

# Religious Pariyati Education and Mathematics Performance of Students: Case Study of International Buddha Pariyati Uday Vihar

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## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this case study is to find out the entire education system, management of education, and the mathematics achievement of the students of International Buddha Pariyati Uday Vihar. Another purpose is to find out the governing system of such types of institutions however Nepal government has the policy of keeping them under the educational mainstreaming. This study is designed in qualitative approach applying tools of questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion to the subjects of study. Tools were prepared and adopted deeply to connote the entire Vihar Pariyati education system of International Buddhist Pariyati Uday Vihar through case study. The results indicated that these types of Vihar Pariyati educational institutions are conducting autonomously outside the policy of government, moral education is highly appreciable, promote greater racial harmony, and reducing school violence. The main source of conducting schools are donation from local community and international institutions and mathematics achievement of the students is poor.

**KEYWORDS:** *Mainstreaming education, Theravad, peace and harmony, violence, autonomous*

## INTRODUCTION

Nepal is a mosaic of social diversity. It is possessed by individuals of differing social, ethnic and strict foundations. The public statistics 2011 uncovered that there are 125 rank/ethnic gatherings and 123 dialects spoken as first language in Nepal. Tending to this issue has huge ramifications for the instruction area to connect the different ethnic gatherings to give training and education to all, particularly with respect to arrangements of educational program, course books and instructor preparing in their native languages. Nepal is a common nation with 81.34% Hindu, 9.04% Buddhist, 4.38% Islam, 3.04% Karats and 1.41% Christians. While these five religions establish over 99% of the all out populace. There are a dozen sites listed as the world cultural heritage. Moreover, in its long history cultural tolerance has been one of its foremost features and it continues to celebrate and sustain the cultural diversity that combines spiritual values, mythologies and wonders of nature through numerous festivals. The Constitution of Nepal (2072) enshrines the common aspiration of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural characteristics of the Nepalese people with a bond of allegiance to national independence, integrity, national interest and prosperity of the country.

The constitution of Nepal-2072 has the provision that education is the fundamental right of all citizens. It also states that on the lens of state, all citizens are equal. They have right to acquire quality education according to their needs and interest. Nepal is a secular country and people of

this country can enjoy in their customs, festivals, cultures and religions. State becomes neutral on the aspect of religion. This is why, there are many schools registered or non-registered which should be in the mainstream of education as religious institutions such as Gumbas/Vihars, Gurukuls/Ashrams, and Madarasas. Further, we had millennium development goals to achieve up to 2015 and have already reviewed. Furthermore, we are pursuing the Sustainable development goals (2016-2030) in education sector. It is the question of great concern of the respective local government of Tilottama and central government whether these types of institutions supporting to achieve national goals or not. It is necessary to know the actual condition of these schools on the basis of aims/objectives of education of the nation and what the academic performance of the students in respective levels.

## Background

By the restructure of state, Tilottama Municipality is located east-west boarder from Devdaha to Tinau river and north-south boarder is Butwal Sub-metro politan city to Siyari Rural Municipality. With the harmonious settlement of heterogeneous society on the lens of casts, cultures and religions, Tilottama is prosperous in unity in diversity. According to the religious traditions, there are some religious schools running in this municipality like Gumba/Bihar, Gurukul/Ashram. One of the religious Pariyati Uday Vihar school is situated in Tilottama-4 Dingarnagar established in 2059. Although, the policy of central

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government of Nepal, these types of schools are under the mainstreaming education system and the government of Nepal has a funding policy in these types of institutions and follow ups and monitors. But municipality states that this Vihar Pariyati institute is not under the policy of government. In this context, how the institution is running on? What are the educational activities Uday Vihar operating? What is the management system of this Vihar? What facilities are students getting by the institute to support academic career? What is the quality status of education in this Vihar? Does religious education effect mathematical achievement of the students? Many questions are in front of the local community, education related concern peoples and local government.

