

**CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
HERITAGE SITES IN THE EASTERN TERAJ OF NEPAL**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of  
Tribhuvan University in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

in

**NEPALESE HISTORY, CULTURE AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

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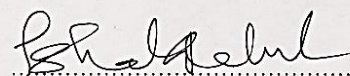
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December 2023

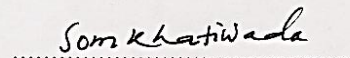
**LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION****LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

We certify that this dissertation entitled "Conservation and Management of Archaeological Heritage Sites in the Eastern Terai of Nepal" was prepared by Abhijeet Thapa under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for final examinations by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in NEPALESE HISTORY, CULTURE AND ARCHAEOLOGY.

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## APPROVAL LETTER



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**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
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This dissertation entitled "**Conservation and Management of Archaeological Heritage Sites in the Eastern Terai of Nepal**" was submitted by **Mr. Abhijeet Thapa** for final examination to the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the **Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Nepalese History, Culture and Archacology**. I hereby, certify that the Research Committee of the Faculty has found this dissertation satisfactory in scope and quality and has therefore been accepted it for the degree.



Prof. Kushum Shakya, PhD  
 Dean and Chairperson  
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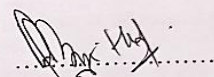
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## DECLARATION

iii

### DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Dissertation titled "Conservation and Management of Archaeological Heritage Sites in the Eastern Terai of Nepal" is my own work. I have not used its materials for the award of any kind and any other degree. Where other authors' sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.



Signature

**Abhijeet Thapa**

Dec, 2023

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research undertaken through multiple visits to different religious, cultural and archaeological heritage sites in the Eastern Terai of Nepal is the outcome of inspirations and support of many well-wishers, local informants, temple-priests, social workers and humble peasants. I have my deep gratitude to all these helpful people.

Importantly, I also express my deep gratitude to all those people whom I met on the ways but whose names I did not make record of, in the quick quest of locating destinations. Indeed, they were guides who provided first-hand informations on the heritage sites. My quest to dig knowledge of the sites would also have been very difficult without all the national and international writers of archaeology, cultural heritages and history. I owe my deep respect and gratitude to all of them.

I express my genuine thanks to my research Supervisor Prof. Dr. Peshal Dahal for his humble and inspiring nature. He accepted my research concept, pondered over it, revised my chapters and guided me to frame my research work. His overall moral support during the research tenure have been of great inspiration to me. This research would also have strayed without the support and previous research works of my Co-Supervisor Prof. Dr. Som Prasad Khatiwada, who is also the Head of the Central Department of Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology, Tribhuvan University.

My sincere thanks go to all my teachers, colleagues and students. I am grateful to my respected teacher Prof. Dr. Dilli Oli and Prof. Dr. Prem Kumar Khattry for their best wishes and concerns for my research. I want to thank Prof. Dilli Raj Sharma for his suggestions during my PhD Seminar paper presentation.

This dissertation would not have taken this present format without the guidance and genuine suggestions of Prof. Dr. Beena Poudyal, Prof. Dr. Mala Malla, Associate Professor Dr. Poonam Rajya Laxmi Rana and Associate Prof. Dr. Sandhya Khanal who imparted their valuable advice as experts during my final viva and Pre-Viva. My sincere thanks are always to Prof. Dr. Sabitree Mainali, Associate Prof. Dr. Mahesh Acharya, Dr. Nirmala Pokhrel, Dr. Pashupati Nyaupane and Dr. Tina Manandhar for their well wishes. Similarly, my thanks are to the Dean, Assistant Dean and staff of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tibhuvan University. Similarly, I thank Keshav Dhungana, priest of Kichakbadh, Tapan Khadka, former Social Studies teacher of Shree Rudra Memorial Boarding School, Birtamode and all the Research Assistants who helped me take a brief survey at Kichakbadh festival in 2019. I express my deep respect to archaeologists Kosh Prasad Acharya, Prof. Dr. Robin Conningham, Ram Kunwar, Kazi Pyakurel and Bhaskar Gyanwali for their information and best wishes. I thank my friends Bhagawat Shree Neupane, Chandra Prakash Basnet, Chandra Hatuwali, Shyam Madan KC and Sudarshan Aryal for their support. I sincerely thank Suresh Pradhan of University Computer and Photocopy Service, Kirtipur for helping me in setting computer formats for this dissertation.

Last but not least, this research is incomplete and void without acknowledging my respected parents, wife, dear son, brother, sister, and core in-laws who all kept keen eye on my academic venture. I shall always remember how with concrete support my family members had always pushed me through tough times-especially in the field works either to volunteer for me to take photographs or take interviews always with unforgettable encouragements and surging moral supports.

## ABSTRACT

This research is centered on archaeological heritage sites lying spatially and surviving on different conditions of natural and human induced risks in the Eastern Terai of Nepal. The sites of study have been selected on certain bases in the three districts – Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari of the Koshi Province. The take of the core concerns of this research is converged to provoke heritage sensibility and invoke globally accepted archaeological conservation and management models in the region. Much effort has been put on this study to explain and depict the whereabouts, conditions, conservation measures and management models that are practised around archaeological heritage sites in this region.

With set objectives to analyse the development of civilization in the region, to explain the present conditions of archaeological sites and analyze archaeological heritage conservation and management in the context of evolving good practices at global level, the research actually builds heavily on empirical and rational analysis. Many archaeological sites bear more of anthropological identities; their colossal potentialities of archaeological repute are ignorantly subdued and submerged. Many such sites have been romanticized in the local folklores, myths and stories of the epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

During the research it was presumed that new, virgin and less known archaeological sites in the region could be discovered, which in fact have been. New sites literally less known and unknown to the country and the wider public like Kichkagadhi (the name bearing close resemblance with Kichakbadh) and Dhanushapokhari have been brought forth into the archaeological mainstream for the first time through this research. Dhanushkuti region of Jhapa and the villages of Shantipur, Devichaun and Jogichaun near Damak have been identified as the zones of archaeological

significance. Some ancient wells and the findings therein have been documented.

The research is qualitative and is supported by careful observation, empirical investigations and multiple field visits at intermittent periods of 2018-2021. This data were further collected through selective interviews, key informants, photography and videography of sites all aided with wise and rigorous analysis of secondary data. The models of archaeological conservation and management followed in countries like India, Cambodia, the UK, the Guatemala- Belize border have been vibrantly discussed in the research. The models of archaeological heritage management have been studied through the international charters, conventions and the practices adopted by different countries.

Moreover, the role of community integration is less valued in our nation. We have not valued their potential strengths in the heritage sectors while we implement historical and archaeological processes into the local sites. We are more expert-driven. In the world today, radical advocates of conservation at times talk or write about driving experts away and bringing in community people to promote stewardship and ownership of heritage sites. However, there is a need to balance the experts and the public community to archaeological heritage sites. Thus, it is taken care during the research that the belief patterns of respective communities around the sites and their relation to the sites are understood well.

Heretofore, the research addresses the multifold of natural and human induced risks like fire, rain, flood, landslides, looting and illegal trafficking of artifacts at the sites while proposing for a re-modeling of good practices adopted at global levels to the local level. Archaeological heritage is not something to be laid upon the responsibility of weak local bodies, carefree government entities and insufficient cultural policies. The emerging concepts and debates of “value”, “equitable benefits” and “public archaeology” are prominent to heal heritages that have been sored since long time back.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | <b>Page No.</b>              |
|--|------------------------------|
| LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION                         | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| APPROVAL LETTER                                  | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS                                 | <b>iv</b>                    |
| ABSTRACT   | <b>vi</b>                    |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS                                | <b>viii</b>                  |
| LIST OF TABLES                                   | <b>xiv</b>                   |
| LIST OF FIGURES                                  | <b>xv</b>                    |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS                   | <b>xix</b>                   |
| MAPS   | <b>xx</b>                    |
| <br>   |                              |
| <b>Chapter One: Introduction to the Research</b> | <b>1</b>                     |
| 1.1 Introduction                                 | 1                            |
| 1.2 Statement of Problem                         | 9                            |
| 1.3 Research Questions                           | 10                           |
| 1.4 Objectives                                   | 10                           |
| 1.5 Significance of the Research                 | 11                           |
| 1.6 Delimitation                                 | 12                           |
| 1.7 Conceptual Framework                         | 13                           |
| 1.8 Chapter Organization                         | 13                           |
| <br>   |                              |
| <b>Chapter Two: Review of Literature</b>         | <b>16</b>                    |
| 2.1 Research Gap                                 | 46                           |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Chapter Three: Research Methodology</b>  | <b>51</b>  |
| 3.1 Research Design   | 51         |
| 3.2 Research Methods  | 54         |
| 3.2.1 Primary Data  | 54         |
| 3.2.1.1 Observation   | 54         |
| 3.2.1.2 Interview   | 56         |
| 3.2.1.3 Focused Group Discussion  | 59         |
| 3.2.1.3.1 FGD in Vaisabadi  | 59         |
| 3.2.1.3.2 FGD in Department of Archaeology, Kathmandu   | 61         |
| 3.2.2 Secondary Data  | 63         |
| 3.3 Research Philosophy   | 63         |
| 3.4 Theoretical Framework   | 64         |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>Chapter Four: History of the Development of Civilization in the Eastern Terai of<br/>Nepal</b>                               | <b>68</b>  |
| 4.1 Pre- History of Eastern Nepal: Analysis and Surmises  | 68         |
| 4.2 Ancient History of the Eastern Nepal  | 72         |
| 4.3 Analysis on the Medieval and Modern History of Eastern Nepal  | 84         |
| 4.4 Eastern Nepal's History: Still in Limbo   | 95         |
| 4.5 Conclusion  | 100        |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>Chapter Five: History of Archaeological Heritage Conservation in the Eastern<br/>Terai of Nepal: Selected Sites of Study</b> | <b>106</b> |
| 5.1 Concept of Archaeological Conservation  | 106        |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 5.1.1 Looting and Vandalising:  | 110 |
| 5.1.2 History of Archaeological Activities in Nepal                               | 113 |
| 5.2 Excavated Sites of Eastern Terai of Nepal                                     | 117 |
| 5.2.1 Bhediyari   | 117 |
| 5.2.1.1 Findings-Retrieved by Locals of Bhediyari                                 | 119 |
| 5.2.1.2 Conservation Approaches in Bhediyari                                      | 121 |
| 5.2.2 Kichakbadh  | 125 |
| 5.2.2.1 History of Excavation in Kichakbadh                                       | 130 |
| 5.2.2.2 Conservation Approaches in Kichakbadh                                     | 132 |
| 5.2.3 Betana  | 136 |
| 5.3 Representation of Sites on a Map  | 136 |
| 5.4 Hierarchy- Chart of Sites in terms of Archaeological Potentiality             | 138 |
| 5.5 Sites in Jhapa  | 139 |
| 5.5.1 Sadhutar  | 140 |
| 5.5.2 Arjundhara  | 145 |
| 5.5.3 Pandavapur  | 147 |
| 5.5.4 Viratpokhari Sarovar  | 149 |
| 5.5.5 Inhabited Areas in Kamal Village Municipality nearby Damak and<br>Gauradaha | 150 |
| 5.5.5.1 Well Remnants   | 152 |
| 5.5.5.2 Bricks  | 153 |
| 5.5.5.3 Boats   | 154 |
| 5.5.6 Dhanusapokhari (Dhanusha Pond)  | 155 |
| 5.5.7 Dhanuskutidham  | 156 |
| 5.5.8 Chillagadh  | 161 |

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 5.5.9 Krishnathumki           | 162 |
| 5.5.10 Satashidham            | 164 |
| 5.6 Sites in Morang           | 167 |
| 5.6.1 Kichka-Gadhi/Kichkagadh | 168 |
| 5.6.2 Dhanpalgadhi            | 170 |
| 5.7 Sites in Sunsari          | 173 |
| 5.7.1 Varakshetra             | 173 |

## **Chapter Six: Evaluation of the Archaeological Conservation and Management in**

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>the Eastern Terai of Nepal</b>   | <b>180</b> |
| 6.1. Clear History of the Sites Still in Limbo                                    | 180        |
| 6.2 Devalued Chronological Evidences  | 183        |
| 6.3 Virgin and Unexplored Sites   | 183        |
| 6.4 Meagre Conservation Fund for the Sites  | 184        |
| 6.5 Absence of Heritage Practitioners in Local Conservation Committees            | 186        |
| 6.6 Lack of Identification of Stakeholders  | 186        |
| 6.7 State & Local level Indifference to Site Management                           | 188        |
| 6.8 Risks of Natural Agents   | 189        |
| 6.9 Risk of Human Agents  | 189        |
| 6.10 Risk of Urbanization   | 192        |
| 6.11 Lack of Risk Assessment and Risk Mapping                                     | 192        |
| 6.12 Sites of Archaeological/ Prehistoric Importance Underneath Occupied Villages | 193        |
| 6.13 Risk of Well-intentioned Constructions in the Sites                          | 194        |
| 6.14 Lack of Periodical Monitoring and Maintenance of the sites                   | 194        |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 6.15 Lack of Touristic Ambiences and Visitors Statistics          | 195 |
| 6.16 Lack of Community Linking Programs                           | 196 |
| 6.17 Lack of Published Reports                                    | 197 |
| 6.18 Loopholes in Site Management Planning Process                | 198 |
| 6.19 Absence of International Partners                            | 199 |
| 6.20 Absence of Site Museums in the whole region                  | 200 |
| 6.21 Growing interests of Local People for Touristic Implications | 200 |
| 6.22 Strengths of <i>ich</i> in the Archaeological Sites          | 201 |
| 6.23 Solutions to the Problems                                    | 201 |

## **Chapter Seven: Models of Conservation and Management of Archaeological**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Heritage Sites in the Eastern Terai of Nepal</b>  | <b>203</b> |
| 7.1 Public Archaeology   | 204        |
| 7.2 Archaeology and Ethics   | 208        |
| 7.3 Challenges of Archaeo- Tourism in Eastern Terai of Nepal   | 213        |
| 7.4 Global Practices and Ways of Managing Archaeological Sites: Relating in the<br>Context of Eastern Terai of Nepal | 218        |
| 7.5 Heritage Management in Nepal's Present Context :Provisions and Practices   | 226        |
| 7.6 Failing Centralized Model of the DoA: Resolution and Way Forward   | 231        |
| 7.5 Conclusion   | 234        |

