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Myths Visualized through Jatra and Cultural Performance in Satya Mohan Joshi's *Legend of  
Lalitpur and Related Tales*

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## Myths Visualized through Jatra and Cultural Performance in Satya Mohan Joshi's *Legends of Lalitpur and Related Tales*

### Abstract

*This thesis explores how the myth associated with Newari jatra and naach conveyed complex ideas, beliefs and cultural values. This study shows how mythical treasure is enacted in religious and cultural activities like jatras and naach of Newars. The Newars have provided continuity to their culture through staging myths. This is what the paper explored being based on Joshi's Legends of Lalitpur and Related Tales. Folklores and legendary tales have created social well-being with morals by illustrating the rise, turbulence and fall of evil based on archaeological treasures, literature, music, festivals or events that have a great impact on arts, culture and literature. By bringing old stories to life, Newari jatras bridge the gap between myth and communal life. Furthermore, this thesis examined that Newari jatra and naach are the living embodiments of myth that uphold the Newars' cultural identity and legacy. The Power of Myth by Joseph Campbell theorizes that myth can shape human life and activities, myth directly or indirectly has some role to play in the aspects of Newars life and society. According to the theory of Campbell, the visual representations of folklore in celebrations such as the Red Matchhendra Nath and Kartik Naach show the myths ongoing power. The paper examined how the Newars make sense of the inexplicable through the myth. Jatras and performances have become the foundation of Newars cultural identity and unity by providing a shared narrative and sense of belonging.*

**Keywords:** Folklore, Myth, Newari Culture, Performance, Jatra, Naach, Morality

Jatra is a visual representation of a Newari culture and myths associated with it. Jatra uses images, costumes, masks, music, figures and symbol to illustrate the visual representation of the myth, this visual representation subtly shows the cosmic and enormoussness of the myth and its importance to the tribe. These visuals have helped people

to understand the concepts with ease and embrace their spirituality, bringing out the energy to dive into the live enactment of mythical rituals. Newari jatras have become a powerful medium where Newari values, stories and tradition are staged which helps myths to come in life. The jatra of red Matchhendra Nath is one example of how jatra is a visual representation, this jatra has its root in a local folklore also a religious tales which are also comprised of morale and provides insights into Newars beliefs, traditions and social values. This shows that jatra and naach are performance art which involves processions, music, dance, and elaborate rituals. Red Matchhendra Nath's jatra is a festival of living myth that dramatizes ancient myth and folktales through folk music, chariot pulling, masks and cosmism in public processions that makes them accessible to all.

Newari folktales consist of gods and supernatural beings which explain human existence and the origins of the world. Newari folktales based on myth provide explanations for the unknown conveying religious and cultural beliefs. Though the primary purpose of myth and folktale may be different, they are similar in their functions and form which become the component of cultures narrative heritage. Newari jatra and performance are a visual representation of myth. They offer moral lessons such as bravery and loyalty and warn us about the consequences of the vices. This research focuses on how Newari jatra and cultural performance as folklore is the real-time act of myth which is composed of sacred religious narratives. The research tries to show the connection the jatra makes between the past and present. The study is focused on the Kartik Naach and Bhoto Jatra as narrated in Satya Mohan Joshi's *Legends of Lalitpur and Related Tales* and Lalitpur's Unique Heritage of Dance, Drama and Music and The Mysterious Jacket of Red Matchhendra Nath.

Red Matchhendra Nath jatra and other typical jatra's of Newar community are connected with mythological stories and beliefs, making them powerful visual representations of myths. The use of chariots, masks, dance and music, ballads, cosmic and

astrology accentuate ancient myths to life. Red Matchhendra Nath's chariot is sixty-foot-tall chariot pulled on the alleys of Patan. The religious folktale behind this huge celebration is, it is said that Red Matchhendra Nath ended 12 years long drought which was cursed upon the valley. Bringing this particular deity was not an easy task. However, people were successful and with the arrival of the deity, the long drought came to an end which shows deep mythological importance, symbolizing hope, relief and the power of divine intervention.

The study hypothesizes that jatra based on myth, which serves as living artifacts that preserve and transmit intangible cultural heritage, ensures the preservice of Newari traditions in the world of modernizations. The ancient folklore has guided modern life, through the visual enactment of myth in jatra and naach and brought social cohesion and a distinct identity of a community. The enactment of the myths through Newari jatra and naach highlights the enduring power of myth to shape cultural identity, spiritual values, and social behavior, demonstrating how myth continues to be relevant and influential in the lives of the Newar people. Likewise, the visual and performative aspects of Newari jatra and naach serve as a powerful medium to communicate and reinforce the spiritual, cultural, and historical narratives of Newari society, making myth an integral part of their living cultural tradition.

Myth is still alive through visual representation in Newari culture. Despite the modernity, Newars are still close to myth through the enactment. Jatra being relevant to the current context is connected with the cultural identity and the sublimity of the rituals myth. This myth is what one gets to see in their everyday rituals and everyday practice. The mythical practice has created social well-being with morals, illustrating the rise, turbulence and fall of evil. Even the everyday practice of myth is associated with shaping cultural framework providing moral guidance and teaching life lessons. Myths are illustrated in Newari folklore which incorporates elements of the myth into the lives of ordinary people and visually circulated and preserved through jatra and naach by performing in the religious

and cultural activities which still resonate across the generations. The Jatra and naach show the historical and cultural significance of it by reflecting the aesthetic and beauty of the festival in depicting folklore.

