

BUDDHISTS WHISPER DOWN THE LANE

A BURMESE NOVEL AND A NEPALESE NUN LOST
AND FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Christoph Emmrich,
University of Toronto

This talk follows the cascading series of translations into three languages, over a period of half a century, from 1963 to 2016, of the story, told by a leading Burmese poet, historian, and monastic manager, about a feisty Newar Buddhist adolescent girl child prodigy from a wealthy Nepalese family who joined a troupe of Assamese elephant hunters to cross the Indian northeast and reach a nunnery in a sleepy town on the opposite shore of the Bay of Bengal, aiming to learn about the meaning of nirvana. Join the speaker in trying to solve not just the puzzle of nirvana, but also to answer those questions posed by the iterations of a life story which, as it crosses the boundaries of genders, languages, regimes, and nation states, the protagonist tries repeatedly and in multifarious ways to re-appropriate as her own.

Christoph Emmrich is Associate Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of Toronto. With a background in the study of the Buddhist Theravada and the Śvetāmbara and Digambara doctrines of time, he works on Hindu and Buddhist Newar rites, texts, and material things involving poets, priests, girl children, translators, print pioneers, and shopkeepers in the Kathmandu Valley and does some of the same in Burma and Tamil Nadu. His next book, forthcoming with Brill, is Writing Rites for Newar Girls: Marriage and Menarche according to Kathmandu Valley Manuals.

MARCH 7, 2024, 4–5:30PM

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING, RM 3041

CO-SPONSORED BY THE 84000 BUDDHIST TEXTS
TRANSLATION INITIATIVE, THE IHC SOUTH ASIAN RELIGIONS
AND CULTURES RESEARCH FOCUS GROUP, AND
TRANSLATION STUDIES

UC SANTA BARBARA