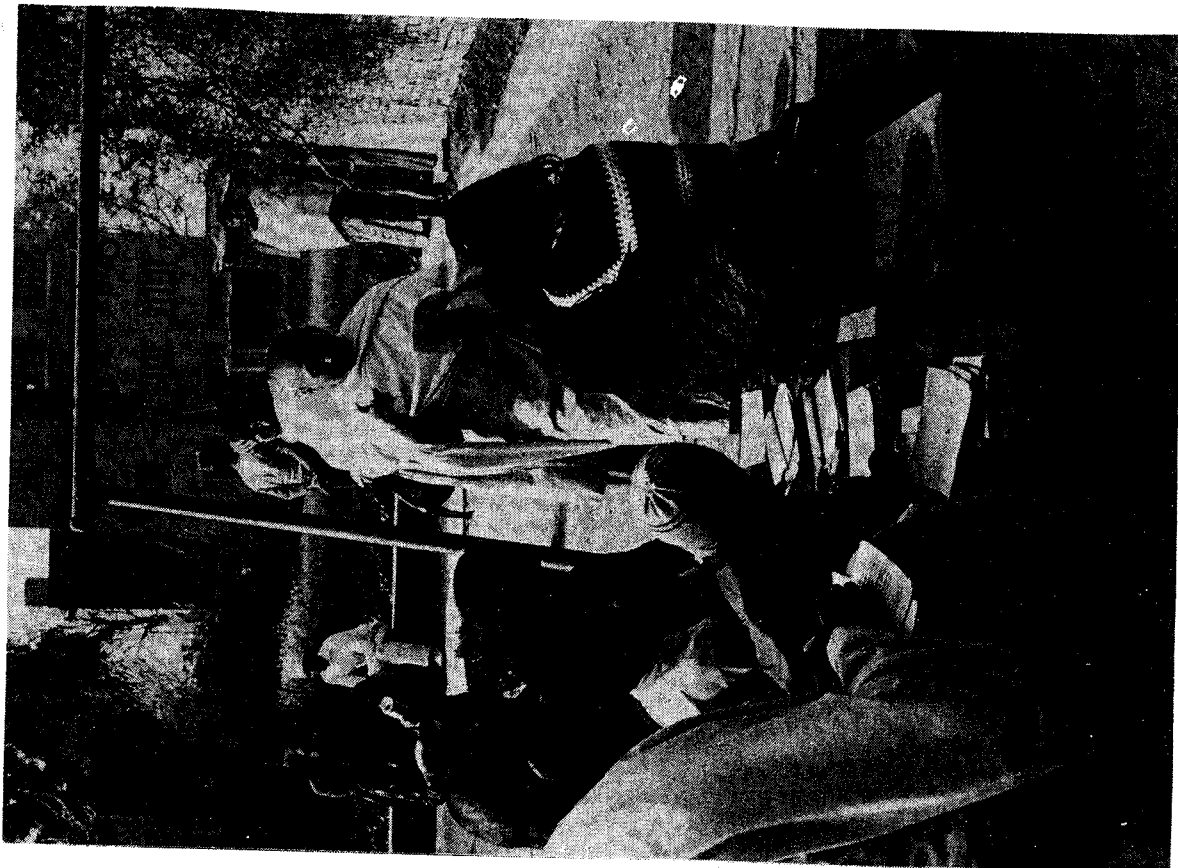
After the example of the Mahā Bodhi Society the Dharmodaya Sabhā sent requests to the government to renovate the important place of pilgrimage at Lumbini. A programme was developed to make provisions for the lodging of pilgrims, to build a monastery and to construct roads. This project was to be finished at the celebration of 2500 years of Buddhism, in 1966, but although most of the buildings taken over have been erected, the place remains not easily accessible. Reconstruction has been planned by the United Nations, with financial support from other Buddhist countries. These plans to renovate Lumbini became urgent when it became known that Nepal was to be the host for the next Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. In 1956 this Conference took place, under the leadership of the Venerable Amṛtānanda, then president of the Dharmodaya Sabhā and elected vice-president of the World Fellowship

²¹ *Mahā Bodhi*, 60, 1952 (Nepal Number) issued on the occasion of the visit of the Sinhalese delegation with the relics.

²² On the occasion monks had been invited for a meal and to receive gifts. From their side the monks gave a sermon.



Copy of the 5th century Buddha in Sarnāth.
Śākyasimha Vihāra, Patan.



Nuns giving lessons in Buddhist religion. Gana Mahāvihāra, [redacted] Kathmandu



Illustrations of the transitoriness of the body. Dharmakīrti Vihāra, Kathmandu.

of Buddhists. The report of the Conference²³ mentions the government's organizational and financial support and King Tribhuvan's personal interest in it. The King's private secretary, Mr. Lok Darshan, also played an important role in the preparatory committee. At the opening ceremony speeches were given by King Mahendra, the Venerable Candramaṇi and Dr. G. P. Malalasekera, then president of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.

During the conference the importance of foreign support to the Nepalese Buddhists was repeatedly emphasized. The ideal of Nepal as a Buddhist country and the comparison of its King with Aśoka comes up frequently in the proceedings of the conference. In this connection also Lumbini and Kapilavastu are mentioned as important places for restoration since they are the symbols of Nepal's Buddhist past, and future 'centres of the faith and devotion of all Buddhists of the world'.²⁴ The preparations for the conference and the occasion itself involved a lot of publicity for the Dharmodaya Sabhā. As it was the inviting organization the success of the meeting resulted in its becoming known to a greater public, inside as well as outside the country. But it appears as if organizing the conference had used too much of the Dharmodaya Sabhā's resources, for we find that its activity decreases quickly after 1956. The Dharmodaya Sabhā had come to the foreground as *the* national Buddhist organization, representing all Nepalese Buddhists. This task it could not possibly fulfill, since it was only supported by Theravāda sympathizers, relations with other Buddhist groups being mostly on a personal basis and far from united in a single body.