The book "Legends of Lalitpur and Related Tales" by Satya Mohan Joshi is a noteworthy work that includes stories about the city of Lalitpur's rich mythology and history. Joshi's work is crucial to comprehending how Lalitpur's myth, folklore, culture, and history are intertwined. His tales have helped to preserve old traditions and highlight how myth still shapes the city's religious and cultural customs today. This book captures the mythical, cultural, and historical spirit of Lalitpur. Myth, folklore, and history are all mixed in this book and presented in the charming way of the stories. In addition to being a compilation of tales, Joshi's book examines how myth, folklore, and culture are communicated through jatra, celebration and naach in the Newar community of the Patan.

This book is crucial to comprehending how Lalitpur is a living heritage site rather than only a historical artifact because myth and truth coexist there. A guide into the spiritual and mythological landscape of Lalitpur, this book is an important addition to Nepali folklore and cultural studies. Joshi's in-depth investigation and narrative vividly depict the rich legacy of the Newar community, providing insightful information for academics, historians, and anybody else curious about Nepal's cultural past. This book is an attempt to record and codify the myths that were previously only known orally. By doing this, Joshi contributed to the preservation of the Newari people's cultural legacy, guaranteeing that upcoming generations could stay connected to their past. The goal of Joshi's work was to bring Lalitpur's unique myths back to life and explain how the city's religious festivals, gods, and tales were essential to its cultural identity.

Understanding that oral traditions and myths are equally as crucial to a culture's preservation as physical monuments, Joshi sought to preserve Lalitpur's mythical and

spiritual heritage. The perception and study of Nepali culture, especially Newari culture, have been profoundly influenced by this work. His work acts as a teaching resource for both the general audience and academics, in addition to preserving the myths of Lalitpur. This book honors the city's rich history in both a scholarly and personal way.

The book starts with the story of social celebrations Joshi starts with an emphasis on the fact that a common possession of all beings is a mother. The deceased person has spiritual importance in Nepalese society, on the new moon of the month Baisakh Mother's Day is celebrated it is believed that one can see their dead mother's face on the pond of Mata Tirtha near Kathmandu on this day. In the same chapter, Joshi also gives a picture of the Holi festival and the story behind its celebrations. Moving on he talks about the founding myth of Lalitpur. This myth is significant as it links the city's origin to divine intervention and positions Lalitpur as a sacred space, blessed by gods and the origin of rich and diverse traditions in Patan. Joshi's book presents:

Oh king the spring shown to you by the farmer is most sacred one. Its name is 'Gaurikund' it is called after Gauri, the consort of Lord Shiva. When you visit the forest next time you will find there one Shiva Linga (a phallic idol) of Serveswor (The Almighty Shiva). I advise you to clear the forest and build a beautiful town. Then the town should also be your new abode. (8)

This shows how inhabitations in Lalitpur first started and eventually became cultural place. The god coming in a dream of a King, the conversation of a farmer with a King all reflect the spirituality of the people This story intricately weaves together the history, mythology and cultural practices of the Newar community in Lalitpur.

Lalitpur's intangible cultural heritage is an exemplary heritage where the myth and jatras unique connectivity is observed all year round in a daily basis. It is believed that the city was established by King Varadeva in ancient times. Various legends are linked to its

founding, with gods and goddesses playing central roles. Moving on Joshi explores the important religious and historical shrines and palace of Patan which has become an important cultural hub and is the center of Newar art and culture renowned for its architectural marvels, craftsmanship, and religious institutions. Moving on there is a local folklore related to the mystical golden bird believed to bring prosperity and well-being to the people of Lalitpur.

Joshi's text consists of tales and illustrations of Lalitpur regarding the cultural activities, beliefs and traditions. Joshi in the book emphasizes that though different nationalities have different religions and folk beliefs and observe their celebration in their way, he emphasizes that there is a common origin of cultural aspects among mankind. The legends and tales give us interesting theories about them and ask for explanations upon which he gives examples of celebrating motherhood in all countries. Joshi asserts, "Legends says the custom of holding a festival in honor of motherhood is very old. The ancient Greeks used to worship Cybele, the mother of gods, and honor her with the rites in woods and caves. The custom was introduced from Greece to the western world, and from there to New World" (3). This shows the blend of mythology into the everyday rituals all around the world and brings out the shared spiritual heritage inherently.

The book is comprised of many such legends, myths and folktales which provide a window into the spiritual and mythological landscape of Lalitpur. The collections are significant because they show how mythology continues to shape the Newar community's cultural and spiritual life. The mythologies woven throughout these tales offer a framework for comprehending the festivals and customs that are essential to Newar identities, such as Kartik naach and the Red Matchhendra Nath Jatra.

The festival and performances of Newars have a very detailed and interesting history of its originality, modification and influence as time went on. This study investigated how

Newari culture has incorporated traditional Matchhendra Nath and Kartik naach folklore into their theatrical productions and Jatra festivities. The book depicts:

So the dance drama of Lord Krishna has many brilliant facets, each sublime in its own way and unfolding many colourful episodes in dance drama and music from the holy scriptures Haribamsha, Sukhasagar and Bhagabhat. Of the utmost importance are various episodes related to mythology, social obligations and customs that are considered inseparable from religion. (84)

The primeval people did not have the access to outer world and technology this is why they depicted their cultural, spiritual and religious significance through the medium of folktales and Newars chose to enact them. Nevertheless, these cultural activities have created social well-being. Satya Mohan Joshi's *Legends of Lalitpur and Related Tales* is comprised of varieties of tales. These cultural practices have proliferated in such a way that they indeed do have their own songs, verse, dance and dramatic orientation systematically. These activities make the folktales even more buoyant and extravaganza. This study renders how the Newari folktales have been preserved in form of their annual culture-religious practices and helped in thriving Folk literature.