## **Chapter Eight: Summary and Conclusion**

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| 8.1 Summary    | 238 |
| 8.2 Findings   | 239 |
| 8.3 Conclusion | 242 |

|                   |   |            |
|-------------------|---|------------|
| Appendix A        | List of Names –Focus Group Discussion, Vaisabadi, Kichakbadh  | <b>250</b> |
| Appendix B        | List of Names of DoA Staff who attended/participated in the FGD   | <b>251</b> |
| Appendix C        | List of Names of Research Assistantswho assisted the Rerseacher<br>Kichakbadh festival-2019                       | <b>252</b> |
| Appendix D        | List of Names- Key Persons/Informnants Interviewed during the<br>Research   | <b>253</b> |
| Appendix E        | List of Community People who provided Information on different<br>issues and problems and Prospects of Kichakbadh | <b>257</b> |
| Appendix F        | Questions Asked to the Local Experts/ Long Time Resident of the<br>Region   | <b>259</b> |
| Appendix G        | Types of Important Questions Asked during Selective Interviews for<br>Locals and Key Informants                   | <b>260</b> |
| Appendix H        | Question for the DoA staff. (FGD)   | <b>261</b> |
| Appendix I        | Questions asked to the Elected Officials of Proivince-01  | <b>262</b> |
| <b>Glossary</b>   |   | <b>263</b> |
| <b>Pictures</b>   |   | <b>265</b> |
| <b>References</b> |   | <b>294</b> |

**LIST OF TABLES**

|  | <b>Pg. No.</b> |
|--|----------------|
| 6.1 . Budget Ratio of National Development Budget to DoA Development<br>Budget | 184            |
| 6.2. Budget Allocation of Province-1   | 185            |

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1.1 A lithic holy idol in Varakshetra area consecrated in the main Varakshetra temple, Sunsari
- Fig. 1.2 Ancient idol of Varaha dated to 5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D found in the aftermath of flood at Varahkshetra, now consecrated in the Mul-Varah temple, Varahkshetra
- Fig. 1.3 Stone idols now kept outside in the premises of the Krishnathumki temple, Jhapa
- Fig. 1.4 Krishnathumki's lithic idols
- Fig. 1.5 A stone that reveals certain marks that resemble a man's foot and cow's hoof, locally said to be that of Krishna's cow Nandini
- Fig. 3.1 Volunteer students filling up questionnaire in Kichakbadh festival, Photo Credit: Rudra School team
- Fig. 3.2 Researcher having group discussion with the Rajbanshis of Vaisabadi village just by the Mechi River. Photo Credit: Babulal Ganesh
- Fig. 3.3 FGD in the Department of Archaeology, Kathmandu, Photo Credit: Sudarshan Aryal
- Fig. 4.1 A *Shivalinga* found by timber collectors in the nearby hills, now kept in the temple of Dhanuhkuti, Jhapa
- Fig. 4.2 Stone idols found along with the *Shivalinga* nearby now consecrated as gods, and kept in the Dhanushkuti temple
- Fig. 4.3 A local *maata* nearby the Kankai river showing the so said Shiva's *Kharau* to the researcher at Dhanushkuti
- Fig. 4.4 Wooden boat structures found in the Krishna river, kept by a local to commute from home to paddy field, Jogichaun, Jhapa



Fig.4.6 A wooden boat piece now kept by a local in his cow shed to feed fodder for cattle, Photo Credit: Ayush Subedi

Fig. 4.6 Ancient well structures and the researcher at work in Shantipur, Kamal municipiapality village-Jhapa, Photo Credit: Prasanna Pratap Thapa

Fig. 4.7 A local person showing an ancient brick from an ancient well

Fig. 4.8 and 4.9 Ancient pottery sherds retrieved by a local person from the well sites, Shantipur- Kamal Municipality region, Jhapa

Fig. 4.10 A local person demonstrating his finds retrieved from the Betana site, Morang

Fig. 4.11 An iron axe, Betana -Morang

Fig. 4.12 A stone implement, Betana, Morang

Fig. 4.13 Lithic artifacts, Betana, Morang

Fig. 4.14 A stone arrow-head, betana, Morang

Fig. 4.15 iron arrow head, Betana Morang

Fig. 4.16 Lithic artifact most probably a decorative item, Betana, Morang

Fig. 4.17 Iron implements, Betana Morang

Fig. 4.18 Unburnt broken ceramic pot piece, Betana, Morang

Fig. 4.19 Lithic shouldered artifact, Betana, Morang

Fig. 4.20 Cord-impressed pottery sherds floating in the rivulet, Betana.

Fig. 5.1 A ceramic goddess, decorative stone beads, Bhediyari

Fig. 5.2 Ceramic artifacts, Bhediyari

Fig. 5.3 Baked bricks, Bhediyari

Fig. 5.4 Grains so found and kept in Bhediyari at a local residence and locally narrated to have been of the Mahabharata period, Bhediyari

Fig. 5.5 Semi Precious bangles, Bhediyari

Fig. 5. 6 Semi precious beads, Bhediyari

Fig. 5.7 Ceramic and lithic artifacts, Bhediyari

Fig. 5.8 and 5.9 Semi precious stones that glow while laight is passed through,

Bhediyari

Fig. 5.10 Exposed ruins, in one of the mounds, Bhediyari-Morang

Fig. 5.11 Brick ruins now under a tree while photo taken during 2018-19, Bhediyari,

Morang

Fig. 5.12 Local rituals in the Kichabadh Pond during the Kichkbadh festival, 2019

Fig. 5.13 Conserved ruins in Kichakbadh

Fig. 5.14 Hierarchy chart of Sites of Study

Fig. 5.15 Sami Tree at Sadhutar, Jhapa

Fig. 5.16 Shiva temple of Arjundhara being reconstructed, Photo Credit: Rajendra

Thapa

Fig. 5.16 Some wooden structures retrieved in the well sites

Fig. 5.17 and Wooden structures and half burnt wood pieces

Fig. 5.18 A full boat

Fig.5.19 Dhanusapokhari

Fig. 5.20 A brick retrieved by the researcher from nearby ruins of Dhanushapokhari,

Jhapa

Fig 5.21 Kichakgadhi mound , Morang

Fig. 5.22 A small village *thaan* in the Kichkagadhi mound

Fig. 5.23 Dhanpalgadhi temple, Morang

Fig. 5.24. Idols of King Dhanpal and his queen revered as gods and goddess by

Tharus, Morang

Fig. 5.25 Revered dieties in Dhanpalgadhi, Morang

Fig. 5.26 A small rivulet by Dhanpalgadhi

Fig. 5.27 Chillagadhpokhari, Jhapa

Fig. 7.1 & 7.2 Children park in Kichakbadh, Jhapa

Fig. 7.3 A helicopter in the conserved area of Kichabadh amongst curious onlookers,  
2019

Fig. 7.4 A scene in the aftermath of a storm in Varhkshetra, Sunsari

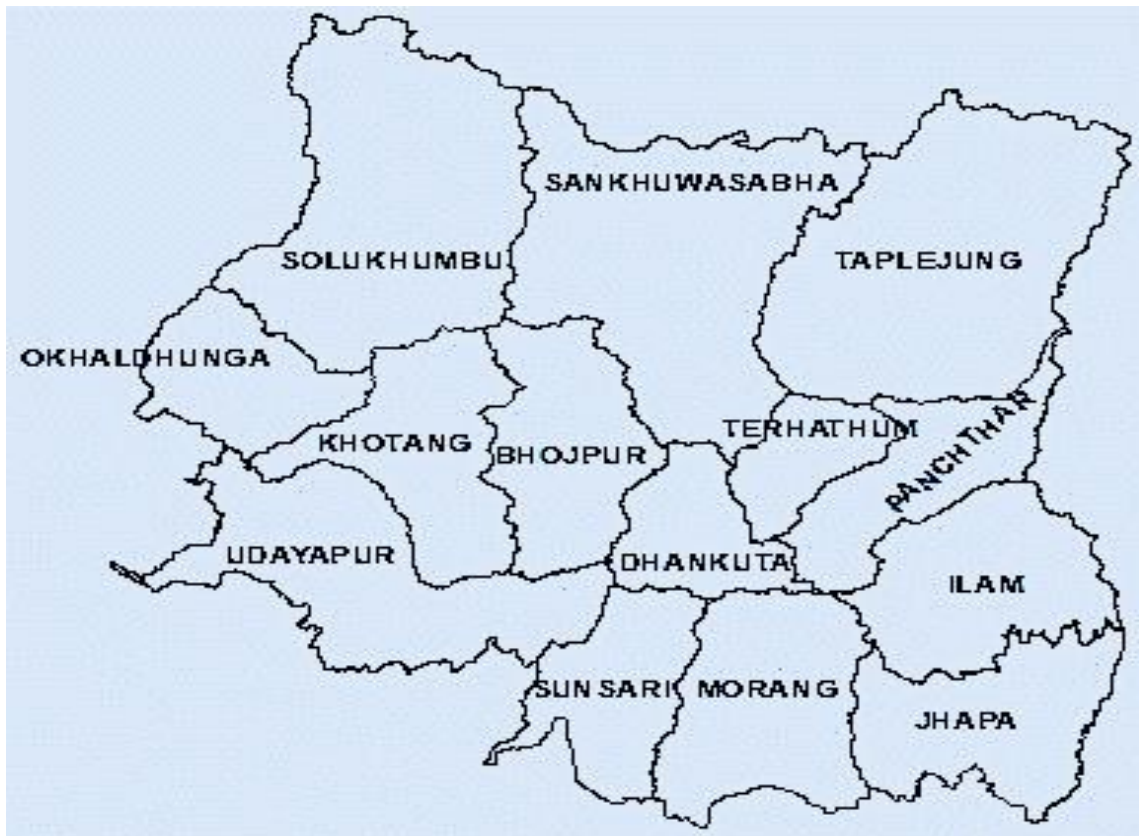
Fig. 7.5 One of the existing ponds of Viratpokhar, being dried up

Fig. 7.6 Chart of Decentralized and Responsible Community Model for Managing  
Archaeological Heritage Sites

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS**

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>ACCU</b>   | Asia- Pacific Cultural Center for UNESCO  |
| <b>AHM</b>    | Archaeological Heritage Management  |
| <b>AMP</b>    | Archaeological Management Plan  |
| <b>APSARA</b> | Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Seam Reap.          |
| <b>ASHMI</b>  | Archaeological Survey and Heritage Management of India                                      |
| <b>ASI</b>    | Archaeological Survey of India  |
| <b>CPMAH</b>  | Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage                    |
| <b>CRM</b>    | Cultural Resource Management  |
| <b>DoA</b>    | Department of Archaeology   |
| <b>DPR</b>    | Detailed Project Report   |
| <b>ECPAE</b>  | European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage                        |
| <b>FGD</b>    | Focused Group Discussion  |
| <b>FOKCI</b>  | Friends of Khemr Culture  |
| <b>HMG</b>    | His Majesty's Government  |
| <b>ICAHM</b>  | International Committee for Archaeological Heritage Management                              |
| <b>ICCROM</b> | International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property |
| <b>ICOMOS</b> | International Council on Monuments and Sites  |
| <b>RIPPAE</b> | Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations         |
| <b>SAA</b>    | Society for American Archaeology  |
| <b>WHS</b>    | World Heritage Site   |

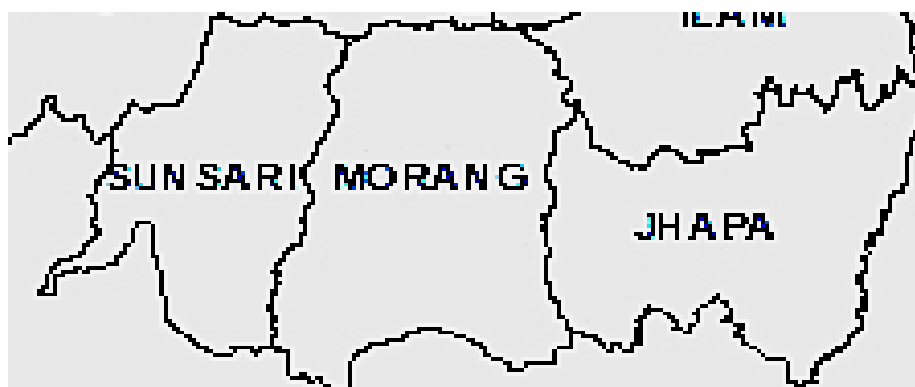
## MAPS



Map of Province-1, Koshi province

(Maps Source: <https://www.dhakalvivek.com.np/2020/09/provinces-and-local-levels-of-nepal.html>)

### Districts of Study



## Chapter One

### Introduction to the Research

#### 1.1 Introduction

This research is a dedicated attempt to unravel known and unknown archaeological heritage sites of the Eastern Terai of Nepal and study their conditions of survival in multifarious risks and risk levels. It is obvious that archaeological heritage sites around the world are prone to different natural and human induced risks. Apart from them, they suffer from mismanagement at local and state levels. As such, this research is focused on archaeological heritage conservation and management in the Eastern Terai, delimiting the study to three districts- Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari. While simultaneously exploring about their mythical dimensions, archaeological evidences and importance for the construction of the regional history, the research also embodies the lens of archaeology to open up a plausible vista in suffusing global practices of archaeological heritage management.

In the current restructuring process of New Nepal, this region of study falls in Province number -1 as per the latest Constitution of Nepal (Appendix-4, B.S. 2072, p. 169). At present, this region is facing the duel, by different ethnic movements and debates of it being named as the Koshi *Pradesh*. Politics apart, the region is a cultural and religious hub for all kinds and ethnic tribes inhabiting hereby. This region is still in virgin state if attempted to look through archaeological lenses. It is to be noted that some heritage sites have not been studied because on surface observation, such sites did not reveal notable archaeological evidence to the past but were of religious importance. Such sites are just mentioned on the basis of their proximity to major archaeological and mythical sites. However, these sites which are left out here can be of importance to future researchers.