Dr. G. P. Malalasekera's presidential address at the conference concerned the main objectives of the World Fellowship of Buddhists for the years to come. Important for the Nepalese who attended the conference were his suggestions for closer cooperation with Mahāyāna Buddhists. Other aims he formulated agree for the greater part with the objectives mentioned by the Dharmodaya Sabhā in 1950; more publications and translations of Canonical works in the various national languages; the establishment of a Buddhist news and information service; international Buddhist cooperation, especially in determining a common standpoint on international political issues; reflection on the task and responsibility of a Buddhist organization in the world; development of ideas concerning a Buddhist welfare state, concerning education and missionary activity and concerning cooperation with other religions.

The 2500 year Buddha Jayanti in 1956 was another reason for that year to stand out in the history of Nepalese Theravāda. Various activities accompanied this celebration organized by special committees in the various cities.²⁵ These included religious gatherings and worship, processions, public meetings and conferences.

²³ See *Report of the Fourth World Buddhist Conference*, Kathmandu 1956, 9-11.

²⁴ *Dharmodaya*, No. 135, 1958

²⁵ *Dharmodaya*, 1956, Vesak Number

DEVELOPMENT OF THE THERAVADA MOVEMENT AFTER 1956

The year 1956 was recorded by the Dharmodaya Sabhā as 'a New Year in the Revival of Buddhism'.²⁶ In its evaluation of the events it repeatedly points to the importance of the activities and efforts of the lay-people who supported the organization of the conference. In this context it was stated that the visit of the relics of Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana in 1952 had taken place in time to rouse the voluntary help of many lay Buddhists. One of the results of the conference was that the work to restore Lumbini as a place of pilgrimage was taken up again. Bhikṣu Mahānāma was sent to Lumbini to assist in the reconstruction. The conference also resulted in an increased self-confidence of the Dharmodaya Sabhā and in the rise of great expectations for the future. This incited monks as well as laymen to institute regular religious services and to prepare for the building of new monasteries. Also at this time some leading personalities seem to have taken the role of coordinators of all different initiatives. Amṛtānanda's part in this must have been essential. At the same time owing to their new international reputation he and other members of the Dharmodaya Sabhā were busy establishing contacts with Buddhists in other countries. Foreign visitors were received in Kathmandu, among them President Rajendra Prasad of India, Prime Minister Chou En-Lai of China, a Buddhist delegation from North Korea, and a Chinese Cultural Mission in 1957. Some Nepalese Buddhists, mainly laymen, went to the meeting of the World Peace Association in Colombo in 1957-8.

A great impression was made by Amṛtānanda's journey to China, North-Vietnam, Mongolia, and the Soviet Union in 1959. On his return he was convinced that Buddhism was flourishing in these countries and was to have a great future.²⁷ Everywhere he had been treated as a guest of honour and he came back with a gift of 500 000 rupees for his Buddhist High School.²⁸ His praise of the communist countries made a great impression on the Buddhists in Nepal and also in Sri Lanka and Burma.

On his return the expected growth failed to occur. Several reasons can be suggested for this. The success and popularity of the Dharmodaya Sabhā at the time of the conference did not continue in normal circumstances, in which the less glamorous everyday work of managing the organization's activities had to be taken up again. The enthusiastic help of many laymen during the preparations of the conference decreased and the former core of supporters and active monks became again

²⁶ *Dharmodaya*, No. 135, 1958

²⁷ Amṛtānanda, *Buddhist Activities in Socialist Countries*. Peking 1961; id., *Religious Freedom in China*, in the *Buddhist*, XXX, 1959-60, 1974 f.; see also *World Buddhism*, VIII, 12, 1960, 11; X, 6, 1962, 24; X, 9, 1962, 26; XI, 1963, 23.

²⁸ See Holmes Welch, *Asian Buddhists and China*, in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 40, 1963, 18; Bechert, o. c., 160.

the centre of the movement. At this time the important financial aid of Mañiharṣa Jyoti, who still lived in Kalimpong, gradually came to an end, after the removal of the Dharmodaya Sabhā to Kathmandu. This meant that the publication of the journal 'Dharmodaya' had to stop. At the same time younger monks and laymen began to take over some of the places of the first activists. Their interest shifted from missionary work to the role of the established monasteries among the people and their educational tasks.

The number of sympathizers has not greatly increased in the last two decades. But it seems as if this fact had a positive influence on the consolidation of the movement and resulted in deepening and strengthening its ideals and creating a closer relationship between its members. The earlier tendency to have many small monasteries in different places now seems to change in favour of having larger monasteries with more monks living together in one place. Books and pamphlets in Newari continue to be published, written by monks as well as by laymen, and distributed through the monasteries.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Up till now it has remained a custom for Nepalese monks to study in Burma or Sri Lanka, and since 1966 also Thai Buddhists have expressed their wish to help with the promotion of Theravāda in Nepal. In that year the Upasangharājā of Thailand visited Nepal, on which occasion also an American Buddhist was ordained.²⁹ At the moment thereabout are 44 monks and novices living in 31 monasteries. In Kathmandu there are five monasteries. There are fifteen nunneries in the whole of Nepal. Many of the 37 nuns however prefer to live alone in private houses.

As is the case with the monks, most nuns come from Newar families. The monasteries or buildings they inhabit are given to them for this purpose by lay people. Some of them have private means for their living and the rest are dependent on gifts. Most of them have not been married and have entered the order at a young age. The parents often have problems with accepting their daughters' decisions to become nuns.³⁰ But some were formerly married and became nuns with their husband's consent or after husband's death. The reasons they give for their choice of religious life range from the wish to become educated or to leave the rigorous life of a housewife or the desire to attain a spiritual life and a higher aim. As with the monks their religious activities comprise meditation, study of the canonical texts, recitation of texts, *puja*, preaching and teaching. At times they are invited for lunch in the house of a layman and visit important family celebrations. More often than the monks they are asked for advice in family matters.