Joshi's text contains folklore legends and tales that are prominent in Newari cultures. It contains typical legends related to folk culture and related tales. The particular text "The Mysterious Jacket of Red Matchhendra Nath" foregrounds the patron deity of the valley which tells the long rambling legend about the origin and significance of the festival. The story is, "The legends of Gorakh Nath, Red Matchhendra Nath and Min Nath have become a legacy of folklore connecting many picturesque celebrations of Kathmandu valley. They remain even to-day as a most striking feature of Nepalese Legendary scene" (64). Joshi to highlight the importance of such legends composed a poem in the following manner. Joshi writes:

Such generous works  
 Brought many benefits to the people,  
 In prosperity and welfare, they flourished.  
 As the month of Baisakh came  
 People became more thoughtful  
 They worshiped their lineage deity. (62)

The Newars of Patan, Lalitpur have adopted their folklores in their festivals which has immortalized the myth. There were originally certain folktales and myths associated with gods and deities which are popular among the locals and as awareness flourished and influenced they went on to incorporate folktales in the form of festivals celebrations, dances, music, poems and verses. As of today, we can see this lively experience of folktale-based cultural activities.

Although myths and folklore have left a rich legacy, thorough academic studies that examine how these traditions are visually and performatively performed through Jatra and Naach are not adequate. There is also a lack of knowledge on the relevance and influence of these performances in the modern day because their significance in forming cultural identity and societal cohesion is frequently neglected. This paper explores how jatra and naach visually represent and preserve Newari myths and their social-cultural significance by examining the stories in *Legends of Lalitpur and related tales* to understand the role of myth in shaping Newar society's moral and ethical framework. By offering a thorough examination of the visual and performative elements of myth enactment in Newari culture, the study closes a gap in the literature and advances the scholarly conversation on cultural and performance studies.

Myth and folklore stimulate the understanding and appreciation of different cultures, promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity. This paper focuses on how the jatra of Newars is

the visual representation of myth and folklore. Cultural representation in folklore is dynamic, reflecting the diversity and complexities of human cultures worldwide. The folklore genre consists of folktales, myths, legends, songs and ballads, performances like sacrificial, voodoo, spiritual healings etc. Folklore is transmitted through word of mouth and through this orality we come to know about the history and background of a particular thing like the place, people and behavior. Regarding the issue of Folklore, multiple researchers reviewed their ideas in their way. Michalopoulos and Xue write:

This implies that images can be preserved even if the landscapes, climates, and social configurations change. Moreover, stories travel because of the interactions among members of different traditions. Eventually, the borrowed stories are integrated into the stock of indigenous folklore. These migration and cross-pollination processes suggest that the link between a society's landscape at the time of initial observation (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) and the geographic attributes mentioned in its oral tradition is not straightforward. Hence, tracing a group's contemporary ecology in its narratives will increase our confidence in using the motifs to learn about other unknown aspects of these societies. (10)

Folklore is a wide genre which is about oral literature about the culture and people which is performed for the spectators. It can be contextualized however people are searching for an autonomous identity. Critiquing Michalopoulos and Xue's remarks, Ben Amos writes "No matter how defined, its existence depends on its social context, which may be either a geographic, linguistic, ethnic, or occupational grouping" (4). As folklore is tales of people in association with nature, culture and beliefs it can be dependent and cover a wide range of cultural subject matter. At the same time, it may vary because of the multiple narrators.

Defining folklore is a tedious task as it covers a broader range of the artworks like arts, culture and literature. Folklore as a part of literature deals with religious people in

relation to their cultural beliefs. Folklore as a literary genre is performed or narrated by different kinds of cultural communities. In this regard, Ben Amos states:

Unlike written literature, music, and fine art, folklore forms and texts are performed repeatedly by different people on various occasions. The performance situation, in the final analysis, is the crucial context for the available text. The particular talent of the professional or lay artist, his mood at the moment of recitation, and the response of his audience may all affect the text of his tale or song. (4)

Folklore as an early genre of literature was widely popular all over the world. We can find different varieties of folklore in many Western countries, too. In Western and other developed countries there is a trend of adapting folklore in their mainstream literature and adapted which leads to the production of blockbuster movies which made it popular and circulated all over the world while Nepali folktale is preserved orally this is the reason it becoming infrequent. Sewa Bhattarai in *Comparison of persecution narratives in folktales of Nepal and Europe* compares the ways of pursuing the folktales principles. Bhattarai writes:

Several explanations are possible. First of all, in Nepal the folktales have not undergone the mass marketing found in the western world. Tales are usually transmitted orally, and there are few other means of learning the tales. Also, many western tales are edited to suit the tastes of younger people. As a result, Nepali folktales are less popular than Western tales. (17)

In this regard, through the adaption into the mainstream literature, people get to know about previously prevalent norms values and culture which functioned as information and knowledge disseminating processes. It is clearly seen that Newari folktales lack these things.

Folktales are intangible cultural heritages of Nepal. As already mentioned before, Newars have incorporated their folktales into performing arts but there are other types of folktales also. Pradhan states that folklore is further divided for their convenience. "In the

context of Nepal, folklore is largely understood as being divided into two overarching domains: (a) Oral Traditions and Performing Arts and (b) Customary and Material Folklore” (30). He further mentions “In general, oral traditions in Nepal are understood as expressions by word of mouth, such as phrases and idioms, recited poems, chanted hymns, recounted tales, ballads, epics, folk tales, riddles, proverbs and narrated myths and legends. All these, together with folk songs and folk dramas make up folk literature” (31). So folk literature is a wide genre which is made up of consisting all these small oral traditions which bricked in the building the realm of folk literature.