The recent global good practices of heritage management incorporate communities to the sites for site management. Thus, it is taken care during the research that the belief patterns of respective communities around the sites and their relation to the sites are understood well. There are many heritage sites in Eastern Terai but the research is concentrated on the sites linked to the stories of the Mahabharata by the locals. The heritage sites that were selected, observed and studied only if they were or met at least one of the bases mentioned below:

1. Had archaeological ruins.
2. Sites in close proximity to archaeological sites nearby.
3. Sites with stories and incidents of accidental findings of archaeological artifacts.
4. Sites widely believed by the locals to be of the Mahabharata period, with stories of the Mahabharata.
5. Sites with history of archaeological excavation.

Although with its rich mythical backgrounds and traces of ancient settlement, eastern Terai is a virgin region in the mainstream archaeological study. The various indigenous groups of Rajbanshi, Koch, Satar, Tharu, and Dhimal signal to distant past and undocumented migrations from and through various routes and places of origins. Yet, the historicity of the civilization, its development in the East Terai is unknown and unclear. This will remain the same until we add brick on brick to the study and researches of the region. So this research is an effort to add a brick on the study of the region. With only a few excavations in some places and unfortunately less trodden in terms of archaeological ventures, the Eastern Terai of Nepal is in fact a potential region for archeological explorations and excavations because here are many mythical places and indigenous settlements.

The authentic history of many sites with ruins of houses or palaces-like structures along with their conservation approaches at the local and state levels have been analyzed with strong and concrete evidences. Some ancient appearing idols that are religiously revered in Varahkshetra (Fig. 1.1 and 1.2) Krishnathumki (Fig 1.3 and 1.4) quite give an impression of the objects of distant past. One consecrated in Varahkshetra called “*Vishnuvigraha*” (Fig. 1.1 ) has been said to be very ancient and the idol of Varah now kept in Guru Varah temple is related to be of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. However, the local versions of the timeline is much ancient derived through their folk narratives. One idol (Fig. 1.5) of Krishnathumki has a distinct mark of cow-shoe and human feet locally believed to be that of lord Krishna and his cow Nandini. Similar mark stone bearing foot mark (so called by locals as *Vishnu paau*) is also consecrated in Dhanushkuti temple premises in Jhapa. Numerous other lithic objects and ruins that are archaeologically important have been romaniticised in local myths, legends and heroic characters of the epics, especially that of the Mahabharata. The lithic finds, amazing stone arrow, blades representing Mesolithic artifacts, iron implements and other (Fig. 4.10-4.19) of Betana collected by a local Bhim kumar and shown to this researcher all point to the prehistoric occupation of the region. Cord-impressed pottery sherds (Fig. 4.20) have been shown to this researcher that flow stray in the rivulets in Betana wetland. These are just few examples and many are discussed in the later part of the research.

Michele, an archaeologist who drafted action plan for Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia, 2014 has written 'A risk assessment map with a priority list should be the first step during the preparation of a conservation programme....in fact the risk map should highlight not only damage that has already occurred, but also damage that may occur in the future" (2014, p. 32). Michele also has stated about three risks level



which are recognized (i) zero risk (ii) medium risk and (iii) high risk for which he suggests practice of cost-benefit measures categorized as (i) Emergency measures (ii) urgent measures and (iii) preventive measures. These types of assessment and cures are new to our nation.

In Nepal only in few sites, site management and conservation approaches have reached to that satisfactory stage where cultural and environmental monitoring, even collecting visitors's profile, surveying water level, humidity fluctuations or recording rainfall and wind speed by using Cambridge KE model 3000 tests have been carried out in the WHS of Lumbini (Connigham, Schmidt & Strickland,2011, pp.1-8). This is a hopeful outset but conceding to the facts of such researches' expenditure, expertise and their availability, these types of scientific researches are far from near to being carried out in other less famous sites other than in WHS is a serious concern. The eastern Terai does not significantly fall in the national priority until date.

The intensity of concerns of stakeholders, concern of the local government and the central government over such places had to be studied to do justice to such sites and avoid epistemological violence to the value of such historic treasures. Local people link many sites within this region to be the settlement area of the Pandavas of the Mahabharata during and mainly after their 12 years period of exile. Actually most of the places are believed by the locals to be associating with the one year of their incognito (when the Pandavas had to conceal their kingly majestics from their counterpart Duryodhana). The modern Biratnagar is related to be the king Virata's territory and there are many sites that are romaniticised by the locals in the same manner. Until the science of archaeology can prove this for some sites, we can take these phenomenons or tendencies of the locals to be romaniticization. Many religious and cultural ceremonies are held in such places linking and revering them to the

stories of the the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. While myths cannot be underestimated these all cannot be totally reliable too in scientific ventures that are projected for archaeological findings of this research. Hence, in the context of the Eastern Terai of Nepal, there was a dire need of deciphering facts from exploration of this region and making wise analysis of archaeological findings/evidences to trace their historicity and the development of civilization. Explorations through archaeological, topographical, landscape and cultural survey in the urban, suburban and remote zones of the Eastern Terai were carried out. To make the study authentic and research-oriented, surface findings and present conditions of the sites were observed. This study thus is an analytical study of the authenticity of heritage sites in Eastern Terai, trying to draw any possible linkages among the places of study and people inhabiting nearby by making critical and wise analysis of tangible and intangible cultures. These all have provided very good and detailed information about the existence, location and general layouts of the archaeologically potential sites located (hidden/ unknown) in the Eastern Terai belt of Nepal along with the development of civilization.

There are many sites which are regarded important archaeologically and culturally in the region, most of whose historicity locals relate to the Mahabharata period. To name some -Kichakbadh, Viratpokhari sarovar, Arjundhara Dham, Chillagadhpokhari, Betana, Barhadashi, Satashidham, Bhediyari, Varahkshetra, and the list continues. These sites of study are just the chief sites, however, the research also justifiably includes any potential linked sites that are of archaeological and cultural importance in and around the sites. Thus, this research has tried at level best to interpret the physical remains of ancient ruins (buildings or monuments), to follow reports of excavations and also attempted to trace the historicity of Eastern Terai.

Many names in the sites of the study are named after the characters of the epic. Many names seem to be new, only named when people started living by in and during the resettlement campaign of the Terai during B.S 2027-29. Some names to mention are Arjundhara, Krishnathumki, Kichakbadh, Satashidhaam, Pandavpur, Viratpokhari, and Biratnagar to list a few.

There are a few literatures that can be considered archaeologically and culturally important, those that have contents relevant to the region of study. Most regions whose historicity is connected to the Mahabharata period in one or the other way enticed colossal interest to this researcher. Simple books, articles written by priests or local scholars on Kichakbadh, Viratpokhari *Sarovar*, Arjundhara-Dhaam, Varhadashi, Satashi-Dhaam, Bhediyari, Varahkshetra are important too. Also addressing heritage management issues heritage theories, conservation approaches or plans, action plans or master plans become useful sources to go through. Attempting to identify and interpret the physical remains of ancient ruins (buildings or monuments), and ancient human activities to depict their religious, political and social functions in the then period is a difficult task- herculean to be exact. This research without any archaeological tools, supplies or technical knowledge and expertise of the fields just studies the sites and their present conditions. This is because the researcher is not a professional archaeologist. Traditional festivities or performances that are surviving even today in such places need careful literary review of texts, especially written by local people.

In the context of the sites of the eastern Terai, the local narratives of the Mahabharata may be true or false; the research remains unbiased and there is no objective to go on supporting only the archaeological evidences and ignore the belief traditions or just support the beliefs blindly. However, many oral narratives give birth

to other myths, guess-stories (tall- tales) that are just assumed and made seemingly true because of continuous retellings again and again. Geologists Croneis and Krombien as have stated "the farther back one goes in human history the more inaccurate it becomes, until at last even the ablest historical sleuth becomes lost in a maze of contradictory accounts, bewildering legends and mythical stories" (1936, p. 215). Justifying this, they further mention:

Finally, the historian in delving backward into the past, comes to a point in his researches beyond which even the crudest type of written material can no longer be discovered. But there are still older archaeological data which can be used in unraveling the past: and when these at last become rare, or difficult to interpret there always remain the geological evidences which make it possible to read the most ancient history of them all. (1936, p. 216)

The relation of the sites to the Mahabharata really pose a dilemma because at one level a considerable population of the region put their faith upon the mythical authenticity of their age- old belief tradition. It would hereby be very relevant to cite Singh who writes: "Archaeology cannot really prove or disprove the history of epic events or characters. The crux of the matter is that there is a qualitative difference between the nature of literary and archaeological evidences" (2008, p. 20). The findings of archaeological excavations in the sites of the eastern Terai too really cannot be scientifically interpreted to be of the Mahabharata period. This is because, until now, Mahabharata has not been proved as historical account. It is assumable that the epic may not be completely fictions, taking account of the ancient Aryan Hindu rituals and Kingship, it portrays. However, to date, through an archaeological lens, it can be analyzed that certain archaeological sites of eastern Terai Nepal suffer from too much of local narratives of the epic.

The belief patterns and religious aura of those places have become so much significantly linked to the epic characters that even if archaeological evidences like inscriptions relate it to any other dynasties or period, the locals would not summon up to the scientific claims. And in another context, it would be matter of sheer confusion whether it would be ethnical to shatter the age-old beliefs for the sake of constructing a real history to which locals' rituals, festivals and worships all will have to be sacrificed and of which there is no compensation.

Many places in India too are related to the Mahabharata. The kingdom of the Pandavas-Indraprastha, the unfortunate war-field of Kurukshetra and the much talked about or fabled city of Hastinapura, all have been archaeologically tested but without any concrete proof that they are the same places mentioned in the epic.

Site management understanding and site usages at local level are not so appreciable at the present context of the eastern Terai. The locals have, at some sites, given importance in promoting the tourism and managing risks but the lack of knowledge regarding archaeological site management has invited some serious concerns. Especially this gives space to rethink on how communities can be linked to the sites through internationally accepted good practices and approved conservation policies.

With noble objectives to encompass the conservation approaches and management of the sites in the context of different globally accepted good practices, and models of managing archaeological heritage sites, this study also brings forth suggestive measures to plan a benefitting heritage management approach in the sites of study. This approach can be followed across the country.

## 1.2 Statement of Problem

Eastern Terai of Nepal, although with its rich mythical backgrounds and traces of ancient settlement is a virgin region in archaeological mainstream. Explorations and excavations carried out at some places of the region have proved its archeological significance and provoked a need of careful further study, explorations and analysis. Excavations in the sites of Kichakbadh, Bhediyari and Betana have brought forth the pre-historic, historic and archaeological potentiality of the eastern Terai region.

Global practices of AHM have not been sufficiently studied, adhered and adopted in Nepal except in few places of national importances. Keen observation on many sites of the eastern Terai triggered a sensitive questions upon this researcher's mind that why were such sites are not properly valued and managed. What history do the sites carry? Literary sources mostly related the sites to the Mahabharata. Local oral traditions, folklores, told and retold over times although glorified the sites' antiquity and helped them survive in the face of rapid development and constructions yet could be dangerous if such myths, stories and folklores were not true. Real history of the whole region can be lost forever or buried under the fabrications of myths created and re-created. Many scholars relate the Mahabharata as myths while others take it as historical documents. Archaeological evidences are thus valuable to prove and trace the antiquity of the sites. Historical development of the civilizations that flourished here have notbeen analysed properly with the suffusion of historical and arcaeological analysis. So, in this context, the research is centered on following research statements:

(a) The historical development of the civilizations of the Eastern Terai region has not been sufficiently analyzed with adequate references to archeological findings. (b) The present condition of numerous archaeological heritages sites along with natural and

human induced risks have not been studied systematically. There is a dire need to know how locals at community level and mechanisms of government conserve and manage these sites. (c) The sites severely lack the globally accepted models of conservation and management approaches that can be adhered and adopted for the betterment of the Eastern Terai of Nepal.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Following research questions have been formulated to carry out the research:

- (a) What is the history of the development of civilizations in the Eastern Terai of Nepal?
- (b) How are archaeological sites of Eastern Terai of Nepal being conserved and managed in the face of different natural and human induced risks?
- (c) What practices and models of managing archaeological heritage sites can be suggested for this region in the context of global good practices?

### **1.4 Objectives**

This research was carried out based on the following objectives:

- (a) To analyse the historical development of civilization in the Eastern Terai of Nepal through historical and archaeological evidences.
- (b) To explain the present conditions of the archaeological sites of the Eastern Terai of Nepal by identifying and analyzing the risks of natural agents and human activities.
- (c) To analyse models of archaeological heritage conservation and management of the Eastern Terai of Nepal in the context of the global good practices of managing archaeological sites.

Although field study, on -the -site exploration and interviews with local people and experts serve for the fulfillment of the noble purposes of the research, this

research has been aided by analysis of many secondary sources like journal articles published nationally and internationally, numerous texts and genres of archaeology and heritage management. There are many secondary sources that have been studied but here some major ones have been included. The brief and succinct information of review of literature have been given in the next chapter.

### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

This research has following significance at the historic, cultural, religious archaeological and heritage studies of the Eastern Terai, Nepal.

(a) As this research investigates archaeological, cultural, religious and historical importance of many archaeologically potential sites of the Nepal, it has brought out less known and unknown sites of Eastern Terai with potentialities of archaeological importance. This undoubtedly is a seminal research in the context of the eastern Terai Nepal. The heritage sites have been studied through the genre of AHM. b) It has analyzed the historical development of civilization, prehistoric and historic condition of the Eastern Terai of Nepal. The attempt to analyze historicity of Eastern Terai and chronological development of civilization in different places can provoke further study and investigations of the actual Eastern Terai's history. (c) The fruitful and productive conclusion of the research shall be important milestone in the study of archaeological surveys, heritage management and conservation issues or may even lead to/ provoke possible excavations in the Eastern Nepal. (d) With sincere field visits and study of detailed facts, this research has constructed a new lens to look into the probabilities of Eastern Nepal as archaeologically and culturally rich region. (e) Then detail knowledge of the risks of natural agents and human activities in the heritage sites with research results have opened a new exposure to look at heritage mismanagement loopholes in many sites of the region.