²⁹ *The Buddhist*, XXXVII, 1, 1966, 26 f.

³⁰ See Yahmhamhyāy, Kathmandu (Dharmakīrti Vihāra), 1970.

The monks have their own individual activities during the day. After breakfast they receive laymen and guests in the monastery and after lunch each may go his own way. General meetings are convoked in connection with matters of common interest. Once a month they celebrate *uposatha*³¹ but they do not always have a general meeting on that occasion. Ordination (*upasampadā*) and the rain-retreat are held only in the two bigger monasteries which have a parish-boundary (*simā*), namely Ānandakuṭi Vihāra in Kathmandu and Sumaṅgala Vihāra in Patan. All the monks are active in preaching. They deliver sermons in the vihāras and in the houses of laymen. At the moment most of them are inclined to emphasize in their preaching the ideas they have in common with the Newars, e. g. concerning moral obligations. They illustrate their talks with well-known stories from the *Jātakas* and other popular texts like the *Rasavāhini* and the *Dhammapada*. In the month of Guṇḍa (August-September), there are special gatherings every day. Often the majority of the listeners at these meetings are women.

Ascetic tendencies, which are found especially among the younger monks, are not encouraged since all are needed for missionary work. Lately however, a greater interest in meditation has come up, and a small number of monks have devoted themselves to the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna-meditation.³²

The practice of going from house to house to beg for food appeared to be difficult for the monks to continue because of the influence of the caste system. When they had accepted a gift from a person of a lower caste, others, of higher castes, might refuse to present them with food any longer. Therefore many monasteries have lunch-invitations from laymen, and the monks go to them alone or in a small group. Other days they take care of their own cooking or eat the food which laymen bring them in the morning.

The monks do not participate in rituals that have a Mahāyāna origin. They do however perform a *parittā* ceremony³³ at the request of laymen. This can be done on different occasions, on birthdays, at a marriage, or in cases of illness or death, at which times they recite the Suttas that suit the event. They also perform the ceremony in connection with customs like the *annaprāśana*.³⁴ At times a *parittā* is used to cure people who are possessed by evil spirits. It is a custom of the King to order a *parittā*

31 The monthly gathering on full moon day of monks, at which the monks' rules are recited and possible breaches confessed.

32 For *Satipaṭṭhāna*-meditation see *Dīgha Nikāya*, II, 290 ff.; *Majjhima Nikāya*, I, 55 ff.; Nyanaponika, *Geistestraining durch Achtsamkeit*, Konstanz 1970, Bhikkhu Sumangala, *Buddhist Meditation*, Lalitpur 1974.

33 Lit. 'protection'. At the ceremony Canonical texts are recited, which are considered as possessing protective properties; see also E. Waldschmidt, *Das Paritta*, in: *Von Ceylon bis Turfan*, Göttingen 1967, 465-478.

34 The Hindu ritual (*Samskāra*) at which a child receives its first mouthful of rice.

to be held at his birthday every year.

Those who have an extra interest in Buddhism and who wish to do more than to listen to the preaching, are individually instructed in the monasteries. Lately also a few Buddhist study-groups have come into existence. In Patan the Young Men's Buddhist Association has been active on this point but the main activity comes from the Dharmakīrti Bauddha Adhyayana Goṣṭhī under the leadership of the Venerable Aśvaghoṣa and organized by the nuns of the Dharmakīrti Vihāra in Kathmandu. In Banepa a similar group exists. In the field of education more is done, and in this again the nuns of the Dharmakīrti Vihāra are engaged. Apart from teaching at school in Pokhara and Patan, the nuns give religious education to young children every day, and to high-school students and adults once a week. They also give advice in meditation and are active in teaching adults to read and write, and other things like cooking, handicrafts, painting, etc. Lessons on health and on the Pāli language are offered to the interested laity. These educational activities are very popular with the laity and they are usually well attended.

The Buddhist schools founded by Amṛtānanda were in 1971 taken over by the government. Since then on their free days the Buddhist children have been given the opportunity to come to the monasteries for religious education. In Gaṇa Mahāvihāra Bhikṣu Mahāsaṅgha runs a class of some forty to fifty children, the Nepal Bauddha Pariyatti Siksa, from 8 to 10 every Saturday. Parents are requested to send their children for this religious education. It seems that the children are less enthusiastic to sacrifice their leisure time in this way, and the monks have therefore planned to organize some recreation for them as well. To finance all this remains a problem, since they depend mainly on the voluntary contributions of the laity.

The Anandakuti Vidyapeeth was started by Amṛtānanda in 1952, at first in the monastery with four pupils, later in buildings of their own close to the monastery at Svayambhu. At the moment the number of pupils is approximately 700, mostly from Buddhist families. The Buddhist elements in the life of the school have been restricted to the morning service, the visits to the vihāra on full moon days, and the lessons on religion of the three monks who work at the school. During the yearly Vesak-celebrations there is a special programme for the pupils, including a procession. The contacts with Sri Lanka are still strong. Regularly monks from Sri Lanka, but also from other countries, give lectures. This year the school expects to be able to start a high-school for girls as well.

On the compound of the Gaṇa Mahāvihāra a kindergarten, the Siddhārtha Siśu Niketana, has been founded by the Venerable Sumaṅgala, who is its head. Every day from 10:30 to 3:30 eight teachers have about 100 children in their care. The school receives some help from Sumaṅgala's friends in the United States and Japan who send toys and educational appliances.

The interest of westerners in meditation has resulted in the organization of a programme of study for American students and others who wish to be introduced into Satipaṭṭhāna-meditation, in Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, under the guidance of the Venerable Sumaṅgala. He also gives meditation-courses to Nepalese and regularly invites monks from abroad to give lectures. Since 1975 a *Vipassanā Bhāvanā* meditation programme has been conducted for two hours every Tuesday and Friday at Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, and it is attended by 30 to 70 people.