Various researches indicate such as Jeynes (2002) asserts that religious schools may be better than public schools in urban settings in promoting greater racial harmony and reducing violence. In addition, Morris (2009) identified Catholic schools as generally providing an environment that students perceive as being more supporting, mission focused, and oriented towards academic success. Similarly, Geary & Stoet (2017) in their research found that students in countries with higher levels of religiosity perform lower in science and mathematics. Luebke (2019) did a non-experimental quantitative research and found a small statistically significant relationship between mindset and religiosity ( $p < .01$ ). However,, religiosity and mindset were not correlated with math achievement. Further, he suggested that Brofenbrenner's ecological model could not be used to predict math achievement as he used. In an exploratory research on academic performance of school students with reference to religion (Ghimire, 2018) found that students in Buddhist religious schools secured A+ 30.0%, secured A 20.0%, secured B+ 0.0%, secured B 32.5%, secured C+ 10.0%, secured C 7.5%, secured D 0.0% grades but the researchers have not studied on separate particularly subjects. The researcher is eager to know the entire education system of this institution, managerial aspects, gap of government policy of bringing mainstreaming system and such types of institutions, actual academic performance of students in mathematics who are in the mainstream of education on the theoretical basis of equity policy in education. In this context, this study has a great importance to make further policies for such institutions in different dimensions.

### Research questions

The study remains in two folds, the first one is to explore the entire education management and the second one is to identify whether the Thervad religious Pariyati education hamper mathematics achievement of the students. So, the following are the research questions of this study:

- How is the entire management and educating system of Pariyati Uday Vihar conducting?
- To what extent Thervad religious Pariyati education hamper mathematics achievement of students?

### Method

The main paradigm of this research will be social development paradigm. When we all say the word "education", it means the main stream education, which is under the banner of the "Social Development Paradigm", where the parts are studied with holistic approach. This study is performed in qualitative case study design.

Qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. When the approach is applied correctly, it becomes a valuable method for social science research to develop theory, evaluate programs, and develop interventions. Further, case studies in qualitative design displays an interactive, dynamic, and emergent character in which the aims, strategies, data, analysis, and validity are woven together in the process of the study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Maxwell, 1996; Becker, 1996). The purpose of this paper is to find out the entire education system of this institution, managerial aspects, gap of government policy of bringing mainstreaming system to such types of institutions, actual academic performance of students in mathematics. Case study research involves intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of single similar units by observing at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time (Gerring, 2004, p.342). As such case studies provide an opportunity for the researcher to gain a deep holistic view of a research problem and may facilitate describing, understanding and explaining the research problem or situation (Barter & Jack, 2008). Qualitative researcher is the key instrument in the design process, continually deploying reflexivity and evaluative skills to data analysis and to the decisions making in research. Interview questionnaires were developed for students, vikshyus, Bhante and starring committee of Vihar Pariyati institution. Check list was formed for focus group discussion and students' performance record in mathematics was observed from office. From the collected data, analysis was done through explanatory qualitative case study design.

### Findings and Discussion

I start with regarding the status of education system of Nepal at first. Then I adjudge the religious education in Vihar with the themes of research questions of this case study.

### Structure of Education in Nepal

There are mainly four types of formal education in Nepal. They are: basic education, secondary education, secondary level technical education, technical and vocational education conducted by CTEVT, higher education by universities. The basic level education is introduced for the children of minimum entry age of 5 years. Earlier primary education or the first level of education comprising of five years of schooling has currently been extended to additional three upper grades to make 8 years (grade 1-8 and ages 5-12) as basic education at first. The second level education is secondary level which comprises in the past of two sections, secondary (grades 9-10) and higher secondary (grades 11 and 12) but now these two levels are merged in one and called as secondary education. A national level centralised examination (SEE) is conducted at the end of grade ten. This examination is popularly known as the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) examination. Furthermore, National Examination Board conducts both SEE and examinations of grade 11 and 12. There is also a provision of secondary level technical education under the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT). Currently, technical schools affiliated to the CTEVT offer skill training courses either to tenth grade pass students or to those having Technical Secondary Education Examination. Similarly, in Nepal there are currently eleven universities and four autonomous, specialised institutions of higher education. Tribhuvan University (TU) is the first university

in the country that started in 1959 as a teaching and affiliating university. It has constituent and affiliated campuses all over the country.