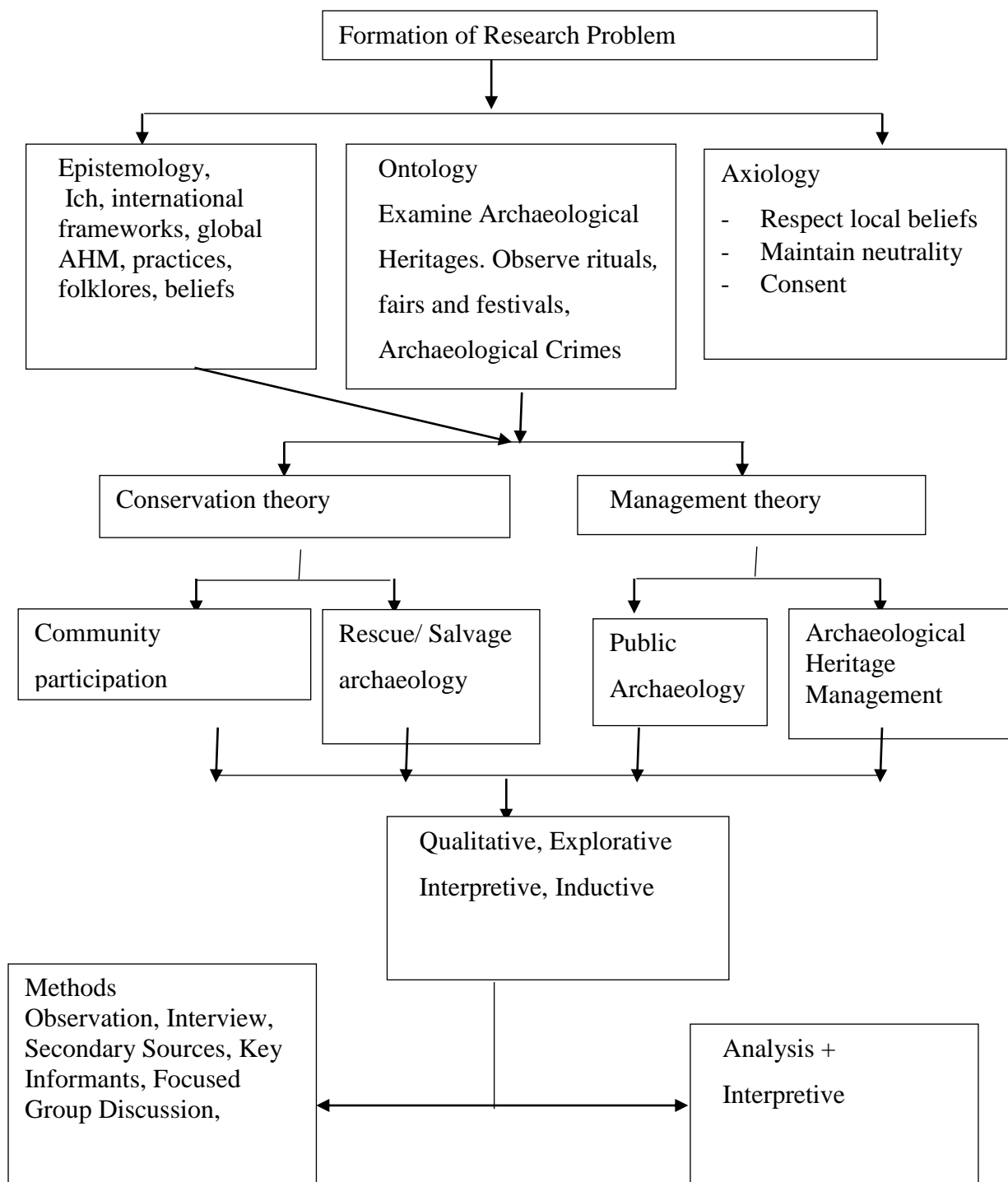


## **1.6 Delimitation**

(a) There are many historically important places in the Eastern Nepal but this study covers the sites of only the Terai region that falls -Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari. (b) Site or sites related by the locals to the stories of the Ramayana were not selected for the purpose of the study. Because of the abundance of linkage by the locals to the stories of the Mahabharata, such sites were studied with set bases and limitations. (c) The research did not deeply explore the belief or worship patterns that locals follow in the heritage sites but the management issues in the field of archaeological conservation have been researched sensitively.

## 1.7 Conceptual Framework

In this research different theories and strategies of heritage conservation, models of practicing archaeological heritage management and related texts have been suffused. The Conceptual framework of the research is depicted as below:



## 1.8 Chapter Organization

The following chapters were framed for the purpose of this research.

- a. Introduction of the Research: It discusses the intent of the research, background of the study and explains about research problems, objectives delimitations, and significance of the study.
- b. Review of Literature: It outlines the previous studies that have similar themes, and addresses the gap that are identified as objectives in this research. The relevance of certain texts, loopholes and linkages are addressed in this chapter.
- c. Research Methodology: It provides the overall approach, research design and methodology that are used to investigate the research problems through analysis of methods, their types and why they have been appropriate for this research. This chapter also contains discussions of theoretical frameworks suffused in the research.
- d. History of the Development of Civilization in the Eastern Terai of Nepal: This chapter analyzes the content in major secondary sources dealing with the history of the eastern region. It majorly depicts and draws wise analysis of prehistoric, ancient, medieval and modern history of the region along with the analysis of archaeological findings made by this researcher.
- e. History of Archaeological Heritage Conservation and Sites of Study in the Eastern Terai of Nepal: This chapter evaluates the conservation approaches that have been implemented in the region. It analyses the history of excavation in three sites of the region and scrutinizes the local and central government endeavors for heritage approaches.

- f. Evaluation of the Archaeological Conservation and Management in the Eastern Terai of Nepal: This chapter draws upon empirical evidences collected by this researcher through observation, field visits, interviews and analysis of the data. The exact scenario of the sites are thus evaluated and discussed with examples.
- g. Models of Conservation and Management of Archaeological Heritages in the Eastern Terai of Nepal: This chapter focuses on global good practices of conservation and management models in different countries like India, Cambodia, UK, Belize border, Serbia and others and deals with several problems of archaeology, ethics, administrative impediments and at the end devises a working model in the context of the eastern Terai.
- h. Summary and Conclusion: It concludes by summarizing the contexts and findings, indicating gaps and recommendations for further researches, and wraps up the overall research in a nutshell.

## Chapter Two

### Review of Literature

As determined by its objectives, this research attempts to serve and investigate on conservation and management of heritages sites especially setting focus on the archaeological potentialities of Eastern Terai of Nepal. As this region of study is a stretch of land in the eastern Terai belt, delimitations have been defined prior to the research. Experiencing the authenticity of heritage sites in this large land requires detailed and meticulous study of the historicity of the different places in different time periods. Equally important are opinion of scholarly people and researchers too that all have to be combined and analyzed. Literatures have been selected if they were useful, if they had some lackings or gaps on the research topic and if they served to explain the purpose of the objectives determined in the research.

As such, in this literature review section, 5 types of secondary sources are reviewed. They are:

(a) Theoretical books on Archaeology, Pre- history and Religion (b) Books on Historical Aspects of Eastern Nepal including local publications like smarikas of the heritage sites (c) Books on Research Methodology (d) Books, dissertations, theses, reports and texts dealing on global practices of heritage and (e) International Charters and Convention on Archaeological Site Management

The responsibility was upon this researcher to examine the previous archaeological findings of eastern Terai that are mentioned in very few archaeological reports that also hitherto unpublished. The primary data obtained through interviews, observation and community's response alone are not be

sufficient and that all have to be aided by time and again reviewing secondary materials that are relevant to the topic of the research.

The local *smarikas* (memoirs) like *Arjundhara Jaleshwordham* (B.S. 2076), *Dhanushkuti* (B.S. 2072), *Kichakbadh smarika* (B.S. 2066) published under the active indulgence of the local heritage management committees of different heritage sites provide valuable information about the sites. They are the first hand sources of information, of typical local beliefs over the sites and of religious or mythical inclinations to the elements of the sites. They exhibit local endeavours and enthusiasm of local initiatives, master plans or tourism strategies local people may have devised. Taking account of the subdued archaeological and pre-historic potentialities of this region of study, various literatures and locally written texts were reviewed, analyzed, evaluated, compared and rethought upon.

However, it's unfortunate that there are very few literatures on archaeology of Eastern Terai of Nepal. Its history is entangled into myths, legends, hear-says and repetitive citing of very few sources again and again. Although with its rich mythical backgrounds and traces of ancient settlement, Eastern Terai is a *terra incognita* in archaeological mainstream. With only few excavations in some places and unfortunately less trodden in terms of archaeological ventures, the Eastern Terai of Nepal is in fact a potential region for archeological explorations and researches like these.

As seen hitherto, in the context of the Eastern Terai of Nepal, there is a dire need of deciphering facts from exploration of this region and making wise analysis of archaeological findings to trace their historicity side by side going through texts written by different scholarly people in different times and climes.

For meeting objectives such as to identify, document and study historicity of archaeologically potential sites of the Eastern Terai region of Nepal, to study the present condition –the risks of natural agents and human activities, to study the cultural affiliations of different ethnic, indigenous and caste groups this research has been aided by studying many secondary sources, synchronic study, journals, articles published on local, national and international spheres.

The following literature reviewed are all in chronological order in accordance to their date of publication.

Nepal's most adhered official document regarding monuments and conservation is *Pracheen Smaarak Sarakchan Ain-2013 (Ancient Monument Preservation Act-1956)* that defines what ancient monument and archaeological object is along with definition of curio, preserved monument area, preservation and local bodies (Article-2). Along with the punishment provisions, classification of ancient monuments specifically with preservation of Archaeological object (Article, 17A), this document provides provisions of heritage management in Nepal. As this current research looks at heritages through the lens of conservation and management approaches, the *Ancient Monument Preservation Act (2013) (1956) of Nepal* was a must- have document throughout the duration of the research. *Constitution of Nepal* (B.S. 2072) and its provision of cultural heritage management as well as the shared notion of heritage management in province and state level was also some important issues to refer to through the constitutional provisions. As such these serve as legal documents and must be handy to the researchers while dealing with heritage management.

*Ancient Monument Preservation Act (2013)* was published in Nepal Gazette on B.S. (2013.7.27) / (12 Nov 1956) and with ten amendments as of now, there are 21 articles following a short Preamble.

This act is a good source for analyzing government level initiatives and provisions through policy act. Issues of looting, vandalism and site-destruction are common malpractices in heritages sites. This is much woeful in archaeological sites where sites are treasure- hunted. Risks of natural agents and human activities in archeological heritage sites are other major concerns. Hence, to suggest models of managing archaeological sites in Eastern Terai of Nepal, and analyze local governments' initiatives, this legal and official document is useful. The ancient monument preservation 2013 (1956) is a useful resource to refer to any queries or confusions about the state provisions on the same.

Oakley's *Man the Tool Maker* (1961, 5th edition) published by British Museum is a small sized book which the writer himself calls a handbook with total of ninety seven pages. This was selected as one of the reference materials to consult on lithic tools of past period. As this book discusses on chapters like the antiquity of man origins of Tool-Making, materials used for tools (wood, bone, shell, stone, metal) cultural sequences, Evolution of Paleolithic cultures (Pebble-tool, chopper tool, flake-tool, blade-tool) and implements associated with fossil man, which are all important because Eastern Terai has been at times documented as pre-historic sites owing to the discovery of lithic tools in Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari region. It is a sheer possibility that this researcher may come handy with some pre-historic tools or implements during exploration of the Eastern Terai, then this book was referred as reference book. This is not a full-fledged book on tools. As Eastern Terai, Nepal has already been known to as a neolithic site, taking this information as an opportunistic



leverage of study, this hand book served to understand lithic tools. The making of stone implements and outline of the cultural sequence were specifically helpful to understand tool technology of lithic times, hence was useful when making exploration in the eastern Terai.

Similarly Sankalia's *Stone Age Tools* (1964, 1st edition) disseminates good deal of information on lithic weapons that past men (during the development of Homo sapiens) used for their survival. Written by a Professor of Proto- Indian and Ancient Indian History of the Department of Ancient Indian Culture and Archaeology, reflects his wide and deep understanding of archaeological knowledge and stone tools.

The book is divided into six chapters and each chapter is conveniently divided into sub-chapters to address the purpose of explaining pre-historic sequence of tools, tool typologies and methods of making them. For field-work, exploring sites and within archaeologically potential regions of the Eastern Terai Nepal, this researcher has to do a lot of reconnaissance (*recci*) works, surveying field, surface findings. Some of the regions in Morang like Betana has already been proved as Neolithic site. Hence, encountering pre-historic sites cannot be a far-fetched fantasy. Hence some sense of understandings of the stone-tools was really helpful, which this book filled the purpose.

*Mechidekhi Mahakali* provides details of the country's geographical, natural, cultural ethnic and biotic information ultimately to bring all facts into a unified published portal/series. As such under an enormous effort of district officers, the then numerous administrative units and thousands of informants, a country's full fledged information was all a successful project published by *Suchana Vibhag* in B.S. 2031.

*Mechidekhi Mahakali* (Part- I) is only one of four voluminous books on 75 districts of Nepal. It has covered 16 districts of 3 zones that all were then included in Eastern Development Region. The book unfolds itself with a long factual description of regional summary (pp. 1-46).