A small health clinic has been set up in Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, the Siddhārtha Svāsthya Sevā, which has so far treated about 3000 patients. On Vaisākhā Full Moon Day the clinic sends out a medical team for out-patients. On the same day also the nuns of Dharmakīrti Vihāra go to various hospitals to visit patients and distribute food. Already in 1950 health services had been given an important place in the programme of action of the Dharmodaya Sabhā. At present also the Dharmakīrti Study Organization has attracted the help of a medical practitioner and a nurse to provide free medical assistance one morning a week in their monastery. This has been extended also to Banepa, where in the Dhyānakūṭi Vihāra patients of TB and asthma are checked regularly. There are plans to make this service available to other villages as well.

For lay-people who wish to make a pilgrimage to visit the Buddhist sites in Nepal and in India, the Theravādins organize tours, and a monk usually comes along with them as a guide. The Venerable Sumaṅgala has conducted pilgrimages five times to India, and also to Burma, Thailand and Malaysia.³⁵ The Gaṇa Mālā Saṅgha, a society of amateur musicians who have been playing and singing religious songs every morning at Svayambhu for 25 years, is now organizing its second pilgrimage. On the first about 500 people went to the sacred places.

The importance of practical work in the propagation of Buddhism is often stressed by the Nepalese Theravādins. Most initiatives made in this connection however seem to be purely individual, although they can be said to fit into the broader outline of the organization's ideals. One gets the impression that most—if not all—activities result from the devoted zeal of individual people, and that without their inspiration the movement would not be able to develop. At present some very active members are found among the monks and nuns and their work has led many Buddhists in Nepal to have increasing confidence in them. Their efforts have resulted in an increasing number of publications, contacts with other countries, the establishment of modest Buddhist libraries and teaching facilities, the development of health services and the building and repairing of monasteries. In their contacts with the laity the monks and nuns occupy a confidential position. They often give advice concerning family matters and visit laymen at their homes.

³⁵ See e. g. the itinerary published for one of the pilgrimages by the Gaṇa Mahāvihāra in 1974, *Bauddha Tirtha Yātrāko Kāryakrama*.

The influence of the laity can not only be seen from their share in the management and the publications, but is also evident from the fact that they have requested and influenced a number of religious developments. For example, a few years ago a Buddhist wedding-ceremony was instituted. The typical Newar custom of initiating boys into monkhood for a limited period has been adopted by the Theravādins.³⁶ They ordain boys by means of the *pabbajjā* ('going forth') ceremony, after which the young novices live in the monastery for a short time, thereafter to return to lay-life again. Adults also can receive the *pabbajjā* or the higher ordination for a short period, from a few days to a full three months during the rain-retreat, living in a Vihāra as a nun or a novice. In 1976 twelve adults were thus initiated in Lumbini.

By far the majority of lay-people who visit the Theravāda institutions are Newars. They attend the meetings and religious services and on certain occasions seem to prefer the monks to the Vajrācārya. In the beginning this caused a negative attitude of some Vajrācāryas towards the Theravāda monks, as some of them are economically dependent on their tasks as priests. This opposition however diminished when it became evident that most Newars continued relying on them for their ritual services, which were refused by the Theravādins. Their relations with other Buddhists and the Tibetans seem for the greater part to be based on personal contacts and restricted to occurrences of common interest. Of late attempts have been made to organize all Buddhist groups in the All Nepal Buddhist Federation, which was founded in 1973 by the Venerable Sumaṅgala. The unfamiliarity of this way of combining interests seems a reason for the rather subordinate position of the Federation at the moment.

Theravāda influence on Hindus in Nepal has been more limited. Sometimes a Hindu family invites a monk, or a few Hindus attend a sermon. Very rarely Hindus get interested in the Buddhist teaching, although instances have been reported of Hindu participation at Buddhist meetings and of Hindu women who became nuns. There appears to be some interest among the younger Hindus, but usually they do not feel any necessity to become Buddhists because of the flexibility of their beliefs which makes it easy for them to accept Buddhist ideas within a Hindu framework. This might also be an important reason why the Theravāda Buddhists are not considered as acting against the Nepalese law³⁷ which forbids conversions to religions other than one's traditional family beliefs.

The Theravādins continue to contribute to the amount of publications in Newari and Nepali, which they consider of utmost importance since very few books on

³⁶ See Stephen Greenwold, *Monkhood versus Priesthood in Newar Buddhism*, in *The Anthropology of Nepal* edited by Chr. von Fürer-Haimendorf, London 1974, pp. 129-150

³⁷ Cf. Selections from the 1963 Legal Code, III, Nepal Press Digest, Nepal Law Translation Series, Vol. 7/33, Kathmandu 1973, 23-25