All the previous researchers are concerned with issues like the lack of proper understanding of the importance for the conservation of folklore and why folklore is on the verge of extinction, issues of folklore having no authentic source and documentation etc. However, there is still a massive gap in terms of exploration through folklore as visualization of myth analysis. Therefore, this paper explores the relevance of myth in contemporary Newari society by being based on Joshi’s text. The jatra and naach as cultural performances are still connected with mythical realities of folklore. Joshi’s text has symbols, episodes, visual text, cultural values, historical events, natural phenomena, rituals and tradition, human experience such mechanism connects the folklore with mythical realities. Myth has a profound influence on individuals and societies so, Joseph Campbell’s Power of Myth has been used in this research to show the importance of the visualization of the myth. Similarly, Hall’s representation will be used to analyze how the performances represent and reinforce Newari community identity. The study is limited to the cultural traditions of the Newar community in Lalitpur, with particular emphasis on Jatra and Naach. The study does not examine Newari cultural practices in general; instead, it concentrates on the visual and performative features of myth enactment.

The folktales popularity among the people was firstly been observed through word of mouth and then passed with the form of mouth words. The tales were either exaggerated or sometimes understated where the interest in politics is dominant. The festival based on myth and ancient folklore depicts the essence of myth and meaning-making out of it has not been lost even with lots of modification, interpretations and influences. *The Power of Myth* theorizes how the myth can shape human life and activities. Myth has some direct and indirect role to play in the aspects of human lives and society. People are an integral part of their culture. The reappearance of themes regarding rituals and oral tradition depict eternal, mystical and universal truths about mankind.

Myth and jatra are closely connected with a common purpose of storytelling and cultural representation. Jatra a popular form of folk theatre, often draws its themes and narratives from mythological stories, epics, and folklore. values, ethics and traditions. The enactment of mythological tales in jatra can be seen as a continuation of the sacred tradition, connecting the divine with everyday life. The other shared function of jatra and Myth are they serve as a medium to preserve and pass down cultural and religious heritage. Through generations, myths survive in living memory, often through artistic forms like jatra and naach that keep them alive and relevant to contemporary audiences. Jatra has become the channel to reflect the myth in such a way that incorporates ritualistic elements of the myth and people have accepted the myth in their everyday reality as cultural continuity.

Jatra and Myth are connected through the visual representation of the myth where jatra is the medium for an enactment of the myth. The interconnectedness of them reflects the spiritual, cultural, and social identity of the Newar people. Many jatras of the Newar like Rato Matchhendra Nath jatra, Indra jatra, and the Narashimha Dance of the Kartik Naach, etc trace its root to myth. These jatra performances have a foundation laid on a myth which explains their rituals, cultural significance, and mythical reasons for their purposes. For

example, the dance of Narashimha is the dance where lord Vishnu takes the avatar of Narashimha to victory over evil Hiranyakashyap. This particular dance enacts this religious myth, imparting the lesson of victory of good over evil. This particular myth is still relevant which reminds people of divine forces, and prevents oneself from hurting the weak. Through the dramatic processions, dances, and masked performances, the mythological stories have come to life. Jatra serves as a living embodiment of ancient myths. Through jatras, Newars continue to honor and relive the myths.

Myth is a framework which provides the guideline of a tradition which serves them from birth to death, for instance, from the very birth of an individual or even when it's in an embryo form many rituals and traditions. They are observed till the death and disposal of the body also have some mythology in myth-making. Certain traditions are guided and performed by pre-existing mythologies. Campbell and Moyers write:

Mythology teaches you what's behind literature and the arts, it teaches you about your own life. It's a great, exciting, life-nourishing subject. Mythology has a great deal to do with the stages of life, the initiation ceremonies as you move from childhood to adult responsibilities, from the unmarried state into the married state. All of those rituals are mythological rites. They have to do with your recognition of the new role that you're in, close the process of throwing off the old one and coming out in the new, and entering into a responsible profession. (19)

Myths function as an educator to the younger generation providing the guideline for existence and making sense of society, nature and culture. Campbell and Moyers point out the formation of society and culture. It is powered by the myth where he further states that there is a scarcity of myth in today's society and he has brought his example regarding the knowledge of power in myth-making. They reclaim, "This is why we have graffiti all over the city. These kids have their own gangs and their own initiations and their own morality,

and they're doing the best they can. But they're dangerous because their own laws are not those of the city. They have not been initiated into our society" (16). The power of theory in myth-making is a major approach that is applied in the text of Satya Mohan Joshi. The Jatra, dance and music portray eternal, mystical and universal truths in-depth on how the formation of society and culture is powered by myth and how still myth plays an important role in the dynamic society of the present.

Myth has given a direction to humans live and through the myth that has been existing and practiced on how the culture works. So, myth is the backbone of the culture; Myth makes sense of the Culture. The interview contends, "I think what we are looking for is a way of experiencing the world that will open to us the transcendent that informs it, and at the same time it forms ourselves within it. That is what people want. That is what the soul asks for" (49). The power of myth is to explore and emphasize the universal significance of myths and their role in shaping human culture, spirituality and the individuals journey through life. Campbell and Moyers argue that myths help to study different cultures around the world. It often shares common themes, symbols, and archetypes revealing a fundamental human need for storytelling and meaning-makings. *The Power of Myth* lies in the ability to serve as a timeless source of wisdom, inspiration and connection to human experiences. Myth has the enduring power to shape our beliefs, values, and understanding of the world. The interview consists, "They are true in different senses. Every mythology has to do with the wisdom of life as related to a specific culture at a specific time. It integrates the individual into his society and the society into the field of nature. It unites the field of nature with my nature. It's a harmonizing force" (52). *The Power of Myth* lies in its ability to convey complex ideas, beliefs and cultural values through storytelling.