The first part of the book, Mechi Zone comprises 4 districts, Taplejung, Paanchathar, Illam and Jhapa. The Second part Koshi zone covers 5 districts Sankhuasabha, Terathum, Dhankuta, Morang and Sunsari .The final part Sagarmatha Zone Comprises 7 districts – Solukhumbhu, Bhojpur, Khotang, Okhaldhunga, Udaypur, Saptari and Siraha. As for the present research, only three districts Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari are required but while studying the historicity of these three districts the past kings, their dynasty and territory details are important too. Hence, the surrounding peripheri and historicity of neighboring regions of these three districts are equally important. According to the book, this region has ethnic majority of Sherpas in the Northern Himalayan Sector, Kiratas in the mid hills, Tharu, Sunar, Danuwar to the east of the Koshi and Yadavs to the west of the Koshi (B.S 2031, p. 2). It is interesting to note hereby how the under majority ethnic tribes the Rajbanshis, Kochs and Dhimals are not enlisted, however in the districtwise descriptions, their names appear frequently. In the Nature and Landscape section, the definition to Terai states that “the flats lands formed by the Ganga (Ganges) and the Brhamaputra towards the south and that which lies at the foot of the Chure and the Mahabharat is called *Terai*, as dervied from Pharasi (Irani)”(Hooker, *as cited in Mechidekhi Mahakali*, p. 2). The Terai is said to have an average altitude of 200 m (660 ft) from the sea level.

The book states that the *Chure* is almost lost to the east of the Koshi and towards the north of the Jhapa it is seen as shredded hillocks and small mounded

peaks. Main cities, villages and headquarters are in the south. In the Historical background, Kiratis are described first. Citing from Iman Singh Chemjong's *Limbu Nepali- English Dictionary* (p. 9), it has the information that the Kirats are assumed to have entered Nepal from Kush-probably *Hind Kush* (Mechidekhi Mahakali, Part-I, B. S. 2031, p. 14).

This book, written elaboratively with every minute detail on all aspects of districts is listed among and with all other secondary sources as a very important secondary source for the research.

Gurung's *Vignettes of Nepal* (1980) is his personal but factual perspectives of Nepal as he saw Nepal as a traveler cumexplorer. Most of the chapters are about Western Nepal. Only one particular Chapter 22 on *East of Kathmandu* (pp. 357-365) is about the eastern part of Nepal as what he saw the Eastern part of Nepal in May 1967. So 57 years ago eastern Nepal is worth reading written by a celebrated writer. The region has gone a drastic change in all political, economical and other respects now. There is a brief comparison of the Kathmandu to this part, its development to that of Jhapa and Kanchanpur. At one point he writes: "In 1961, Jhapa district with a total population of 119,700 represented speakers of more than 27 languages and dialects derived from Indo-Aryan, Tibet Burman and Munda-families", thus the immense variety of languages indicates that Jhapa has been a much sought-after place for refugees in search of land from diverse sources (1980, p. 359). There is also a brief story of Koch and the descendants of Haria Koch of Assam and how they came to Nepal.

The book was only used as a reference material to compare historical details of the Koch along with other review of other secondary materials. Gurung (1980) briefly touches to give historicity of the region in the following way:

Morang was ruled by Sangla-Ing in the beginning of the 15th century and one of his descendants Bijay Narayan Rai (1584-1609) established on the hillock (487 m) overlooking Dharan, his capital in 1584 A.D. and named it Vijaypur (city of victory). According to the Kirat Vamsavali, he was instigated to select the site by his friend Murey Hang. The Limbu Chief of Phedap who later became his chief minister. The capital was conquered by Lohang Sen, ruler of Makwanpur, in 1609 and the same king is said to have built the Varah temple at Chatra on the banks of the Kosi, Kamadatta Sen (1761-1769), a descendant of Lohang Sen was murdered and succeeded by Buddhi Karna Rai in 1769 who in turn was defeated by the Gorkhalis on 17th July 1774 and the town was occupied. Buddhi Karna Rai was tortured to death in 1777 and its burial place at Vijaypur, a simple shrine known as BurhaSubba (god king) is now a place of worship. (p. 356)

Some of the details by Gurung, although short has been helpful for the research.

Nepal's *Nepal Nirukta* (B.S. 2040, 1st edition) provides some interesting researched essays on the peripheries of the eastern Nepal. The writer has compiled his 30 articles in this book written at different times and different periods.

The first essay *Nepal Nirukta* vividly describes the geographical location, area of ancient Nepal in reference to many historical and secondary sources like *Atharvaparisishta*, where among 6 great countries Nepal's name is enlisted as *Nepal Kamrup (Assam) Videha (Mithila), Ujjain, Udumbar and Kaikay* (B.S. 2040, p.6). About a reference of *Skandapurana*, he writes how a country called Nepal had one lakh villages and Nepal must have been a very large country (B.S 2040, p.7). This information is important to note as he assumes that this must be a Kirat population as in the *Mahabharata* it is stated in the hill sector of *Mithila* there were seven Kirat

territories (B.S 2040, p.8). In essay covering Vijaypur, he writes how Vijaypur, in one period of history was full of palaces, its rich identity is now turned into a deserted jungle (B.S 2040, p.272) Today's Vijaypur was once the capital city of Sen kings. Nepal writes:

To the north of the Vijapur, a hill which has a dead end must have had a fort  
Downhill the location of the fort, a plain ground is visible, which is said to  
be Tundikhel of Sen-kings and towards the south, and there is a temple of  
Panchakanya. A blocked hole is said to be a tunnel. (B.S. 2040, pp.272-273)

Khatiwada (B.S. 2068) in his book *Morang ka Parayatakiya Sambhawanana ra Chunauti* has also mentioned about a *Bhatabhunge Darbar*. Vijaypur has been said to be included in Sen kingdom by Lohang Sen, Mukunda Sen's son by defeating a Koch king called Vijay Narayan, who a Bengali Hindu was chased by Muslims (Nepal, B.S. 2040, p.278). In between Bhimsensthan and Hanumansthan- a hill is referred to by the writer as having foundation remains of the palace of Sen kings, but there are no remains (B.S. 2040, p.273). In one stance Nepal (B.S. 2040), claims that before the advent of the Royal Shahs, Vijaypur's history indicates that it had been ruled by Rai, Limbu, Koche and Sens (B.S. 2040, p. 279), but their reign had been terrifying for people and he writes examples it through some legends and oral narratives. In this essay, there are interpretations of written facsimiles written by various historic characters like Kamdutta Sen, Buddhi Karna Rai and Harischandra Sen which are all worth-reading.

The book is rich in historical and mythical interpretations ranging from article that analyses, questions and re-questions the etymology of word "Nepal" to articles that deal with excerpts from the *Ramayana, Mahabharata and Vedas* and *Puranas*. All of the articles are entailed with numerous citations, analysis and some

ethnographic details and field visit of the writer himself make this book an authentic secondary source for this research.

For the present research, it is essential to deeply know about the past rulers, their state extension programs and detailed events of the East. Nepal (B.S. 2040) deals with *Koshi Pradesh* (pp. 167-181), *Vijaypur* (pp. 271-307), *Varahkshetra- An Historical Account* (pp. 308-340), *Chanditatha Kiratasthithi* (p. 341-355), *Purbi Nepal ko Sankshipta Sanskritik Adhyan* (pp. 356-366) and *Maina Raja Maina Rani* (pp. 336-340). These essays, undoubtedly were worth knowing and valuable references materials for the research.

Some important international and globally accepted documents for cultural and archaeological heritage management were the goldmines that helped to study and compare archaeological heritage management in our country. These were good literary sources too. *ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Heritage 1990* (Retrieved from [www.icomos.org](http://www.icomos.org)) stated in the charter itself that it was prepared by the International Committee for the Management of Archaeological Heritage (ICAHM) and approved by the 9th General Assembly in Lausanne in 1990. This in its introduction states that was inspired by the success of the *Venice Charter*. The 1990 charter has nine articles. Drafted in simple and succinct manner, the charter has following chapters in which definitions of terms and provisions on chapter are elaborated sufficiently.

(a) Definition and Introduction (b) Integrated protection Policies (c) Legislation and Economy (d) Survey (e) Investigation (f) Maintenance and Conservation (g) Presentation, Information, Reconstruction (h) Professional Qualifications (i) International Co-operation

The charter as globally accepted as a source to model archaeological heritage management and followed at global level and widely recognized for training professional too was referred to along with other charters like the *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013* (Retrieved from [http://portal.iphan.gov.br/uploads/ckfinder/arquivos/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31\\_10\\_2013.pdf](http://portal.iphan.gov.br/uploads/ckfinder/arquivos/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31_10_2013.pdf)) are examples to list some. *ICOMOS Venice Charter's* (Retrieved from [https://www.icomos.org/charters/venice\\_e.pdf](https://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf)) Article 15 emphasizes on excavations of scientific standards and recommends on international principles adopted by UNESCO in 1956. A part of its provision in Article 16 mentions about provisions of record-keeping and its easy availability to the research workers. The article states “it is recommended that the report should be published”.

Sharer and Ashmore's *Archaeology: Discovering Our Past* (1993, 2nd edition) is a voluminous book on Archaeology, exploring how archaeologists around the world do their work and use analysis and results to reconstruct the past.

With total eighteen chapters, the book's simplistic approach well-fits the newcomers of archaeology or any expert with the details and fascination of archaeology that help any expert to go through chapters without feeling bored. After each chapter, small interesting event about 'Archaeologists at work', co-relating with the theme and objective of each chapter are informative too. In Introduction part, the writers write:

In pursuing the past, archaeology addresses questions such as: where, when and why did human life begin on earth? How and why did some early human societies develop increasingly complex cultures? Why did some others not become more complex? How and why do civilizations rise and fall? (1993, p.7).

Chapter-I, *Viewing the Past* deals with many introductory aspects of archaeology, especially with what archaeology is, the differences between archaeology and pseudo-archaeology and information on archaeology as a profession. The last chapter - XVIII *Challenges to Archaeology* is particularly important as it deals with looting and antiquities collecting, cultural Resource Management, Conservation Archaeology responsibilities of archaeology and even a sub-chapter on working with concerned ethnic group as in the field-study. As this researcher is all set to work with ethnic communities like Rajbanshi, Dhimal, Tharu, Koch and Satars all in all, this book is an important book on archaeology and useful for the research.

Sharma's *Nepalko Killa Vastukala* (B.S.2055) gives an overview of fort systems that prevailed in Nepal for long time. The places like Kichakbadh and Bhediari, in Eastern Nepal have shown remains of fort like structures and this book is ideal to compare and relate the fort systems that developed in the past Eastern Nepal.

The first part of the book provides introduction of fort systems-*gadh, killa and durga* along with the chronological development of fort. There are brief details of security systems in the Greek, Nile, and Indus civilization and even top that of *Vedic* period and which are mentioned in the *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Kautilya's Arthashastra, Mnausmriti-etc* (pp. 3-15). Part II entitled as (pp. 21- 27) describes about the Lichhavi, Medieval and the Shah's fort systems and development in brief which are quite relevant for the present research.

Sharma's *Biratnagarko Aitihāsik Adhyān -B.S. 2055 [Historical Study of Biratnagar]* is a mini-research conducted under Research wing of Humanities and social science faculty, Tribhuvan University, Biratnagar: Degree Campus. This report was prepared by Sharma, the Department of History of Degree Campus, Biratnagar.



The study was carried out as a mini research under *Anusandhan Mahasakha*, Tribhuvan University in B.S 2055.

The research is based on questionnaires, primary and secondary sources. The whole of the research report is divided into 11 chapters. The first seven chapters from introduction of the research to geography, Naming of Biratnagar, Ancient Biratnagar, Medieval Biratnagar, Modern Biratnagar and Rana era's Biratnagar are important for the research whereas the latter chapters dealing with political movements in B.S. 2007, 2036 and 2046 are although informative but not relevant and necessary to the research. This mini -research specifically deals with Biratnagar, the town which is one of the important sites of study for this research. One archaeological place Bhediaryi, as believed to be of the Mahabharata period lies in this region. Researcher Sharma has begun by giving geographical introduction of the area and slowly delved into the etymological interpretations of Biratnagar. According to the report, the name Biratnagar in its initial phase was "Nepalgunj" (B.S. 2055, p. 6). He gives further information on how it became Chandragunj to Gograha and to Morang. The report chapter is conveniently divided into three sections as:

(a) Ancient Biratnagar, (b) Medieval Biratnagar(c) Biratnagar in Rana period.

Some other chapters relating to democracy movements in Nepal are not relevant for this research; however, major contents of the research report are useful as these provide insights to analyze historicity of Biratnagar.

The importance of the report also lies in the fact that it is prepared as an academic material for the purpose of studying regional history. Although a report cannot be a full fledged resource material for elaborated analysis of Doctorate dissertation, the contents in it can be compared with other materials and results of field work.

Hamilton's *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, (2007, reprint edition) is a remarkable attempt of the writer to describe Nepal, which he documented seeking help from various sources, refugees traveler and his trusted fellow-men during 1802 to 1803 at first phase and other two years, which he spent collecting information's about the country. The whole account is divided into two parts- Part I and Part II.

For the purpose of this research Part II accounts are highly relevant and useful because of Hamilton's first -hand experiences and knowledge he gathered on Eastern Nepal (greater Nepal at the time then).

The second part is an account of the particular states which formerly existed, families by which each was governed. Chapter I of Part II is titled as the states East of the River Kali and there are two sections in chapter 1. Section I is about inhabitants and government of Sikkim, which are helpful to trace and compare the historicity of Eastern Terai during the early 19th century. Section II vividly depicts dominions of the family descended from Mukanda Sen, Rais of Makwanpur. Hence, Hamilton's book serves as an important secondary source analyzing and comparing later historical chronicles of Eastern Nepal.

*Kichakbadh Excavation Project, Preliminary Report-2058/2059.*

(Unpublished report) by Acharya was useful to correlate this researcher's observation and interview findings on the site called Kichakbadh in Jhapa. Archaeologist Uddhav Acharya did series of excavtions at these sites. The preliminary report prepared by archaeological officer Acharya and documented by Purna Bahadur Shrestha is the outcome of brief archaeological survey starting on B.S. 2058/9/27 (2002 AD). The exploration and trial trenching was done under the Department of Archaeology, Nepal.