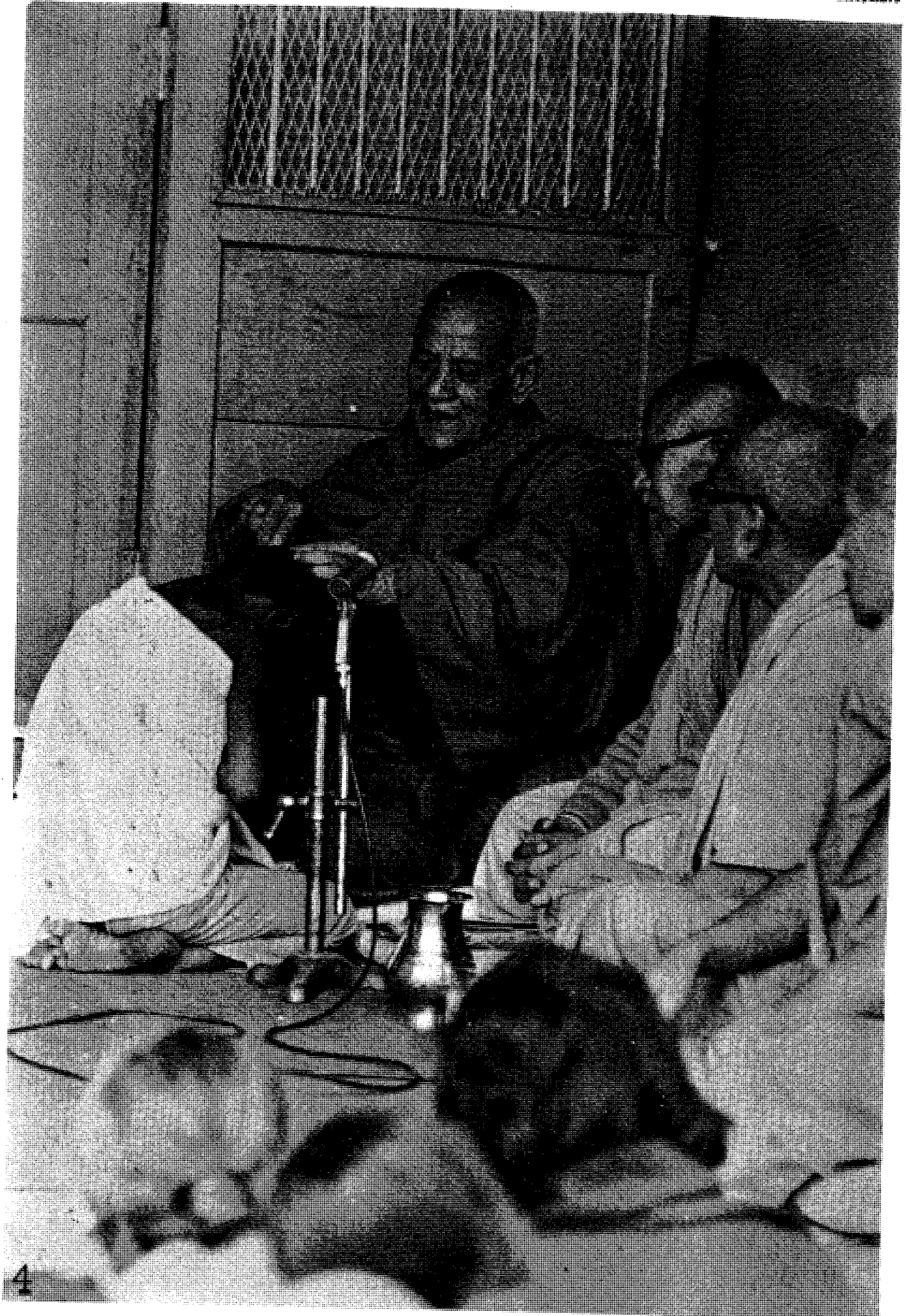
Buddhism are available in these languages. Many of the monks and laymen regularly publish sermons or booklets treating some special subject, usually in the field of ethics. Also translations of Canonical texts by the Venerable Amṛtānanda³⁸ continue to be brought out. In a list of publications of 1974, 394 titles (by 89 authors) are given, written in the period from 1935 to 1973. Nearly all the publications deal with some aspect of the Buddhist teaching, of the Canonical works, or of ethics, or else they contain edifying stories.

Magazines are scarce and are irregularly published. In 1959 the publication of *Dharmodaya* was stopped. At the moment the only magazine, *Dharmakīrti*, is brought out by the Dharmakīrti Vihārā once a year at Vesak. The journal *Lumbini*, started in 1970, is published very irregularly.