Myths are not just ancient tales but they serve several important functions like explaining the unexplained phenomenon-mysteries of existence. They guide us in moral and

ethical guidance, cultural identity, transmission of knowledge, archetypes and universality. They give inspiration to creativity and psychological insight. Campbell and Moyers write:

These bits of information from ancient times, which have to do with the themes that have supported human life, built civilizations, and informed religions over the millennia, have to do with deep inner problems, inner mysteries, inner thresholds of passage, and if you don't know what the guide-signs are along the way, you have to work it out yourself. But once this subject catches you, there is such a feeling, from one or another of these traditions, of information of a deep, rich, life-vivifying sort that you don't want to give it up. (*The Power of Myth*, 11)

Campbell and Moyers take myths as a source for information collection in ancient times. Historical records also can be a part of myth-making and that supports the artworks and cultural history. Their views are now connected with the socio-cultural practices, performances and the myth makings. One can observe the cultural activities as a part of myth-making on the basis of the following figure.



Fig. 1. Photograph taken by this researcher in the time of *Jatra* in Patan.

The above picture, reflects the legacy of jattras and folklore continues even today with great enthusiasm and active participation of the youth. In the above picture we can see people climbing on the top of a sixty-foot tall chariot and remaining there during the process of pulling the chariot which is very prone to incidents and accidents. Nevertheless, people have been doing that. One can see thrill and passion in the people invested in that picture however free from the fear of death. This is what myth tends to do being close to death makes every breath count. Campbell and Moyers discuss, “I think that what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive” (12). Campbell and Moyers argue that due to the scarcity of myth, youngsters consider graffiti as a myth.

In the above given picture, we can see a massive and long tower-like chariot being pulled. This is the visual representation of the myth, agrarian Newar communities’ patron deity is Red Matchhendra Nath who showered rain upon its arrival putting an end to the misery of a very long drought. Since then every year the jatra of Red Matchhendra Nath has been performed to pay homage and ask for future prosperity. The summoning of Red Matchhendra Nath from Assam India and the journey here were filled with great challenges. The challenges of constructing and pulling such a giant tower chariot in narrow streets is a visual representation of the mythical challenge of bringing the rain to a valley. The pulling of a chariot is a symbolic representation of Matchhendra Nath travelling through the valley, bringing rain and fertility to the land. Chariot is the foremost visual element other visual elements incorporated in this jatra are the music, lyrical hymns, offerings and sacrifices which visually dramatize the myth of the rain gods journey.

The chariots as a visual element basically are about the symbolic movements of gods and their mythical journey. The mythical folklore had gods and figures moving in here and

there and the part of folklore with great religious significance is extracted as a performing art which shows the core reason for being celebrated as jatra in the chariot procession. Similarly, the masks and costumes used bring the myth to life, the masks consist of deities, demons and spirits. This visually represents the life, nature and character of the mask being worn. Masks is mere a mask but when worn as a part of jatra performance it is visual art where the story of the mask is presented through dance and music. The dance of Rudrayani of Khokana can be taken as one of the examples of how masks are visual elements.

For Campbell and Moyers, the power of myth lies in its ability to convey complex ideas, beliefs and cultural values through storytelling. The Mysterious Jacket of Red Matchhendra Nath is built around a core set of myths and stories. Their spirituality and belief systems are often shaped by myths. These myths have provided the foundation for religious beliefs, rituals and practices. Campbell and Moyers assert, “The ancient myths were designed to harmonize the mind and the body. The mind can ramble off in strange ways and want things that the body does not want. The myths and rites were means of putting the mind in accord with the body and the way of life in accord with the way that nature dictates” (65). The jatra of Red Matchhendra Nath is like a part of the popular culture. The folklore in everyday activity brings a subject of praise and glory whereas jatra is a yearly live broadcast of the folklore where people can see the things and listen to the stories. About the jatra performances and myth makings, Joshi writes, “This unique festival is celebrated continuously for two months (May and June) with religious enthusiasm, feasting and rejoicing but the most striking period is when the chariot is taken around the city” (39). Myths often serve as the foundation of a culture’s identity and unity. They provide a shared narrative and sense of belonging.

In multicultural societies, myths can help different groups of people to maintain their cultural identity. Myths often contain moral and ethical lessons. They can offer guidance on

how to live a good and meaningful life. Campbell and Moyers write, “I think mythology as the homeland of the muses, the inspirers of the art, the inspirers of poetry. To see life as a poem and yourself participating in poem is what myth does for you” (52). In today’s secular world, these lessons are sometimes found in literature, film, or popular stories. Political leaders and movement launchers often use myths and narratives to gain support and shape public opinion. These narratives can help to create a sense of purpose and legitimacy for a particular cause of ideology. People often use personal myths in life narratives to make sense of their own experiences. It helps to create a coherent sense of self. These personal myths help individuals to understand who they are and where they are headed. Natives and aborigines are getting the live depiction through their active participation in acquiring and imparting. Joshi asserts:

The performances of the Kati Pyakhan on the traditional pattern are based mostly on folk and classical forms. Under folk forms, the drama of the three Bathas (clever brothers) is worth a mention. The youngest Batha (Bathakija by name) of Lalitpur is the cleverest of the three. The two others (Gandaju and Samadaju respectively belonging to Kathmandu and Bhaktapur) are always cheated by him. Anyhow the three Bathas are very popular and attract much attention. As such their role in the variety show of the folk drama is of great significance. (82-83)

In this respect, myths can be used to comment on contemporary social and political issues. Writers and artists often use mythic elements to shed light on the human condition, societal problems, and the state of the world. Myths can be seen as metaphors for understanding complex concepts or experiences. Joshi mentions:

My countrymen sooner or later we all have to pass away from this world. So, why one should possess such a costly material in life? It simply created avarice and strife.