Besides the formal education, there are provisions of non-formal education at primary, lower secondary and secondary level education with policy and planning frameworks for reaching all the unreached. Out of school adolescents, youths and adults who could not attend primary school due to various reasons join the Out-of-school programme (OSP). There are also provisions for open school programmes for those who could not join regular hour schools and School Out-Reach Programme for those who do not have access to regular schools. Various forms of adult education programmes, such as basic and functional adult literacy and open school programmes are organised by Non Formal Education Centre (NFEC) with provision of equivalency to school education up to secondary level (grade 1-10). Grasping the responsibility of the slogan "Education for All" (EFA) inside the Country Context since 2000, The World Conference on Education for All (Justine, Thailand, March 5-9, 1990) put great stimulus on the advancement of instruction in the nation. The current pattern of instructive advancement in Nepal concerning essential/fundamental training is continuation of the long term campaign for EFA. In the World Education Forum on EFA (Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April, 2000), Nepal received the Dakar Framework for Action (DFA) for Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments. The DFA included six significant EFA objectives alongside twelve systems to accomplish completely by 2015. It is appropriate to make reference that Nepal added a seventh objective to address the goal of guaranteeing the privilege of indigenous individuals and etymological minorities through primary language. As called attention to over, the DFA concentrated on aggregate duties, broadly just as universally, to guarantee that no nation must be abandoned of getting quality education. Furthermore, The School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) started from 2009, aims to strengthen equity in the education sector. For this, there is a need for developing a broader framework of equity and inclusion in the education. In order to 'participate equally' and 'attain equitable results' all children should have equitable access to education, equitable participation in education, leading to equitable attainments.

To implement these commitments, the government of Nepal has a provision of delivering Gumba, Vihar, Madrasa and Gurukul formal education. They have been implementing the formal education programs in two ways; on their own and government initiatives. Recently, the government's attention has gone towards the education systems of these religious institutions. Considering the relevance of the monastic and formal education to achieving the goals of EFA, the government made a decision to bring this education to mainstream education. Under the decision facilities to be provided to the religious institutions for the development of formal education is included.

### Religious Schools

Religion is a system of beliefs, values and norms. Language is saturated with similes and metaphors, moral stories, literary references to scriptures, religious epics and shared history. Education provides learners not only with facts and factual knowledge, but with beliefs, values and norms held by the teachers and inserted in the language of instruction, teaching

and learning materials. In Nepal, the Interim Constitution, 2007 has declared a secular state and treating all citizens equally. According to the constitution of Nepal, citizens of religious belief can establish their own schools that enable their children with beliefs, values and cultural norms. Such types of schools are mainly Gurukul, Vihar/Gumba and Madrasa in count according to the population of Nepal.

### Schools in the Lens of Government and It's Effort

The government has executed a few change programs for guaranteeing childrens' admittance to instruction. To accomplish this target, the administration looks for the assistance of the non-government sectors. There is a claim that a portion of the religious schools offer education to the offspring of religious networks however some are not included in the statistical data of the government. There is additionally the contention that the attempts of these establishments must be perceived by the state. The Department of Education (DOE) has just begun mainstreaming the instruction gave by the religious organizations, which is taken as a piece of instructive change. There have been a few attempts to standard the instruction gave by such religious schools. The Curriculum Development Centre has been developing educational plans for offspring of religious schools, which are founded on the public educational program structure.

### Critical Analysis

The decision by the government to mainstream the education provided in the religious institutions is praiseworthy. The government has made a decision to waive the registration fee charged for the conducting primary level education in the religious institutions. This decision has encouraged the religious institutions, especially Madrasas, for registration. But some religious institutions are unaware of such decision. Many religious institutions are conducting formal classes starting from the lower secondary level. Such is the case of Vihar and Gurukul. But Uday Vihar has been taking admission of students from 1st grade to 10th grade. As Vihars themselves have been providing hostel facility, feeding facility, uniform dress facility and other facilities, there is no meaning of waving the registration fee for them in such institutions. This has affected the governments' policy of mainstreaming education.