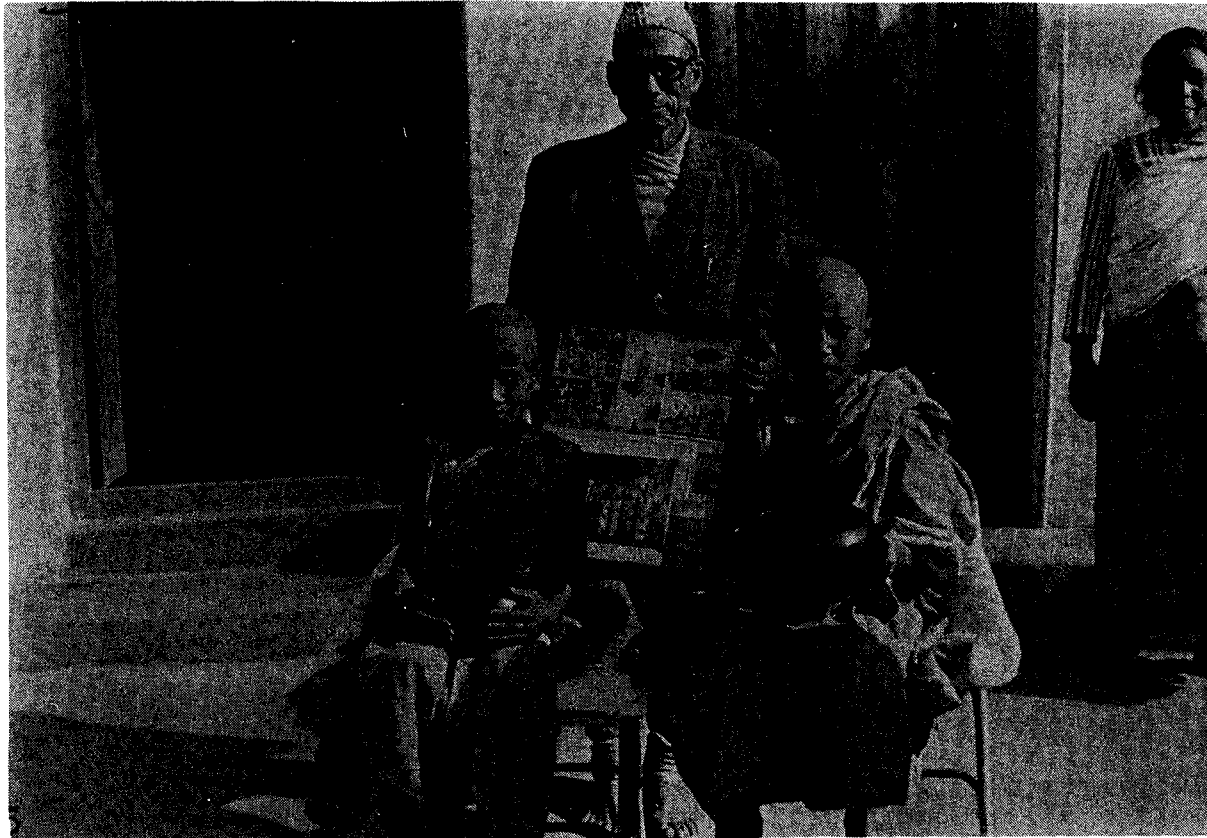
There is some activity going on in restoring or enlarging old monasteries or in building new ones. Up till now the architecture of the Theravāda buildings has depended largely on the existing shape of the area and its usefulness for the occupants and the intended activities. The usual village monastery contains a modest shrine room, a monk's cell and sometimes a separate bathroom. The monasteries in the cities are often not much distinguished from the surrounding houses or buildings. The layout of Ānandakūṭi Vihāra forms an exception, because from the beginning it had been planned like a Sinhalese monastery, having a separate shrine room, preaching hall and monastery, as well as a stūpa and a Bodhi-tree. But the majority of Theravāda buildings do not show any specific characteristics,³⁹ apart from a sign over the gate and maybe a small stūpa on the compound or on the roof. However, there seems to be a tendency to use the traditional Nepalese architecture for new buildings, together with the woodcarvings and curved roofs, as is evident from the new vihāra in Lumbini and the building of the Candrakīrti Vihāra in Banepa, which is in progress. The question which now poses itself is: Is there a possibility of a typically Nepalese development of Theravāda Buddhism? As is known from its history in South-East Asian countries, Theravāda has a certain flexibility to adjust itself to existing religious patterns. Since Nepalese Theravāda is still in an early stage of its history it does not seem correct to compare the Nepalese situation with that in Theravāda countries in South and South-East Asia. We can only see some differences and similarities and the beginnings of what may become a more or less typically Nepalese feature. The life of the monks and their various activities are very close indeed to the traditional ways of other Theravāda communities. But there is a tendency to accept existing Newar customs, like ordination for a limited period, only when they are not in conflict with Theravāda

³⁸ See Buddha-Dharma Sambandhi Grantha-Sūci, edited by Bhikṣu Sudarśana, Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, Kathmandu 1974.

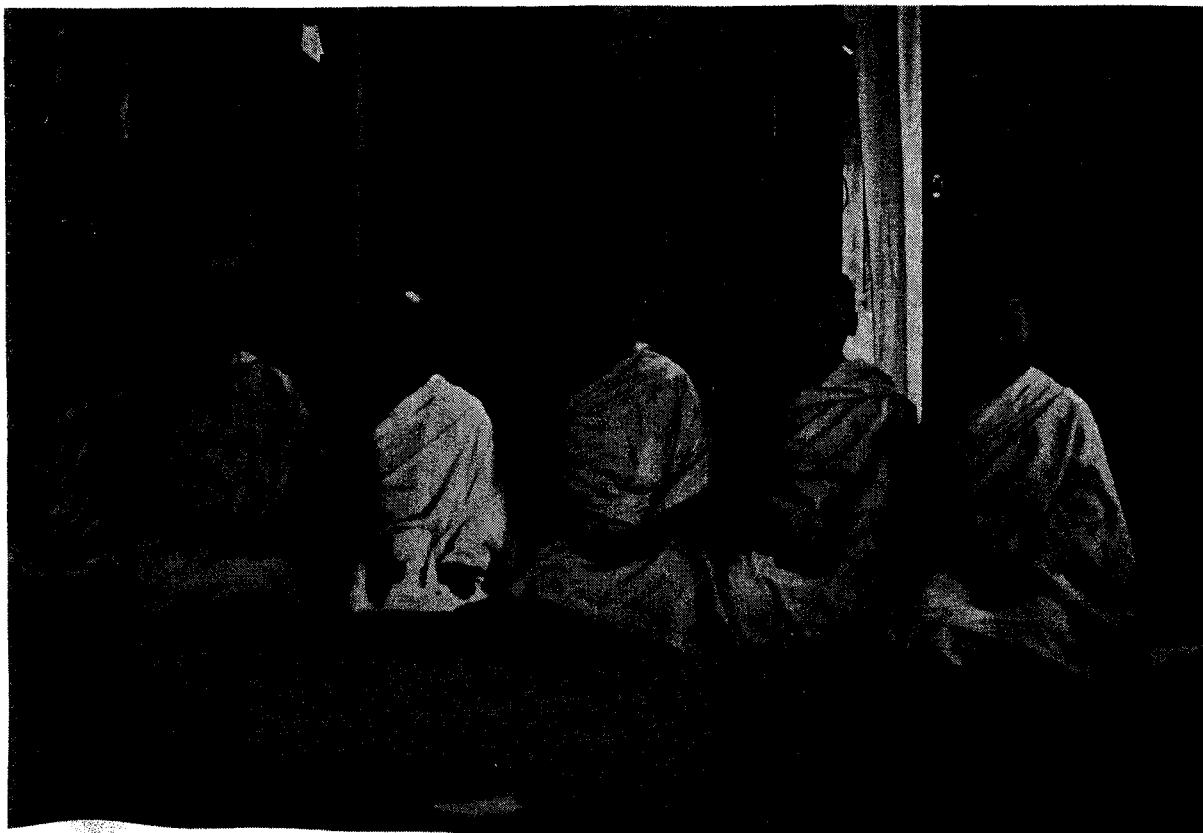
³⁹ See also the remarks of Jacques Maquest, Expressive Space and Theravāda Values: a Meditation Monastery in Sri Lanka, in *Ethos*, 3, 1, 1975, pp. 1-22.