Rather let us donate this invaluable jacket to the almighty god Red Matchhendra Nath

and ask him to display it once a year to all the people of this valley as a concrete proof that he still possessed it” (43).

The line illustrates that myth and folktale play a crucial role in resolving the conflict in order to maintain peace and harmony in a community. In this sense myth not existed only for the hidden aspects but also for creating ethical parts for the welfare of social well-being. Joshi’s statement about the Bhoto logic is an inauguration of Bhoto jatra which is clearly mentioned in the following figure.



Fig. 2: Photos of Bhoto Jatra. *Nagarik News*. May 13, 2018s

This photo from *Nagarik News* shows Bhoto being displayed to the public. Bhoto acts as concrete proof that the Bhoto mentioned in the folktales is somehow real. In folktales, King Baradev commanded the serpent king, demon, farmer and people present on Jawlakhel (Place in Lalitpur) to come up with evidence to claim the bejeweled jacket until then remaining it with almighty Red Matchhendra Nath. From that day onward Bhoto is still shown to everyone by the important authoritative figure of the country.

In today’s highly interconnected and globalized world, the power of myth often takes on new forms and blends with contemporary culture. While traditional myths endure, they are

joined by modern narratives and evolving stories that reflect the changing values and beliefs of society. Myths, in all their forms, remain a powerful means of shaping and understanding the world around us. Campbell and Moyers say that the essence of myth-making has lost its beauty because those people who are merely adapting in the movies and popular culture do not experience the myth firsthand. They just focus on telling the myth but not preserving its authenticity. “Yes, but what is unfortunate for us is that a lot of the people who write these stories do not have the sense of their responsibility. These stories are making and breaking lives. But the movies are made simply to make money. The kind of responsibility that goes into a priesthood with a ritual is not there. That is one of our problems today” (76). However, Newar people have their jatra performances and cultural dances. Religious people give performances at festivals as the manifestation of the folklore which gives religious cultural and moral meaning to the things around them. Although as said above in the modern and contemporary world some modifications have been made as per the convenience of the cultural community however without losing original taste and significance.

The folklore of Matchhendra Nath suggests that myth arouses some hope for the lives of the cultural community. It was like crossing into an oasis in the desert. Rato Matchhendra Nath was hailed from India to bestow the rain by uplifting the curse, the curse led twelve-year-long drought. So the same deity is honored and worshipped even today with grandeur. Campbell and Moyers points, “People make sense from the myth, myth makes lives bearable. Young people just grab this stuff. The myths are metaphorical of spiritual potentiality in the human being, and the same powers that animate our life animate the life of the world” (28). Bhoto jatra and Kati Pyakha illuminate supreme power winning over evil and living grounded by out casting any earthly and materialistic possessions. During Jatra and Festivals, one goes through rigorous rituals that require one to sacrifice animal, cut down trees, detachment from the materialistic world and sometimes even live the life of a hermit. Myth

makings inspire the locals to pursue whatever is necessary. Further, they say, “These early myths help the psyche to participate without a sense of guilt or fright in the necessary act of life” (69). Myth plays a vital role in evoking the demons within us for survival.

Jatra and Katti Pyakhan have undoubtedly an enactment of myth through which myth has become immortal and got a shape. These rituals and traditions have been preserved from generation to generation. Campbell and Moyers explain, “A ritual is the enactment of a myth. By participating in a ritual, you are participating in a myth” (76). For this enactment of the myth active participation of every age group and gender can be seen; from the chariot construction to decorations to pulling the majestic chariot around the city with unity coordination and planning Campbell and Moyers pinpoints, “Myth must be kept alive. The people who can keep it alive are artists of one kind or another. The function of the artist is the mythologization of the environment and the world” (78). The myth and its essence are on the verge of the extinct in this modern world let alone the enactment so the one who is preserving and performing is like the artist of a kind. This kind of enactment is becoming rare and it’s surreal to be a part of this kind of mythic cultural presentation. Campbell and Moyers spoke, “With respect to ritual, it must be kept alive. So much of our ritual is dead. It’s extremely interesting to read of the primitive, elementary cultures -- how they transform the folk tales, the myths, all the time in terms of the circumstances (78). Newari culture is a lively example of cultural wealth and riches. Only a few have been able to preserve and practice their cultural significance in the same manner and enthusiasm as per the old tradition.

Campbell and Moyers argue differently about the structures of the cities and myth-makings. They claim that the cities were structured relating to the mythical stories. The buildings were designed and determined to cross the borders of myth-making. They write:

It takes me back to a time when these spiritual principles informed the society. You can tell what’s informing a society by what the tallest building is. When you approach

a medieval town, the cathedral is the tallest thing in the place. When you approach an eighteenth-century town, it is the political palace that's the tallest thing in the place. And when you approach a modern city, the tallest places are the office buildings, the centers of economic life" (86).

Kathmandu Valley is still well known for its popular culture and well-known heritage. We have many instances where people bet their whole career and family to participate in their cultures and festivals which shows how myth shapes up the identity.