### Study of International Buddha Pariyati Uday Vihar

There are two principal schools of Buddhism: southern known as Thervada School and northern known as Mahayan. Both the schools aim to work for peace, happiness, social and harmony in human society. Uday Vihar was established in Tiltotama-4 Dingarnagar to provide Pariyati education (Buddhist education in Theravada) and academic education for Shrawaners and Anagarikas. It is being run under the policy of "All Nepal Vikshu Mahasangha". It was established on 3 March, 2003 under the active leadership of Saddhammajotikadhaja Bhadanta Mahaasthagir Vikshu Jatil who came from Burma. Land for the Vihar was donated by a devoted local community on the leadership of Surje Lal Gurung and Dev Prasad Gurung and local government as a Bhogadhikar and has a property 2-1-0 (Two Bigaha and one Kaththa covered) without Red Book (Lal Purja). By Impression of the Vihar's activities, Dammar Bahadur Suryabamsi of Tiltotama-3 and Sher Bahadur Tarami Magar of Butwal-12 Tamnagar contributed donation to purchase 0-4-10 (four kaththa ten dhur) nad now in total it has 2-5-1

(Two bigaha 1 kaththa one dhur) land in area for strengthening Theravada Buddhist Education and meditation practices and in the expectation that the Vihars would eventually develop into a center for Buddhist studies and researches. Countries like Thailand, Burma and Shrilanka have contributed to produce human resources for upgrading and propagating Theravad Buddhism.

The present study was focused on Vihar's Buddhist Education and mathematics achievement of students. Buddhist and formal educations, grades 1 to 10, are provided for Shrawaners. Shrawaners are children who have come from the different parts of the country. The formal education part completely follows the government curriculum in public and boarding schools since this Vihar has not yet been recognized by the government. Shrawaners have the facility for acquiring academic courses in three schools: Butwal Public School, Sidhhartha Boarding School and Janajyoti Secondary School near Vihar. The Vihar provides an extra English language course for Shrawanes which is taught by Vikhus of Vihar if possible by foreign volunteers. Knowledge of English is necessary for Shrawanes who want to go abroad (Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka) for further education. Some products of this school study in Nepali Universities to get higher education. The Vihar mainly conducts Pariyati education and extra-curricular activities related to this education.

#### Activities of the Vihar

The researcher collected information on the various activities of the Vihar including education. The information was collected through interviews with monks (Bhikshus), Shrawanes, Anagarikas, Guru Aama, Guru and the Vihar management committee. Under the religious education the Pariyati education and Pali education (Theravada Shikshya and Palhi language) were provided for Shrawanes and Anagarikas in addition to Prabrajya. Under the Pariyati education leading up to grade 3 Prarambhik Sikshya, up to grade 6 Prabesh Sikshya, 7th grade Sadhammapalaka and for 8,9,10th grade Kobid could be received. The Vihar is also the contacting centre for Nepal Boudha Pariyati Education. So far, according to the published Bulletin 'Pariyati' up to 2014, a total of 43 students have passed the Pariyati education (different levels), 2 Vikhsushad passed Kovid level from this Vihar. As being the centre of examination of Pariyati education, other 3 students from Rudrapur, Dipnagar and Padmachaitya Vihar of Butwal were passed out from this centre. In the same way every year students are passing out Pariyati examination in the ratio of 30-40. Moreover, the Vihar is also providing special classes on Pali grammar and JatakPali. There is a meditation camp inside the Vihar. The chief monk had conducted a short tem (10/15/30 days) and long term of two month's mediation retreat for Buddhist devotees. The Bhikshus and Shrawaners are sent to villages and towns to teach Pariyati to interested people. The activities of Vihar have also helped the community by making resource materials such as books, encyclopedias and dictionaries available in the library for the monks and for those who have interest in Buddhism. Publication of a bulletin and Smarika are another activities of the Vihar.

Chairperson of Uday Vihar stated that every year new Shrawaners from different parts of Nepal come to the Vihar for Buddhist and formal education. The Shrawaners are of different ethnicities. The Vihar makes no discrimination in

terms of caste and economic status. Children from poor status can get high priority to enrol in Shikshalaya. At present, there are Shrawaners from different districts of Nepal such as Dolpa, Sindhuli, Pyuthan, Lalitpur, Palpa, Sindhupalchok, Palpa, Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Kapilvastu, Arghakhanchi and Dang. Popularization of Buddhism is also a major activity of the Vihar. FGD participants told that Pariyati education is very essential for Shrawaners as well as for other students because it teaches moral education. They therefore suggested that the government should develop a Pariyati curriculum and implement it in the schools so that people could be motivated to study Buddhism.