Temporary initiation (pabbajjā) of a young boy. Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, [redacted] Kathmandu



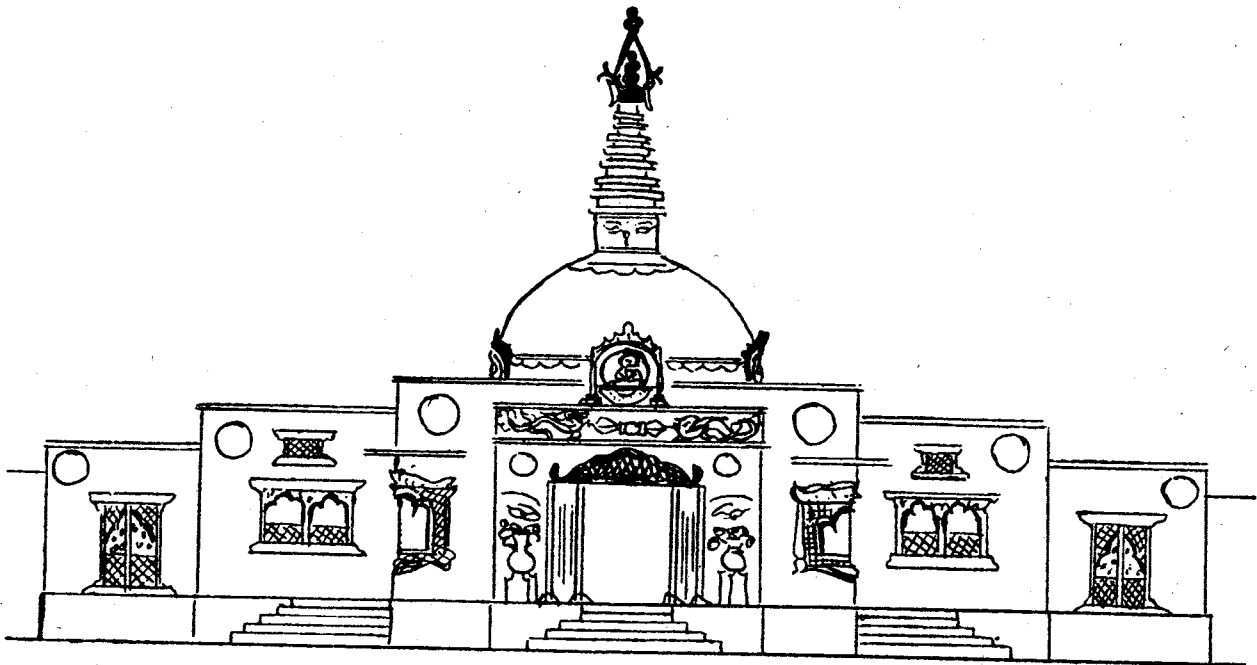
Boys remain in the monastery for some days after initiation.



The nuns of Dharmakirti Vihara, Kathmandu.

ideas. When they are considered as Mahāyāna, as in the case of various rituals, they are rejected. On the other hand we can say that the new interest in Newar culture and literature can for an important part be connected with the success of the Theravāda mission among the Newars. At the same time the monks' international Buddhist relations have prevented too close an association with one community, and an open attitude towards all other religions within the country.

There is a clear influence of Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand, especially with regard to the education and training of young monks and novices. This has created a dependence on these countries and at the same time provided an opportunity to keep in close contact with them.⁴⁰ Also international Buddhist associations keep in contact with the Nepalese, who are at the same time members of the established Theravāda community and engaged in the promotion of Buddhism in a Hindu kingdom, which in its process of growth towards a modern state will need all its cultural and religious resources as well. It still remains to be seen if in the future we can speak of a typically Nepalese development of Theravāda Buddhism, which may have a role to play in the preservation of the ancient religious traditions in combination with the establishment of a new emphasis on the task of organised religion in a developing country.



Lumbini Vihāra, after a drawing in *Dharmodaya*, 8, 96-97, 1955

⁴⁰ There are plans to start a *pirivena*, a monastery school for novices and monks in Kathmandu so that it will no longer be necessary to send young monks abroad.

APPENDIX

LIST OF THERAVĀDA MONASTERIES IN NEPAL

(March 1977)

I. Monks

Kathmandu:	Ānandakuṭi Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Amṛtānanda ⁴¹ Bhikṣu Mahānāma Bhikṣu Kumāra Kāśyapa Bhikṣu Aśvaghoṣa (Bhikṣu Maitri—in Sri Lanka)
	Sriḡha Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Jñānasāgara
	Bhasatipura Vihāra (Balambu):	no monks ⁴²
	Gaṇa Mahāvihāra:	Bhikṣu Sumaṅgala Bhikṣu Subodhānanda Bhikṣu Prajñāraśmi Bhikṣu Sudarśana Bhikṣu Sāsanapāla (Bhikṣu Susobhana—in Bangkok) (Bhikṣu Dharmasobhana—in Bangkok) (Bhikṣu Dharmasukha—in Bangkok) (Sramaṇera Sugandha—in Bangkok) (Sramaṇera Sunīta—in Bangkok)
	Mātātīrtha Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Dharmavaṃśa
Patan:	Sumaṅgala Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Buddhaghoṣa Śramaṇera Saṅgharatna Śramaṇera Ananda (Śramaṇera Nanda—in Sri Lanka) (Śramaṇera Sumedha—in Bangkok)
	Śākyasiṃha Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Prajñānanda Bhikṣu Dharmapāla

41 In the spelling of the names of the monasteries and the monks and nuns, as well as of Buddhist technical terms, both Sanskrit and Pāli forms are used by the Nepalese Theravādins.