This unpublished report lacks the standard format of a report that should have been so clearly and manageably written on such widely noticed/followed field works that were conducted in difficult situation of Maoist insurgency in the country. The report as received by this researcher is actually just a 4 page brief outline of some limitations and finding during the excavation and for the rest covered by 18-20 photos and some drawings.

Although with little descriptions, this report has been important for the research as it is an authentic source prepared by the archaeologist who conducted excavation in Kichakbadh, Jhapa and after this session, about five other archaeological sessions have been led by him in the same site.

According to the report about 10 *bigah* of the site was surveyed although dividing it into grids was difficult. After points were determined for grid, trench layouts started from 2059/10/02. The grids were divided from A to Z (except 1 and 0), that were done only later on (Acharya, p. 1). The report further elaborates that the trench KBQ 4 was excavated first until the depth of 1 m. In second stage KP P 3 was excavated where a support wall was seen. Then series of other excavations followed (Acharya, p. 2).

Along with red pottery shred, findings such as bricks of  $42 \times 30 \times 5 \text{ cm}^3$   $39 \times 28 \times 7 \text{ cm}^3$  and  $28 \times 28 \times 14 \times 5 \text{ cm}^3$  have been documented in the report (pp. 2, 3).

As this was just a preliminary report, other subsequent articles had to be studied that provided information about the archaeological activity in Kichakbadh. In this report the excavation officer has assumed that this site can be related to before Christian era as per comparative datings of the finds.

Similarly Acharya's another unpublished *Kichakbhadh Excavation Project, Excavation Reports- 2060/2061* was also an important source to go through the

excavation series that followed for years. This is a detailed excavation report prepared and submitted by archaeological officer Uddhav Acharya, to the Department of Archaeology, Nepal. Purna Bahadur Shrestha has assisted to document it again. This report covers excavation detail, findings, drawings and photographs of the session 2060-2061, following the survey and trial trenching session of 2058 B.S.

According to the report, during B.S. 2058- a 15 day survey and trial trenching in two quadrants a big wall and a small wall had been found in KB P 3/4. The big wall was defense wall and the small as a remains of a building (Acharya, p. 1). The report covers in very brief the 41 day excavation program aimed to find the whereabouts of the wall and other subsequent information about the site (Acharya, p. 1).

Following the walls, other major information about the site was revealed. The report is valuable secondary material to read about findings of pottery, corded waves, roof-tiles (p. 3) and most importantly of stratigraphy (p. 4) of the site. The report states that within 180 cm of the trench KB A<sup>2</sup> 8/4 seven layers were revealed (Acharya, p. 46).

The archaeologist in this report has concluded that owing to the findings upto this session of excavation, Kichakbadh's antiquity date backs to Sunga-Kushan period as similar type of findings of Bhediyari, Biratnagar have been dated to this period. Antiquities like iron arrow head, points, precious handles of knife, artistic pottery sherds were revealed (Acharya, p. 5). This research along with such reports draws community feelings towards archaeological sessions and other empirical explorations in the region to fill the gap that the reports lacked.

Similarly international charters are important for the present research. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible cultural Heritage* (2003) was drafted by the General Conference of the UNESCO meeting in Paris at its 32nd session, it has been adopted on October 17, 2003. It defines *ich*, describes note of state parties (Article 11, p. 18) measures of safeguarding education, awareness raising and capacity building along with note of communities. There are altogether 40 articles and this convention is worth reading, re-reading and referring during the venture.

This current research deals with the issues of conservation and management of archaeological sites at 3 levels:

(a) Local, (b) Stakeholder and (c) Government level.

This research includes suggestions and measures (for man-made and natural threats). It is obvious that some sites- if not all such sites have *ich* (intangible cultural heritage elements) in them. For example-belief, myths, ritual and fairs traditionally transmitted to such sites from generation to generation.

Renfrew and Bahn's *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice* (2003, 3rd Edition) provides more than six hundred illustrations and is a book that serves as an important reference for secondary materials with information on world famous sites of Pompei, and sites ranging from North America to Australia. It covers the basics of archaeological sites and descriptions of features and even about stone age tools. The chapters especially with archaeology in religion and salvage archaeology has provided helpful information while dealing with archaeological sites of Eastern Terai, like Kichakbadh, Bhediari, Betana and their conservation approaches.

This book on archaeology is divided into 14 chapters each entailed by summary, further reading and box features providing related and relevant

exemplifications, pictures and interpretations. Before the chapter begins, the writers in introduction part clearly depict the nature and aims of archaeology. Providing a brief introduction with the nature and aims of archaeology this part provides the relationship archaeology as anthropology, history and as a science itself. The broad scope of archaeology is laid down well with the overall plan of the book. Further for convenience study, 14 chapters are neatly segregated into 3 parts.

The first part covers the phases of archaeology from the beginning to the modern phase with details of numerous contributors like Pitt Rivers, Darwin, Leaky couple among many others. At one part, the writers write "Modern archaeology took root in the 19<sup>th</sup> C. with the acceptance of three key concepts: the great antiquity of humanity, Darwin's principle of evolution and the three age system for ordering material culture (2003, p. 48). Various examples of archaeological evidences, cultural formation process, where survey should be carried out, ground & air reconnaissance assessing the layout of sites and features chronology models etc. which are all useful. Some examples of archaeological ventures in different parts of the world will serve as good information for site survey.

The second part discusses on chapters of social archaeology, environmental archaeology (studying landscape) diets of ancient people and tool technologies of the past man. The chapters like 'who were they? What were they like deal with identifying physical attributes and distinguishing sex through human skeleton, so these all are, though basics of archaeology, are exactly not needed in my study, however, these are worth knowing to analyse reports on archaeology.

Archaeology and the Public is the most important chapter in the book that covers how archaeology answers not only what happened in the past but also why it

happened? (Renfrew & Bahn, 2003, p. 933) and helps construct our identity, our cultural inheritance and most importantly chapters on Salvage archaeology.

At one point the writers justify the roles and responsibilities of an archaeologist as “the role of the archaeologist is to locate and record as many sites as possible before they are destroyed by new roads, buildings or dams or by peat cutting and drainage in wetland environment” (2003, pp. 73-74). The concept of salvage archaeology and importance of archaeology is well explained in this book.

Similarly, Pandey & Regmi’s *Nepalko Prag Itihasas* (B.S 2062) is an important resource material to go through the development of pre historic studies in Nepal.

Divided into nine chapters starting from the Introduction of Pre- History to Human Evolution, the chapters also detail on pre historic cultures and lithic tools. Especially the chapters relating Fossils of Hominid in Nepal: Ramapithecus, Pre-historic exploration in Nepal, Paleolithic Periods of Nepal build up the concept of how was the state of prehistoric study in Nepal. Chapter 8 titled as *Neolithic in Nepal* (pp. 62-78) is further divided into sub headings like *Eastern Nepal*, *Kathmandu Valley*, Mid- Nepal, Western Nepal (focusing on Mustang). The writers document the various weapons used by the pre- historic man. At one reference, they have written about the eastern region in Nepal as areas of activities of the pre historic men. Pandey and Regmi (B.S. 2062) give an example of a finding of an axe like weapon found by one Chandra Jung Thapa in the village of Vaijanathpur of Jhapa (p.65) that was retrieved from under 9 ft. Certain examples in the book give glimpses and Eastern Nepal with potentialities of linking it to have prehistoric activities and prehistoric sequences. This book full of pictures and pre historic tools

with scale is a goldmine for knowing about the the eastern Nepal and pre historic findings connected to it.

*Kichakbadh smarika* [*Kichakbadh memoir*] (B.S. 2066) edited by Chintamani Dahal, Giri Gopal and others (Eds.) has altogether thirteen articles including one from Uddhav Acharya, the archaeologist under whose leadership five sessions of excavations and trial trenching has been carried out. There are other articles, interviews and essays from popular and well known local writers written on variety of topics like myths, archaeology, experiences, and festivals in the area which will be of utmost importance during the research. However, the articles need to be supplemented with the keen researcher's eye to evaluate on which direction is heritage management going on there. This gap is fulfilled through the research.

Khatiwada's *Varahkshetrako Sanskritik Sampada* [*Cultural Heritages of Varahkshetra*] (B.S. 2066) provides elaborate insights of Varahkshetra, one of the sites of study in this research. Varahkshetra is one of the most religiously acclaimed pilgrimages of the Eastern Nepal. Apart from its archaeological importance, various intangible aspects, different religious fairs, worshipping patterns and more importantly its association with the past rulers and inhabitants the site is very important for the present research. This full-fledged book on the same contains elaborate descriptions through nine chapters ranging from introduction, development of vaishnav culture to art and architecture of Varahkshetra and fairs.

The author has mentioned that his work was in no way to fill the gap in the study of history, religion, society and culture and to aid in regional text/writing. In the sixth chapter, the writer mentions about the place called *Chatara* as a prominent point for the pilgrims of the Terai region to enter the *Varahkshetra* region. As such, he has admitted that the antiquity of Chatara has not till date been traced. But as a



possibility of a transit point, it is much assumable that people have lived here in ancient period (Khatiwada, B.S. 2066, p. 276-277). Heritage risks and scientific management process of the sites are not addressed sufficiently in accordance to global practices of heritage management.

Khatiwada's *Morangko Sanskritik Paryatan, Sambhawanara Chhunautiharu* (B.S. 2068) [*Cultural Tourism, Prospects and Challenges of Morang*] is divided into seven chapters that are all useful source for this venture as they cover many (if not all) the archeologically potential sites of Morang district. The chapters are divided as- Introduction to Tourism, History of Morang, Wetlands and Ponds in Morang, Religious, Historical and Archeological Spheres of Morang, Hills of Morang and Tourism, Special Festivals, Fairs and Celebrations in Morang and Challenges to Tourism Development in Morang. The fourth chapter- Religious, Historical and Archeological Spheres of Morang, is the most useful part for this current research. From a brief introduction of Biratnagar (pp. 47-48), to various temples like Laxmi Narayan and Radha-Krishna etc. the archaeological aspects of Vedyari, objects found here and along with Dhanpalsthan's details the writer has pointed about the importance of an old city Rangeli and the mounds in Harischandragadhi (pp.69-86). In Khatiwada's own words, Morang is archaeologically and culturally rich region. Although written from tourism approach in the region, this book shortlists as many as places that can be followed through in the field work to extend onto the findings of the writer.

Khatiwada's another book *Raja Dhanpalko Itihas [History of King Dhanpal]* (B.S. 2069) is also is a useful source for getting wider exposure to the historicity of the Eastern Nepal especially in the Medieval Nepal. Regarding ancient history of East Nepal in one reference Khatiwada writes that prior to the B.C period, the Morang

region was one pertinent part of the Mithila Kingdom (B.S. 2066, p. 2). After the collapse of *Mithila*, this region fell victim to becoming parts of other republics, gaining autonomous and freedom at times and being invaded again and again.

*Raja Dhanpalko Itihas* is divided into seven short chapters. The first chapter gives introduction of Dhanpalgadhi which lies in Morang district in Kaseni. In the very beginning, Khatiwada has confessed that while looking for the historicity of this particular site, historicity has not been clear and locals relate this site to be the fort of king Dhanpal but until now excavation has not been done here (B.S. 2069, p. 1). The second chapter gives around brief introduction of Morang district, its boundary-borders, geography, natural heritages and brief historicity. The third and the fourth chapters, History of Dhanpalgadhi and Archaeological remains of Dhanpalgdhi are particularly important for the present research. Before the actual site visit, study of such materials are worth knowing as pre- knowledge further provokes other levels of research. The whole site of Dhanpalgadhi is spread in 35 bigaha and 5 kattha land, (Khatiwada, B.S. 2069, p. 32) which is quite a huge historic site. In absence of literary sources and excavation, this work is the writer's own observation and interpretations of local beliefs, myths and legends. In one context he writes:

There is no any reference to the name of Dhanpal as a person, ruler or a king in the pages of Morang's ancient and medieval history. Fatefully this is same in even modern era's *guthi* papers, donation or other such types of records. However Dhanpal is a king in the traditional folk rituals in Morang's indigenous *Tharus* and *Rajbanshis*. He is considered as a true god in their folksongs, local folktales and ritual. (B.S. 2069, p. 32)

The archaeological remains of the site which is actually a mound, is discussed in chapter 4. Temples, idols, old bricks, security wall (12 feet wide around the mound P.

45) remains of buildings, written manuscripts are briefly discussed from page 41-48. This chapter is very important and provides a clear over view of the site prior to the field visit. Chapter 5 describes about *Siruwa* fair and various gods and goddesses of the indigenous local people around there. Chapter 6 briefly discusses about aspects and prospects of Morang's tourism in the backdrop of Dhanpalgadhi. Last chapter 7 summarizes the whole account and issues raised in this research work.

Khatiwada's *Kausiki Sanskriti [Koshi Culture]* (B.S.2070) provides information about the history of the region that has been around the Koshi region. The Koshiriver that is one of the three major river systems of Nepal apart from the Gandaki and the Karnali is also the eastern geographical delimitation of this research. Here, the author has properly analyzed the cultural aspects of the region along with the information provided on the political history of the Koshi region (*Kausiki Pradesh*) and including in here the details of Chatara(an important religious place) in the region.

The book comprises of thirteen chapters. The first chapter gives introduction of Kaushiki the culture in the Koshi river system. Some general information are laid out here. For instance, Saptakoshi is the biggest river in Nepal and it originates from about 7000m altitude of Nepal and Tibet and ultimately meets with the Ganges in Kurshilla, Vihar of India (Khatiwada, B.S. 2070, p. 2). He states that the Saptakoshi has cultural, historical, religious and natural importance and that the Koshi culture is regarded the oldest in Nepal (B.S. 2070, p. 2). The first chapter briefly described about the tributaries of the Koshi, their origin and their destination. The pilgrimage site around the Koshi like Manakamana of Sanlhunsabha, Varahshetra of Sunsari, Vishnipaduka of Sunsari, Chataradham of Sunsari, Aulimath of Sunsari are briefly

introduced in the first chapter along with festivals and fairs associated with such religious sites.