#### Educational System

There are two types of courses (religious and formal education) for Shrawaners. Under the religious course the Pariyati curriculum is followed which is developed by All Nepal Vikshu Mahasangha. The formal course is taught from grade 1-10 in schools that is approved by Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) Nepal. Pariyati Curriculum and Pariyati education was formally started in 1962 in Nepal to provide knowledge of Buddhist religion, culture, history and philosophy. Initially, the Pariyati curriculum was developed for grades 1-3. Now curricula have been developed for higher grades. The curriculum is organized in a systematic way in terms of subjects, papers, grades, full mark, and teaching hour and soon. The content of the Pariyati curriculum course, Pariyati Prarambhik (for the first year) is equivalent to grade 1 course. It is the first paper with 100 fullmarks and requiring 40 hours of teaching. Similarly Prabesh Shikshya is equivalent to 6th grade, Sadhamma Palaka is equivalent to 7 and Kovid is equivalent to 10. In a question to Bhante who have passed the level of Kovid told that it took about 17/18 years to pass Kovid. This means it is not equivalent to SEE exactly. Their claim to the government of Nepal that government should provide equivalency of Kovid for Bachlor level. The course of Pariyati education has the formal class standard. There is also an examination system. The students have to take written answers as well as oral examination. Students have to pass previous courses to qualify for the higher level. For example, a student must be in grade 5 in order to appear in Pariyati Prabesh Shikshya examination of the second year. At the end of Kobid final year, the students have to perform a 10-day long meditation in the Bipashyana-Bhawana Shivira (meditation camp). The Vihar conducts alms begging every full moon day. The monks of the Vihar said that Vihar sustains on alms and donations from other foreign countries. Request is made for donation to devotees and interested people in foreign countries. The Vihar board members expressed the views that the Viharis self-sustained and so conducts educational program and provides hostel and food facilities to its students. The school provides residential facility to the students who come from inside and outside the Tilotama.

#### Discipline in Vihar

The Shrawaners have to remain in strict discipline. The Vihar has its own norms and culture. The students who meticulously follow the rules and disciplines of Vihars for the Prabajya program and are given Chibar Vastra for Shrawaners' religion uniform of yellow or maroon or brown colour and white and purple colored Chivar for girls and women (Anagarikas). In an interview with Bhante, students of Vihar use Arun Bhojan in the early morning after dawn and take lunch (Diwa Bhojan) before noon (12 o'clock) but

there is a strict rule to them not to take lunch in the evening. Furthermore, about three months (Jun/July-September/October) of every year, there is a strict rule for students. They are not allowed to go far from Vihar. This type of system is called varsha vash. All the vikshus and students requests to other Grihasthis that they should visit and remain their Vihar at least for ten days. It was known through FGD that the students unable to follow the rules are sent back to their homes (Grihasti).

### Formal Education

Pariyati Uday Vihar has been providing formal education to the students as tutoring classes along with Pariyati education from grade 1 to 10 for Shrawanes. But there are no teachers available in Vihars to teach all subjects. The medium of instruction in formal education are Nepali and English. Special English was taught grades 7-10. The FGD participants (Shrawaners) said that they did not feel overloaded in doing the formal and Buddhist courses side by side. They were motivated to learn English because if they had English language proficiency then they could get chances to study advanced Buddhist education courses abroad. There were 25 students studying in various grades (1-10). The number of students cannot be predicted. The number of students in each grade was very low. While talking about the less number of students in different grades, the management committee members of the Vihar said that it is not that there should be equal number of children in school and Vihar. So, the government system of certain number of children required for a particular grade is not possible in Vihar. The daily routine was planned on the Vihar's convenience. The supervisor said that the Vihar had its own regular activities, which should not be disturbed by other external factors. He also talked about Vihar's autonomy in designing the program. The management committee of the Vihar felt the need of government recognition of the school for 1 up to grade 10. If the government recognition was obtained, Vihar would not send students to other schools. The problem of sending students to other school is to maintain the discipline and moral values of them because students are from diverse families and communities in public and private schools. The government must grant autonomy. They said that if the government initiatives disturb the religious aspect of the Vihar then they will not go for educational mainstreaming of the Vihar.

### Facilities

Different types of facilities were available in the Vihar: extra-curricular activities, good physical facility, scholarships and opportunities for going abroad.