42 The monasteries which have no permanent inhabitants are used for accomodating visiting monks.

Mañimañḍapa Mahāvihāra (Dhapaga	Śramaṇera Mahājavana (Śramaṇera Candragupta-in Sri Lanka) Vihāra): Bhikṣu ñānaponika Bhikṣu Silabhadra
Kirtipur: Kirtipur Vihāra:	Śramaṇera Upāli
Bhaktapur: Muṇi Vihāra :	Śramaṇera Mahinda
Samaskrta Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Vivekānanda
Banepa: Candrakīrti Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Mahāpantha
Sudarśanacakra Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Bodhisena
Dhyānakuṭi Vihāra:	no monks
Dhulikhel: Śikhalapura Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Dharmānanda
Purvārāma:	no monks
Thimi: Paṭi Vihāra:	Śramaṇera Muṇijyoti
near Vajravārāhi: Campāpura Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Sugatamuni Śramaṇera Vipasyin
Trisuli: Sugatapura Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Medhankara
Pokhara: Vihāra under construction	
Tansen: Ānanda Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Śākyānanda
Mahācaitya Vihāra:	no monks
Holangi (near Tansen): Holangi Vihāra:	no monks
Ridi (near Tansen): Sugandha Vihāra:	no monks
Butwal: Padmacaitya Vihāra:	Bhikṣu Cuṇṇa
Bhojpur: Śākyamuni Vihāra:	no monks
Dharan: Buddha Vihāra:	no monks
Bungmati: private house:	Śramaṇera Sumana
Baglung: Bānglung Vihāra:	no monks
Taulihawa (Kapilvastu): Kapilvastu	Vihāra: no monks
Narayanghat: Buddhapark Vihāra:	no monks
Lumbini: Lumbini Buddha Vihāra	(Nava Mandir): Bhikṣu Anirudha Bhikṣu Vimalānanda
Chainpur: Siddha Vihāra:	no monks
Without fixed residence:	Bhikṣu Dharmavaṃśa
In Sri Lanka:	Bhikṣu Sudharma Bhikṣu Guṇakośa

Bhikṣu Sangewanchuk
Bhikṣu Maitri (Ānandakuṭi Vihāra, Kathmandu)
Śramaṇera Nanda (Sumaṅgala Vihāra, Patan)
Śramaṇera Candraguṭpa (Śākyasiṃha Vihāra, Patan)

In Bangkok:

Bhikṣu Aggananda
Bhikṣu Susobhana (Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, Kathmandu)
Bhikṣu Dharmasobhana (Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, Kathmandu)
Bhikṣu Dharmasukha (Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, Kathmandu)
Śramaṇera Sugandha (Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, Kathmandu)
Śramaṇera Sunita (Gaṇa Mahāvihāra, Kathmandu)
Śramaṇera Sumedha (Sumaṅgala Vihāra, Patan)

In India:

Bhikṣu Dharmajyoti
Bhikṣu Ānanda

In France:

Bhikṣu Saṅghapāla

II. Nuns

Kathmandu: Mahāparinirvāṇa Vihāra (Kindol): Anagārikā Dhammacāri

Anagārikā Vimukhā

Anagārikā Virati

Anagārikā Yaśodharā

Dharmakīrti Vihāra (Srigha): Anagārikā Dhammavati

Anagārikā Guṇavati (Burmese)

Anagārikā Ratnamañjari

Anagārikā Dhammadinnā

Anagārikā Anupamā

Anagārikā Rūpavati

Kuṅsa Bāhā :

Anagārikā Dhammadassī

Anagārikā Pattācāra

Private houses in Kindol: Anagārikā Viśākhā

Anagārikā Saṅghamitrā

Anagārikā Uttarā

Anagārikā Kuśavati

Anagārikā Dānaśilā

Anagārikā Sumitrā

Anagārikā Śrāvastī

Anagārikā Sarojinī

Anagārikā Khemānandā

Anagārikā Māgandhī

Private houses in Kathmandu :

Patan: Yaśodharā Vidyālaya:
Ila Bāhī:

Tānī Bāhā:

Śākyasiṃha Vihāra:

Private house:

Bhaktapur: Samaskṛta Vihāra:

Banepa: Private house:

Thimi: Paṭi Vihāra: one
near Vajravarahī:

Pokhara: Buddha Vihāra :

Tansen: near Ānanda Vihāra:

Mahācaitya Vihāra :

Ridi (near Tansen): Sugandha Vihāra :

Hungi (near Tansen): Hungi Vihāra:

Butwal: Padmacaitya Vihāra : a new

In India (Kusīnagara):

Anagārikā Sāmāvati

Anagārikā Sujātā

Anagārikā Sujitā

Anagārikā Sucittā

Anagārikā Paññā

Anagārikā Sumanā

Anagārikā Mādhavi

Anagārikā Muditā

Anagārikā Vijitā

Anagārikā Silapārami

Anagārikā Suśīla

Anagārikā Saṅgharakkhitā

Anagārikā Anasobhā

Anagārikā Abhayā

a new Anagārikā

Anagārikā Jñanasīla

Anagārikā Satyasīka

Anagārikā Uppalavaṇṇā

Anagārikā Vajrajñānī

Anagārikā Anojā

Anagārikā (name unknown)

Anagārikā Dānapārami

Anagārikā Dharmasīrā

Anagārikā Sudhammā

Anagārikā Uppalavannā

Anagārikā Sumedhā

Anagārikā Vivekacāri

Anagārikā Karuṇā

Anagārikā Vijitā

Anagārikā Culasubhadrā

Anagārikā Vivesanā

Anagārikā

Anagārikā Upekhā