The second chapter initiated with controlling its water flow from the Indian government's ambitious project is vividly described. This chapter although informative is not so relevant for the present research. However, the third chapter, *Kaushiki Pradeshko Rajnaitik Itihas* (Political History of the Koshi Region) (pp. 66-89) is very useful for understanding the whereabouts of the past in this region. Khatiwada has cited many previously acclaimed (much discussed) works of ImansinghChemjong, DC Sarkar, Gyanmani Nepal, F.B Hamilton, Vishnu Prasad Ghimire and Dhanavajra Vajracharya to analyze the history of this region. He traces back to the upanisidic period, since the existence of the ancient Mithila state which later on divided into many states. The region east to the Koshi known as Matsyadesh (Khatiwada, B.S. 2070, p. 67). Khatiwada mentions that Praagjyotish was also one ancient *pauranic* state of the Koshi region (p. 67) and also mentions of a text called *Royal History of Kuchvihar*, thus taking its reference that the Kiratas took over the Kingdom of Pragjyotish from a King called Ratnasur. Vagadutta's 23 generation ruled here who were declared King by Sri Krishna after killing Nakasur, until the seventh century the region of Vaskar (Khatiwada, B.S. 2070,p. 68). Before the Christian era, this region was known as *Matsyadesh* and king Virata ruled over here Khatiwada (B.S. 2070, p.68) cities *Vavisyapuram* here. In the era, that followed *Matsyadesh*, was divided further into many other states like Angadesh, Bangadesh, Poundadesh (p. 69). This region was ruled by the Kiratas in the ancient period so was called *Kiratadesh* (Khatiwada, B.S. 2070, p. 71). Since the beginning of the medieval period, the king called Murrehang from the east hills invaded the flat Terai so this region was names Morang. After the establishment of Simraungarh in B.S.1154 many regions of the

Koshi fell into it and the Tirhutes of Simraungarh had extended the territory upto Tista in the east (Khatiwada, B.S. 2070, p. 72). Khatiwada in the same book writes that Kuchvihar at certain time may have well extended upto this region. The region faced many ups and downs and the hill Kiratas frequently invaded the Terai when favourable and retreated when in danger

After the fall of Simraungarh in B.S.1362, the Koshi region fell under the Muslims when hill was ruled over by the Kiratas. The Muslims didn't get to rule for long here (Khatiwada, B.S. 2070, p. 72). The author does not write here, who the Muslim rulers were, how long did they rule or where did they come from? But he cites a handwritten document *NarapatijayacharyaSworodayatika* written during the time of Jagjyotirmalla which tells that the Koshi region was under the influence of the Mallas of the valley. It cites YakshaMalla of the Kathmandu Valley's Kingdom extended to Bengal in the east and to the Ganges in the South with this reference Khatiwada (B.S. 2070) exert the possibility that the whole of the Koshi region may have fallen to the hands of the Mallas (p. 73). The influence of the Mallas in this region have been stated by Gyanmani Nepal too which is cited by Khatiwada.

The existence of 10 Limbu brothers who ruled village established Mundhum (Khatiwada, B. S. 2070, p. 74). The Sen of Makwanpur then took over the region until invaded by Gurkhas in 1831 B.S. Chapter Four Prachin-Haridwar is described as a significant cultural place of all eras. Despite a long history of the Koshi region the history of main centre of Chatardham is unclear. Here, Khatiwada analyzes the history of Chataradham which can be relevant to the research as there are other sites of study like Ramdhuni during the current research. Other chapters are not relevant to research except the last chapter that deals with the Koshi culture and Tourism, which will be helpful for suggesting measures to improve the popularity of the region.

Michele's *Culture Heritage Management Process: Action Plan for Banteay ChhMar* (2014) is a report prepared by archaeologist of UNESCO. Cambodia has case studied the site of Banteay Chhamer (in Cambodia), after realizing the need for new approaches to conservation and methodology for managing heritage sites. This 108 pages report aims to "provide the framework for a holistic and guided approach for the conservation and management of the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage of the site" (p. vii). The report is divided into three parts that are entailed with conclusions, glossary and bibliography.

The first part focuses on Cultural Policy conveying a strong message how "cultural policy of a nation should create conditions to preserve heritage and develop contemporary vibrant cultural life" (Michele, 2014, p. 1). It focuses on overview of cultural policy of Cambodia, preservation, tourism and education practices and recognition. This short part of the report is general information and useful only for information sake, at the stake of this present research. The second part focuses on cultural Heritage Management by using previous research produced by international centres as ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN to summarize the process of the creation of a Master Plan for Cultural Heritage. The approach necessary for effectively managing historic areas as necessary for effectively managing historic areas as attractive, competitive and multifunctional places are well laid in this part of the report.

The third part focuses on Action Plan for Banteay Chhmar. Located 110 kms Northwest of Angkor in the ThmarPuok, the temple of Banteay-Chhamr in Cambodia is located within a site that is found to be rich of archaeological remains. Risk assessment map, consolidating high risk areas, following up several conservation activities, in collaboration with national and international partners, mapping natural actions and human actions for decay categorising risk levels (Zero, medium, high),

categorizing measures (Emergency, urgent, preventive), establishing long term strategies for ordinary maintenance (Staffing, programming, making security protocols) all are briefly but clearly laid out in this part.

Although this report is centrally aimed at heritage management issues in archaeologically rich site around the temple of Bantacy Chhmar in Cambodia, various components, strategies including research and education or critical research and education as critical components of cultural heritage management is a prominent report to go through before undertaking this current research.

The local memoir *Dhanushkuti* (B.S. 2072) published by Shree Kirateshwor Mahadeva Dhanushkutidham, contains more than 40 articles and research texts that are related to the religious site of Dhanushkuti, Krishnathumki, Varahkshetra, Sadhutar etc. in Jhapa. The articles called *Krishnathumki* (by- Khanal, K.), *Significance of Varahkshetra* ( by Subedi, G.) and *Sadhutar* (by- Khatiwada, L.) all provided important facades on the religious importance of the spots. Without such articles that are written by the local writers, many important aspects of the sites of the study would have been missed out. However because local memoirs mostly glorify the spots through myths, religious connections or through epics, there was a dire need to contemplate on the spots through heritage management issues or archaeological findings at local level if any.

Pandit Yogesh's *VarahKshetra Mahatmaya* (B.S. 2073) is a religious book with its contents on Hindu Puranas and religious manuscripts that serve as an important source to know about the heritages of *Varahkshetra*. It is divided into short 10 chapters that deal with the introduction of the Varakshetra, Routes, Rivers, Information about hills, sites of religious performances, Shrines around the Main temple, Varah Avatar and stories of the Varah Avtar and Varahkshetra. This book

does not have any archeological insight. Although not written from archaeological perspectives this is a goldmine to know about the religious aspects of the temple, whose associations with other places of Eastern Terai are helpful. Undertaking explorative research, it is justifiable that texts written by priests of temple like this contain ancient belief and myths, religious scripts and religious histories, hence this book is worth going through.

Bryman's *Social Research Methods* (2016), disseminates useful research process and strategies on all types of research- quantitative, qualitative and mixed. The book provides an overview of research strategies ranging from literature review to errors in questionnaires. There are a lot of examples and simple narration of the overall research methodologies and hence was useful at all times during the research to go through or refer to at times for learning about research- methodologies.

*World Heritage Sites and Tourism: Global and Local Relations* (2018). Edited by Laurent Bourdeav, Maria Gravari-Barbasasbas and Mike Robinson contains many articles related to the world heritage site management and tourism.

This volume of 17 articles draws upon multiple facets of the relationship between world heritage sites and local communities dwelling nearby them. The strength of all the articles lie on the fact that they build upon serious issues of ownership, impacts and management procedures of 33 world heritage sites to converge upon an undeniable truth that management of heritage sites not only mean addressing buildings, landscapes etc. but it centers around managing communities that live, work and continue generations near such sites.

However, not all articles are relevant as sources of literature review for this present research. Some selected articles that are related to community management,



archaeological sites transformation and revitalization of such sites are selected hereby and only those are briefly discussed for this purpose of reviewing literature.

The first research article by the editors Bourdeau, Gravari-Barbas, and Robinason *Tourism at World Heritage Sites* (2017, pp.1-17) convey the position and function of community after inscription of a site onto World Heritage List. The authors address in the very beginning how after inscription in World Heritage, the meaning, organization and management issues considerably change. (2017, p.1) They refer to Morisset and Dormeals (2011) how after UNESCO designation extends social, economic, political local, regional, national and international actors in and near the site.

Threats like rapid urbanization, global motilities, tourism etc. are discussed. This article also sheds light on issues of reappraising community engagement with heritage, by summarizing all seventeen articles into a single addressing so is worth reading.

Litka's *Indigenous Perspectives on Ownership and Management of Yucatan Archaeological Sites* (2017, pp.67-76) highlights how local employees mediate between tourist, government and private business (p.67) showing ancient Maya Past in Power-hierarchies of two places Chichen Itza and the nearby archaeological community of Coba. How the fame of Chichen Itza in Yucatan peninsula lends to overshadow equally other significant sites of Maya is interesting and can be related to Nepal's heritage value in both eastern & western parts.

Brulotte's *Archaeological replica Vendors and an Alternative History of a Mexican Heritage Site: The case of Monte Alban* focuses on replica vending and problems faced by vendors while selling artifacts to the visitors around the site; so

economic issue of heritage management and have been well laid upon through case studies (2017, p-56-66).

Similarly, Halls' *Machu Picchu: an Andean Utopia for the twenty-first Century?* (2017, pp.37-44) is an ethnographic work that case studies tourist guides in MachiPichhu and their emotional perspectives with the sites especially that of being 'Incan'. Community's emotional attachment with the heritage can be learnt through this article.

Mcglade's *Visitor Management in sensitive historic landscapes: Strategies to avoid Conflict in Hardrian's wall world heritage site* (2017, pp.189-197) with a study of the UK's iconic historical landscapes depicts how after opening of Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail, a 135 km recreational walking route did damage to the archaeological fabric of the wall and after focus on its conservation and protection was restored, this study renders how "rigorous field based monitoring regime ensures that management decisions are based on reliable data" to address heritage management issue (p.189). In this way, this volume sheds light on heritage management issue on multiple facets, the various international sites the study of that helped heavily to compare conservation and management approaches in eastern Nepal.

Books and articles are written at different times and climes, with different purposes. Many purposes are constructive but many a time researchers and writers intentionally or unintentionally overshadow truth becoming biased to highlight their claims. Especially such claims are made to glorify places through heroic mythical characters that lack concrete proofs. As such, a very systematic study of literature review have been made, that further will be analyzed and authenticated with field-research.

All the texts, articles and research articles referred herein the literature review will build up more on the research problem of this current project and will help revise, refine and provoke further issues and researchable quests to meet the objectives targeted in this current Phd research. This research has a different purpose and significance than all the texts and chapters mentioned here so far.

The dimensions of heritage as intangible, tangible and also as a continual process of Cultural development in any region like the Eastern Terai of Nepal will be vividly explained and its historicity will be analyzed through exploration, site- survey and evaluation of archaeological needs of the sites. The previous works of few writers are either focused separately on history or tourism potentiality of sites or on descriptive approaches to temples and other heritages.

## **2.1 Research Gap**

Few research works have highlighted or briefly explored the heritage sites of Eastern Terai of Nepal. The ancient history is unclear too and will remain unclear unless the archaeological finds are properly compared and important regions are explored and excavated. So far the historicity of the region is chiefly narrated through the references of epics like the Ramayana or the Mahabharata or through some indigenous oral narratives. Such narrations are doubted by many scholars because of the lack of concrete historical or archaeological evidences. Prehistoric surveys have been conducted in the neighboring district of Mahottari two decades back with promising results and indications that the Terai could have been an alluring site of prehistoric occupation and tool making industries but the region east of the Koshi has been untouched on similar scale of surveys and explorations. The major grounds that led the researcher to select the problems are:

(a) History of the region has not been sufficiently analyzed in ancient/ modern literatures. (b) Archaeological Sites are not studied and analyzed. The present conditions of the sites need careful addressing for systematic conservation and management. (c) History of the development of civilization is not properly traced through sufficient historical analysis and archaeological findings. (d) Historical findings, myths, literatures and contemporary global models of managing and conserving sites have not been prioritised. (e) How local people/ government/agencies have been managing heritage sites, especially archaeological sites have not been studied.

The recent prehistoric findings in the Betana region of Morang and state led excavations have indicated that pre historic man lived here. The first excavation initiation in eastern Nepal (east of the Koshi) was in 1970 undertaken in Bhediari, Morang under the leadership of Tara Nanda Mishra on behalf of DoA. Features of temple ruins and punch marked coins and other antiquities are mentioned by the archaeologist Mishra in his article (B.S. 2054, p.28) but such findings were destroyed when Singhadurbar caught fire (Darnal, 2002, p.41). Details of Bhediari has been documented by Khatiwada and other writers like Darnal (2002, p. 41) who also has mentioned about discoveries made by Gudrun Corvinus as mentioning Eastern Nepal's Patu in Siwalik hill of Kamala, RatoKhola in Mahotari district etc .These have also indicated a brief pre-historic studies in the Eastern region but the potential region, east of the the Koshi, had never been in the highlighted studies before. Khatiwada (B.S. 2067) has written briefly in context of Morang's history and cultural heritages of only Morang. Some new sites of Morang have been brought forth in the research. Many similar sites of Jhapa district have been studied hereby thus adding bricks onto gaps of previous researchers. Through this researcher's painstaking

efforts, many virgin sites like Dhanusapokhari and Pandavpur along with details of findings by locals in the villages of Jogichaun, Shantipur of Kamal village municipality Jhapa have been documented in this research.