### Physical facilities

The Vihar had two RCC buildings and the classrooms were good. One of the building is called Simagriha which was built for educating purpose and taking oaths (Upasad) to Vikshus. At the period when the number of students getting large, this building is utilized as class rooms. Otherwise it is used for guest vikshus' resident home. There is another small building named Kuti which contains two rooms. This Kuti is utilized by senior Vikshyus of the Vihar. There is one kitchen and dining hall temporary building (not RCC). Municipality had supported to construct these building. There is another open hall which is also temporary where students use this building for prayer and extra class. The Vihar was all clean and peaceful. Vihar also provided food and hostel facilities to

its children. Three kitchen staffs were hired to prepare food for the children but they were volunteers. They are also called Upashak and Upashikas. Water supply was satisfactory. The Vihar took sick children to hospitals. The children got textbooks and educational materials free of cost. The Vihar also provided the uniform called Chibar to the students. The Shrawaners said that there were a lot of religious books available in their library. But the numbers of formal courses textbooks were limited. They felt the need of a separate library for formal course books. There was space for playing outdoor games in the Vihar. So they played indoor and outdoor games both. Their chibars were of different colours. It was so because different countries had donated them. It means that different Buddhist countries contributed in providing Chibar for the students.

### Scholarship and Awards

The Vihar provides scholarships and awards as incentives for Shrawaners (Pravrajita Shrawanes) and Anagaikas (nuns) who pass the SEE examination, get distinction in Pariyati and perform well in extra-curricular activities. In an interview a Bhikshu said that there were many scholarships established in the Vihar by national and international sponsors. Scholarships were provided for individual students of grades 1 to 10 and of higher education in Buddhist studies. The sponsors were from Myanmar, Shrilanka and Thailand. Some Nepalese also supported the children of the Vihar indifferent ways. Extra-curricular activities and study visits Extra-curricular activities were conducted to develop personality and talent. Moreover, students were sent to many religious places and educational sites such as Vihar, Gumbas, national museum and historical sites. The students regarded extra-curricular activities and study visits as very important for their leadership development. Extra activities such as quiz contest, extempore storytelling, and sanitation were conducted. Such activities would make them competent globally. In an answer to the question of Principal of school said that they are very talent in oratory competition in school.

### Study abroad

The Vihar had link with educational institutions in foreign countries. Some of the Shrawaners were in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Burma to study Buddhism. Shrawaners would be Bhikshus after the age of 20. According to the Senior Bhikshus, students go to foreign countries (e.g. Thailand and Myanmar) for 10-12 years for higher education in Buddhism then come back to the Vihar.

### Management of the Vihar

Various committees were formed at the beginning of establishment for the smooth operation of the Vihar. The main committees were two at the starting period: Central Committee of International Buddha Pariyati Uday Vihar and District Committee. But now, there is only one committee that is central committee composed by is composed of 11 members including three women as members. Scholars of Buddhist studies supervise the activities of the Pariyati Uday Vihar.

### Human Resources

Six Bhikkhus and eight Anagarikas are working full time in the Vihar. There is no special provision of selecting teachers for religious and formal tutoring classes in Vihar. They are selected on the basis of qualification and seniority basis.

Overall activities including religious and formal education are supervised by central committee. There is no provision of paying for teachers.

### Financial Resources

The Vihar depends largely on the kindness and charity of the donors and devotees for expenses. It is sustained on donations by local people and international donors and on educational sponsorships by foreigners. There is fixed bank deposit made on donation by devotees within and outside the country (especially Burma). Some of the devotees help the Vihar with medicines and stationery for the students. Some of the students are provided educational support by individual sponsors for school and higher education in Nepal and abroad.

### Local Participation in Vihar Management

The Vihar is able to fulfil its noble goals with the active participation of the devotees (Upasaks and Upashikas) in the community. In an interview with the Bhikshu of Vihar said that the community is contributing in several ways; for instance, by providing sponsorships, stationery, books, furniture, medical equipment and other materials, and freships for the students. There are also monthly donors who provide food and educational materials for the students in the Vihar. Funds for compounding and dining hall construction was helped by Tiltottama municipality. National and international donors have also made fixed deposits in banks for the Vihar.