Newari *jatra* celebration is not a matter of single-day celebration, it can take several months. Myth sometimes acts as the escapism from the mundane life. It gives you the thrill of staying alive. The risky process of pulling 60 feet chariot with only manpower is very challenging but facing the challenge and coming out alive is what gives them the sense of being alive. Campbell and Moyers write "Men sometimes confess they love war because it puts them in touch with the experience of being alive. In going to the office every day, you don't get that experience, but suddenly, in war, you are ripped back into being alive. Life is pain; life is suffering; and life is horror -- but, by God, you are alive" (100). Every individual who takes part in this myth enactment is artist. Meticulous training is done by the artist to perform for the festivals. Joshi writes, "The Kati Pyakhan, as it is enacted today, is the result of the strenuous efforts made by some senior dancers who are dedicated to the upliftment of the rich cultural heritage of Lalitpur" (85). The artist has truly become successful in preserving the ancient form of myth-telling through dance. Had they not understood the importance of these ancient rituals in the first place they would not be able to preserve to this date and also with the attention given to every detail. So the artist has more responsibility than seen only from the surficial level. Campbell and Moyers says, "It is the function of the artist to do this. The artist is the one who communicates the myth for today. But he has to be

an artist who understands mythology and humanity and isn't simply a sociologist with a program for you" (88). It is symbolically connected in the following photo.



Fig. 3. Photos of Narsimha: Kartik Naach. *The Himalayan Times*. Nov 29, 2020.

The above picture is taken from the Himalayan Times which shows the masked Narasimha avatar from Kartik Naach. The above picture shows the disguised Narasimha avatar of Lord Vishnu. In Hindu mythology, Vishnu took Narasimha's avatar to kill the evil demon Hiranyakashyap. So the Narasimha avatar is the fierce avatar. The play subtly teaches the win of a good over evil and nothing is superior to the almighty. There are various unexplained phenomena associated with this dance drama which are in a way spiritual potentiality of human life which is the power of a myth. Campbell says "Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life" (12). As most of the people from the valley were engaged in agricultural activities for their livelihood, the patron deity and myth are also associated with farming and production.

Folktales of Red Matchhendra Nath tell that Kathmandu valley was facing severe drought led by the curse so Red Matsendra Nath was hailed from Assam, India to uplift the curse. The drought severely affected agricultural production, with the coming of Matsendra Nath it rained after 12 years. So the Karunamaya is considered as the god of the rain, a

compassionate one. The chariot pulling and making takes more than two months. So, they conduct jatra on April and May before the planting season starts. It seems Newars carefully planned their celebration and festivals without hampering their work. Newars rejuvenate from the jatra and the month of paddy planting season begins so they get back to their work after the celebration. That is the beauty of the myth, bringing a sense of the world around us.

The pulling of a 60-foot chariot around the city is not like a piece of cake. There have been recorded many incidences. If any mishaps happen, it is unavoidable due to chaos even though many preventive and safety measures are observed. The construction of the chariot itself is a skill-oriented and tough job many rituals should be performed from the chariot-making persons to all the things necessary for the chariot because every small part has a detail meaning and significance. Local people believe that if rituals are not followed then something bad is expected to happen so prevent that all rituals are followed. One cannot tell the exact consequences but knows the outcome won't be pleasing. There is a force of mystery one cannot control and know fully what's the logic behind it. Regarding this Campbell and Moyers write, "Anyone who has had an experience of mystery knows that there is a dimension of the universe that is not that which is available to his senses" (176). There are certain rules regarding the conduct of festivals everything is calculated and waits for the auspicious time. The head priest plays an important role in this he will be given instructions to be observed. "The first instruction would be to follow the hints of the myth itself and of your guru, your teacher, who should know. It's like an athlete going to a coach. The coach tells him how to bring his own energies into play" (123). It is the linking of an individual to a larger morphological structure than that of his own physical body. And this idea of invisible support is connected with one's society, too. Society was there before you, it is there after you are gone, and you are a member of it. The myths that link you to your social group, the tribal myths, affirm that you are an organ of the larger organism. Society itself is an organ of

a larger organism, which is the landscape, the world in which the tribe moves. The main theme in ritual is as Campbell and Moyers write:

I think this sense of the presence of creation is a basic mood of man. But we live now in a city. It's all stone and rock, manufactured by human hands. It's a different kind of world to grow up in when you're out in the forest with the little chipmunks and the great owls. All these things are around you as presences, representing forces and powers and magical possibilities of life that are not yours and yet are all part of life, and that opens it out to you. Then you find it echoing in yourself, because you are nature. (83)

As said by Campbell and Moyers, the cultural representation of Stuart Hall emphasizes the dynamic and context-dependent nature of meaning-making. The active role of the audiences in interpretation, and the importance of critically analyzing how identity, power and ideology are constructed and circulated through media function on popular culture. Folklore has some other influences during its circulation. As folklore is passed from mouth to ear we can assume that it got some modification, fabrication and twist as per their convenience. Overall audiences have an active role in interpretation and meaning-making. Identity, power and ideology are constructed and reflected in Joshi's text. Even though there are some context-dependent meaning-making, is done the true essence of Newari folklore that has been the same. The Jatra as a visual form of folklore has been successful in invoking cultural enthusiasm even up to today's generation.

Kati Pyakhan was started 350 years ago by King Siddhi Narsing Malla it is the world's longest-performing dance, drama and music festival as it lasts for a whole month. Joshi highlights, "The people of Lalitpur regard the Kati Pyakhan as a productive and highly developed branch of their culture. The songs, dances, dramas and the music reflect their way of life, religious belief, history and folklore" (82). Newars preserving these rich ancient

heritages of dance drama folktales which are based on myth have been truly amazing. Practicing the culture of some three hundred years ago is not an easy task to do all based on hearsay performance. We can assume that the course of events might have gone through some small or major changes during this long year that too without proper documentation, the influence of authority and other factors for its modification. Nevertheless, keeping the performance alive is what counts the most. Joshi writes:

After glorious tradition of over 350 years, the kati pyakhan has suffered much in last 45 years due to various reasons. Some of its choreographs have sunk into oblivion. The one-month long program was reduced to eight days. Several full-length dances (the episodes of King Kama Sen, King Ugrasen, the demon king Banasura, the ever-popular plays depicting Lord Krishna as a boy stealing butter and clothes of young girls bathing at the river) have been dropped. (85)

Historical meanings are produced about the cultural entity. Myths and mysteries are related to the cultural entity that produced certain meanings. The meanings are produced by using sound, symbols and images but they are not the final meanings. Stuart Hall tried to show that those cultural entities have very broad links and relationships with each other and no entity is predominant. Hall's model respects the multiplicity of meanings in plurality. "Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings – the 'giving and taking of a meaning' – between the members of a society or group" (Hall 2). The folklore-based jatra and Naach have multiple meanings related to art, culture and tradition.



Fig. 4. Enigmatic Golden Window, *What the Nepal*. November 6, 2023.

The above picture is about the Golden window of Patan Museum. The Golden window is still reserved for the King to witness the Kartik Naach from windows. Kartik Naach is staged at open-air stage in Patan known as Kartik Dabu. Thousands of people flock to the open-air stage to watch this dramatic dance. Since the establishment of this dance, King Siddhi Narsingh Malla used to watch the Kartik naach from the golden window. King Tribhuvan no longer continued the cultural hierarchy in monarchy but still today the window is open once a year remembering and giving tribute to the King. He was once the witness of magnificent naach. Opening the window shows how the traditions are being followed strictly even today. This shows respect and passion. Newars have their tradition to continue the cultural performances. This kind of passion is lacking in today's world. Lalitpur somehow managed to preserve this rich heritage teaching the importance of myth and mystery-based rituals.

Modern media play a crucial role in cultural representation and recirculation of whatever that is already there. This unique heritage of dance, drama and music has not reached limelight due to under-presentation and circulation. The myth explains the

inexplicable. If we dive into the Myth, we get the answer to all the questions we get in our head regarding these kinds of jattras and performances. Some rituals might be presumed as absurd or sometimes even barbaric due to their representation in such a way. Representation is the way how something is depicted or constructed. So, power can disseminate the discourse and can produce the effects of truth by means of representation. Understanding the importance of every small details of the ritual, this study on myth-making tends to educate about its importance. The Jattras and Naach have created unity, harmony and utmost respect for the culture by understanding its importance.

The Red Matsyendra Nath Jatra and Kartik Naach are enactments of Folklore where myth has become part of folklore the jatra and naach that is based on traditional beliefs, customs and stories. The myth explains the world before us as the universe of godly creation which deems to be sacred and religious. Jatra and naach are Newari cultural values that reflect the beliefs, traditions, habits, rituals and experiences. In Early times apart from entertainment, one of the purposes of these jattras and performances were to teach moral lessons communicated through characters, conflict and resolutions. Bhoto jatra has popular folktales behind its celebration and Kartik naach is performed every year where the audience witnesses a staged version of the myth. Kartik naach is a dramatic dance which has songs, music, masks and attire which add a touch of aesthetic and invoke emotion of audiences in the drama. Both Bhoto jatra and Kartik naach have moral messages to impart which has interrelatedness with folklore and myth. Here the jatra and naach are real time acts of folklore which is composed of sacred religious narratives.

Active participation of women in pulling the massive chariot of Red Matysendra Nath shows the inclusivity of women in the religious activities which is commendable. During the several days of pulling the chariot one day is celebrated as *YAKA MISA YAA BHUIYA*. On the day only women pull the chariot. In patriarchal society where women are considered as weaker one, allocating day for women to pull the massive chariot can be considered as the act

of recognizing and respecting the strength of women. In modern society where women sometimes still have to fight for their rights. It is so beautiful and shocking that women strength is appreciated and celebrated back then and this culture still stands till date.

The jatra and naach are myth visualized whose original form was folktale, the jatra is a visual myth having the peculiarities of mask, hymns, chariot, dance, tales, and cosmism as a visual treat. For the visualization they perform it annually in grandeur and besides that they do every day rites related to it, in the visualization we see chariot pulling and dance performance which have many symbols, live and un-live props. These visualized myth has played a vital role in shaping and preserving Newars cultural identity by incorporating the values, beliefs and history of a community and created a sense of unity and perseverance in the youngsters. The jatra and naach executed offers various teachings. There is no doubt the jatra and naach performed have fueled artistic and literary creativity. More over by active participation of Newari youngsters in this visualized myth have proliferate them in the works of art, literature, music and performance and cultural expression through invoking their creative expression.

The jatra and naach as cultural performances are still connected with mythical realities of folklore. Through jatras the cultural practices of legendary myth have been kept alive. The root of this jatra and naach are based on folktale which was later visually enacted. Through its practice, people get the sense of being alive helping them to escape from the mundane life. These jatras and naach strengthen harmony and brings out communal identity. Myth directly or indirectly has some role to play in each and every aspects of human lives and society. Reclaiming the hypothesis, it was discovered that these cultural performances are, in fact, living artifacts that support Newar identity by bridging the past and present. As Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth* theorizes, the Newars uphold their traditions by vividly dramatizing stories like the Red Matsyendra Nath Jatra and Kartik Naach, which reinforce communal values and provide moral and spiritual lessons.

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