### Autonomy and Decentralization

In the Vihar only Pravrajita (convened) student are studying. The children had renounced their worldly life. In a discussion organized with the management committee members the issue of Vihar's autonomy was raised. People said that the Vihar has its own norms, values, philosophy and culture. So the Vihar has provided more subjects related to Buddhism. They stressed the need of more Buddhist courses. They demanded autonomy to develop religious courses and in certification awards (DharmaUpadhi). Students must get the opportunity for further education in Buddhism. Regarding the decentralization, they said the government should not interfere with the management activities of the Vihar. Now, this Vihar has provided affiliation to operate another Vihar in the same name of International Buddha Pariyati Uday Vihar in Pokhara.

### Expectation of government support for mainstreaming education

There is need of government support for the mainstreaming of education provided in Vihars. Vihars expect formal education for their monks not in the school but in the Vihar because the devotees come to Vihar to offer foods for the Shrawaners and Bhikshus. If they go to the public school, then they will not have to offer foods. Students may not be able to maintain discipline in the school as strongly as the Vihar. They think that the environments of Vihar and the school are very different. Vihar environments cannot be created in the school. The Vihar felt the need of more religious subjects to be taught. The people of Vihar expects that the religious course be recognized as a formal course equivalent to SEE level with only a few subjects of the government course and that be provided by the government. The government should not interfere in religion and must ensure its security. The Vihar expects material support and

laboratory equipment from the government. The FGD participants expressed the opinion that Theravada Buddhism should be included as an optional or extra subject in the school curriculum. There is a lot of literature in Theravada in Nepal. The Vihar also desire to have the authority to select and appoint teacher for the Vihar. Teacher appointment by the government may not match religion and philosophy.

### Contribution of the Vihar

Buddhist education aims at mental and social character development of the students. It produces competent Buddhist monks and nuns as human resources for strengthening Theravada Buddhism in Nepal. The Vihar provides Pariyati education leading to Saddhamma Palaka/Kovid level. It also conducts research and publishes bulletins and journals. Moreover, it organizes regular meditation programs for students, residents of the Vihar and interested people outside it. Field visits and meditation camps are also parts of the activity.

### Possibilities and Challenges in Mobilizing Vihar for Mainstreaming

Since the Vihar is conducting different programs in its own initiative and expenses there is no such difficulty in mainstreaming its formal education. But the study also showed that although the Vihar is conducting formal courses in other institutions for its followers there are no such challenges in bringing it to the mainstream education. The Vihar already has an infrastructure and physical facilities, there will be no problem in the mainstreaming of the formal education provided in this Vihar. Monitoring and supervision are done by the central committee. The government should recognize the education system of the Vihar. In this connection, consultation with the Buddhist scholars could be made. The government should approve such curriculum. If flexible policy regarding certification could be introduced then such education system in Vihar can materialize. The government should provide certificate of both the government and religious courses. There should be a religious course introduced as an optional subject in school so that children interested in particular religion can acquire knowledge on the subject that they are interested. The study shows that all aspects of management of the Vihar are taken care of by the Vihar itself. So the problems of human resources finance should be managed by government after the mainstreaming. But the Vihar may have to face the some challenges: The Vihar will have to follow all the government courses. Since the Vihar is a religious institution it should focus more on Buddhist education than on formal education. So the management committee members were of the view that more weightage should be given to the Buddhist education course (40% for the government course and 60% for the Buddhist education course). According to the government rules and regulations the teacher-student ratio should be 1:30. If the Vihar is mainstreamed, it will have to face a problem in Vihar because it has a limited number of students. Vihar can adopt government rules and regulations but not at the cost of its cultural values and norms.

### Mathematical Performance of Students

The main objective of exploring mathematics performance of Vihar students by the researcher is whether the mind-set by religious environment makes disturb in acquiring scientific knowledge of mathematics or the heavy routine of Vihar and

the heavy homework of schools make disturbance for sufficient time affording for mathematics. Although, Buddhism is “also extremely empirical in its approach, suggesting that followers try the experiment of dharma for themselves to see if it improves their inner freedom, adding: “Because the philosophy of Buddhism takes this pragmatic approach favouring education and experiment, Buddhism has little to no formal disagreement with science (as evidenced by the Dalai Lama’s ongoing collaboration with neuroscientists).”

To explore the performance of students in mathematics, I asked students and teachers (Vikshus and Shrawaners). In what extent religious Pariyati education hampers to the achievement of mathematics? Answering this question, the chairperson of central committee asserts;

This is genuine question to me. I also was failed once in SEE examination in mathematics subject. We people, followers of Buddha dharma, are mostly concentrate on religious education rather than formal education. When we take Prabrajya, the main concentration is how fast we take the qualification of Kovid. Moreover, there are some opportunities of getting scholarship to study foreign countries. To get scholarship, Shrawaners have to do hard labour in Pariyati education. If Shrawaners get chance to study in foreign countries, obviously there is a disturbance of their formal education. So most of the students of Vihar are weak in science and mathematics.

A Vikshyu who was taking tutorial class was asked same question and his opinion was;

I have an experience of studying different schools when I was admitted in this Vihar. Some public schools do not take admission for the students of Vihar. I changed four schools during SEE. In different schools, the teaching styles and pedagogies were different for teaching mathematics. So, the different pedagogical styles disturbed me to secure good performance in mathematics, although I secure grade A. In mathematics, I secure only B+. Furthermore, my formal education was disturbed when I was sent to Burma to study in scholarship. My success of SEE by securing A level goes to the credit of Vishwa Shanti Vihar of Baneshwar because there are qualified teachers. In my opinion, it hampers more or less in mathematics achievement.

I asked same question to four students of Vihar. The theme of their answer was as follows;

We most of the students are from backward and rural societies and poor family background. Before the time of admitting Vihar, we were admitted in local village schools of remote areas like Dolpa, Sindhupalchok etc. There were also not qualified teachers to teach mathematics. Although, we are studying rural schools, the problem we have to understand the English language in boarding schools. In the comparison of average students of public school in mathematics performance, we feel poor than them. So, extra class is necessary for us but in this Vihar, there are no such qualified teachers majoring mathematics. If the Vihar

get recognition, government will arrange such types of teachers.

I got a chance of observing the tutorial class for the students of 6, 7, and 8 mixed together. The teacher was teaching simplification of arithmetic to them. The problem was simple to calculate but students had a problem in fraction. They had no conceptual knowledge of division rule of fraction although it is taught in 5th grade. After the class, the mathematics teacher came with me and told that although they had a routine of getting up early in the morning at 4 o'clock and sit in meditation for one hour, students of this age would not have any concentration. So I used to order them only for 45 minutes to sit in meditation. If the students get time, they engage in sports and game. All the senior Vikshus and Shrawaners coach them frequently, it is difficult to control them up to the age of 14/15.

### Conclusion

There are some considerations for the importance of religious education. Religion has been a determining factor in history and in our cultural heritage. Major decisions have been made in light of religious teachings. While it is true that at times religions have been responsible for conflicts in the world it is also true that they have served to bring about resolutions, peace, and social justice. Our students need to be aware of the role religion has played historically. An effective religious education program will enable the student to understand and appreciate the relationship between religion and history. Religion is also a large contributing factor in current national and international events. By coming to a realization of the importance of religion in these events the student will better understand some of the underlying causes and complexities. So, the consideration of such religious schools are necessary at first. To accomplish these types of goals, International Buddha Pariyati Uday Vihar is conducting programs and activities related to religion as well as formal classes as tutorials. It has adopted the government curriculum in tutorial classes but there are no qualified teachers except two or three subjects to teach formal government curriculum although there are qualified Vikshus, Shrawaners and Bhante to teach Pariyati education well. The main problems found in this Vihar were financial problem. So, Vihar wants government recognition to this institute and expect the regular support. Without the government support, one cannot say the sustainability of this institute. The negotiation is necessary between the government and Vikshu association to bring the Vihar in education mainstream such that government should show flexibility on determining the number of students and determine curriculum. The Vihar will not be ready to adopt the government curriculum if things endanger its religious pulse. Government must admire the religious Buddha community for the contribution of preparing infrastructure by public level without the significant government support. To fulfil the EFA goal and for addressing the human right, religious schools must be sustained. If this is done, nation can preserve its own religion, ethics, norms and values for a long period. Another academic aspect in mathematics performance in Vihar found poor. The cause of students in mathematics being poor are instability of schools, pedagogical differences of mathematics teachers, lack of subject teachers in Vihar to teach mathematics as tutorial class, more concentration on Pariyati education and ambition of scholarship to study abroad.

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