A short article titled *Morang ma Puratatwalai Khotalda* [Exploring Archaeology in Morang] written on behalf of the editorial board from *Morang ek Parichaya* [An Introduction to Morang] gives information that a neo-lithic axe had been found in Jhapa Vaijanathpur by a local (B.S. 2054, p.24). Pandey and Regmi (B.S. 2062, p. 65) too have given the same information and related this finding to the discovery made by Sthcenko in Nawalparasi. It was learnt with the help of Som Khatiwada, writer and explorer of the eastern region that the site Vaijanthpur falls in Morang. Brief descriptions of Bhediaryi, Dhanpalgadhi, Harchangadhi and Sunbarshi pond have been provided by the editorial board of *Morang Ek Parichaya* (B.S. 2054, p. 23-25) in the text. In their concluding paragraph, the dire need of archaeological research in Morang and the periphery has been emphasized mentioning some names of places like Kichkagadhi of Haraincha, Panchayan, Chilagadhi, Chandbela, Charaiya, Gangama, Himpatgadhi of Belaha and Jaltha (B.S. 2054, p. 25). Similarly, these places have been suggested as places of ruins in one article-*Morang Jillako Sadarmukam Biratnagar Rakhnuko Sarthakta*, in the same book (Shakya, B.S 2054, p. 43). It would be very relevant to mention hereby that this researcher during the field exploration of Jhapa and Morang has (in detail) studied one of the ruins Kichkagadhi and one with similar name Chillagadh of Jhapa. The details are summarized in the later part of the research. Mishra (B.S.2054, p. 28) too had predicted that there are many ancient sites in Morang and there is dire need of exploration and research. Joshi (1966) has indirectly mentioned about probability of prehistoric sites in the country and about need of such studies (p.80) in his article

*Prehistoric Exploration in Kathmandu valley, Nepal*, published in *Ancient India* by Archaeological Survey of India.

This research work has also analysed the history of eastern Terai making comparative readings of the relevant texts of Iman Singh Chemjong, Kumar Pradahn, Hamilton, Som Prasad Khaitwada and other writers to mention some few. The history of the region is deeply analyzed in the research by suffusing the need of interpreting recent archaeological finds of the region.

The very few research works and unpublished reports related to archaeological heritages of eastern Terai are not so handy and among them very few have addressed the archaeological importance of some heritages. There are very few informative texts that are locally published in yearly memoirs (*smarika*) which are published by respective local conservation committee of some temples and sites but they are more informative on mythical perspectives than on archaeological perspective. Some texts focus on archaeological findings but they are too insufficient to address the conservation procedure that eastern Terai's archaeological heritages need. This present research takes help of those earlier sources and local publishing but digs deep down on archaeological findings and brings forth parameters to compare the nearby sites. Some earlier works have indicated on the potentiality of archaeological heritages but have not analysed as many sites sufficiently. Some works are just limited to the objectives of survey and citing heritage places. There are almost no works that have analyzed the archaeological potentiality of the Eastern Terai of Nepal.

The research builds on international good practices of conserving heritage sites and suggests sustainable heritage practices in the Eastern Terai of Nepal. Earlier writers had at time written about the loss of artifacts from the sites especially referring

to looting and vandalism. Most importantly, the research through painstaking field works brings forth the new and recent vulnerable issues of the archaeological sites elaborating on the types of risks that the heritages of eastern Terai are facing especially on the loopholes of managing sites both at community and state- level. Indeed these all should be a remarkable gap- filling onto the previous researches.

This research extensively builds analysis on raw information, first hand observation of the sites and indication of few of the writers and has brought forth descriptions of virgin archaeological sites aided by local peoples' first hand information and myths.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This is a qualitative research based on inductive process. This research builds on empirical investigations derived through observations from field visits in the quest of bringing new facts on conservation and management of archaeological heritages sites in Eastern Terai of Nepal. Global conservations norms and practices have been studied through Conventions, Charters and practices adopted at different countries.

This research is explorative in nature, archaeological in intention and analytical and interpretive in documentation. The study focused on finding out the vulnerabilities that archaeological sites were prone to different natural and human induced risks while simultaneously venturing out to discover any new sites that were less known or exclusively unknown. Global Good practices/modelsof Archaeological Heritage Managemnt (AHM) have been studied to relate or compare them in the context of AHM in the Eastern Terai of Nepal.

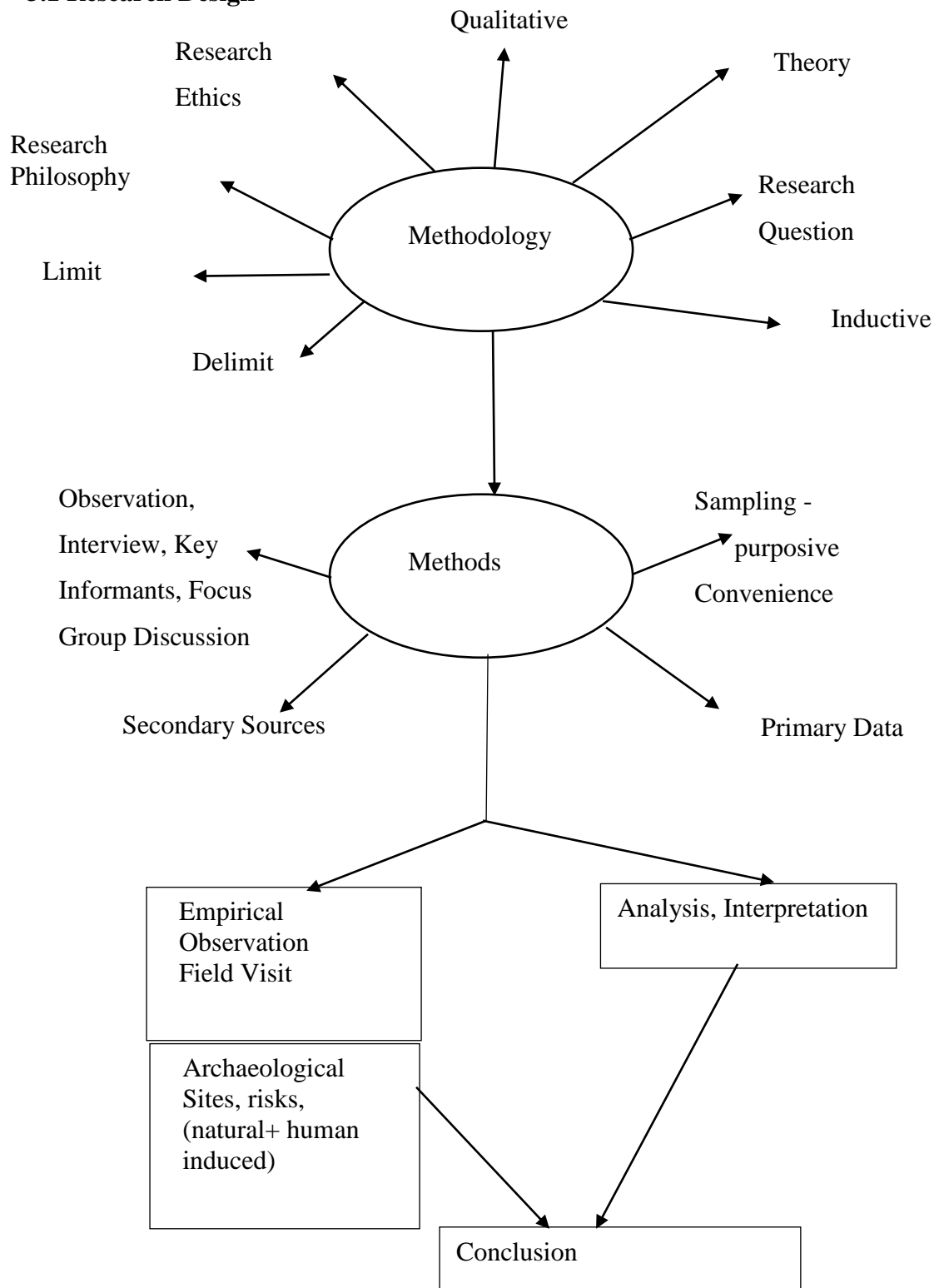
Actually any field based research has to have small or limited area or sites. Too many sites or large area will not yield productive research owing to the fact that such studies are undoubtedly tedious, time- consuming and expensive. Because this research covers three districts- Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari, it may at first glance seem like a mega project, however the research is limited to the study ofselected sites that have archaeological ruins or major religious heritage sites that are locally said to be of the Mahabharata period. As said earlier, the heritage sites that were selected, observed and studied only if they were or met at least one of the bases-had archaeological ruins, were sites in close proximity to archaeological sites nearby, were sites with stories and incidents of accidental findings of archaeological artifacts, were sites widely



believed by the locals to be of the Mahabharata period and were sites with history of archaeological excavation.

In many sites, this researcher needed to document local beliefs upon the sites because management of archaeological sites is impossible without inviting community responsibility and ownership onto them. Site identification and explorations have been conducted with local assistance through inquiries and interviews with the first (early) settlers, priests, and indigenous people. The study sharply focuses on the analysis and observation of risks to the sites (both natural and man made). The overall research design is depicted as below:

### 3.1 Research Design



## **3.2 Research Methods**

This research has been completed analysing both the primary data and the secondary data. The following types of data were collected to conduct the research:

(a) Primary Data (b) Secondary Data

### **3.2.1 Primary Data**

Different methods are applied to collect primary data in a research. They are the first hand information that a researcher can retrieve. In this research, the following methods were applied to collect the primary data.

#### **3.2.1.1 Observation**

For collecting data through observation, field visits to the site were made intermittently on the outset of 2018 to 2021. Seventeen places and sites were observed, photographed, studied and analysed, They are- 1) Kichakbadh and surrounding region, 2) Viratpokhari region, 3) Arjundhara, 4) Sadhutar, 5) Pandavpur village, 6) Satashidham, 7) Chillagadh, 8) Shantipur village of Kamal Municipality, 9) Jogichaun village nearby Shantipur, 10) Dhanushapokhari, 11) Bhediyari, 12) Kichkagadhi, 13) Dhanpalgadhi, 14) Varahkshetra, 15) Betana, 16) Krishnathumki and 17) Dhanushkutidham.

In most of the places, the focus of the researcher was to look for a genuine local expert or a long time resident of the area. Simple interviews were taken with the house owners who lived nearby such sites. Photos and videos were captured for documenting relevant information. Carver has stated about field method applied in Archaeology as “while much field method is directly applied to research questions, much more effort goes in recording archaeological sites that are likely to be damaged by modern construction or clearance”(2015, p.3). Because one of the objectives of the research is to analyze risks to such sites, selected sites were visited and surficial

observation made to record or note any risks from rivers, natural agents or people. Looting, vandalizing or any other sort of archaeological crimes were also pursued if any.

Field visit to dozen of places linked by the locals to the Mahabharata epic yielded considerable rich sources of data and information relating to the archaeological management to this research. Some sites have been visited multiple times, some more than once and some few sites that were visited only once owing to the sufficiency of the research objectives. Pictures have been included to impart information in case they be needed to the culture and archaeology Department or Archaeology enthusiasts and future researchers. There are many places, rivulets and ponds related by the locals to the Mahabharata epic. The major and large ones are Kichakbadh, Bhediyari, Varakhshetra, Arjundhara and Satashidham. Kichakbadh and Bhediyari have been excavated at state-levels and they have gained national importance in recent times.

Research also included visiting local people's houses to look at and take photos of findings they had kept. The researcher visited such private residence at Betana and Bhediyari. The lithic implements, iron objects and pottery sherds displayed by a local Bhim Kumar Rai in Betana gives lot of spaces to think on the ancient occupants of the eastern Terai region. Similarly the visit to the house of a local influential person called Kamal Kishore Yadav of Bhediyari yielded important information on how vulnerable are the sites of Bhediyari to man induced risks. This local had a museum of valuable archaeological findings ranging from pottery sherds, bricks to semi-precious and precious stones at his private home. The details are elaborated in the body section of the research.

### 3.2.1.2 Interview

Primary data have also been collected through interviews. Some interviews were videographed for further purpose of coding actual facts while analyzing the data. Purposive and convenient sampling of the community people, visitors, priests, elected representatives, members of the local committee of archaeological heritage sites and the so said local experts have been interviewed throughout the research. Archaeologists and Officials from the Department of Archaeology, Nepal have been interviewed to gain knowledge of excavation and results. In heritage sites like Kichakbadh, Dhanushkuti, Viratpokhar, Arjundhara, Satashidham, Kichkagadhi and Varahkshetra, interviews were conducted with respective priests. (Names on Appendix D, Questions on Appendix- F). Priests generally deliver genuine information and link religious insights to the sites and know well about the community belief and worshipping procedures. Priests were also chosen because they are readily available on the site and people in the priestly position convey religious and mythological perspectives of places connecting them to the historic and epic characters. The priests being important persons of the communal hierarchy generally give the genuine descriptions of worshipping methods, varying belief patterns and most importantly they have had excess to excavations and were first hand observant of any changes to the sites or temples thereby. So questions concerning on similar issues were put forth to the priests. Generally such interviews in all sites were conversational and semi-structured focusing onto history, performing arts and celebrations and briefly on archaeology. Interviews were also carried out with locally elected representatives of Local Government (Names on Appendix- D, Questions on Appendix -D). The objective was to know about their heritage management plan, strategies, security and budget. Interviews with them also revealed that many of their

agendas were attractive (like declaring Dharan as a touristic city, conducting DPR on building Cultural village at Pathari, giving Homestay trainings to locals etc) but they lacked on evaluating how much positive impact did their agendas brought to the heritage management of their area. Trainings were conducted but never reviewed. Interviews with local representatives also yielded fact that they were enthusiastic on doing something for the heritage during their tenure in their area, but they lacked to coordinate with actual experts and carry on with result yielding mechanisms.

During the large annual fair over here in 2019, the Kichkabadh festival was closely observed by the researcher with the assistance of 12 volunteer students (Names on Appendix-C) and a Social Studies teacher of Shree Rudra Memorial Boarding School, Birtamod. Information were collected from visitors with the help of research assistants (Fig. 3.1). On other sites like Dhanpalgadhi, Kichkagadhi and Bhediaryi interviews were focused on local experts (Questions on Appendix-G) or influential personalities connected to the heritages. Interviews on all archaeological sites were taken with people who in this researcher's eyes were archaeological enthusiasts, had participated in the excavations or who had sufficient knowledge about the sites (Questions on Appendix-G). They were generally found/selected after enquiring with local natives of the respective places. Information were collected in tea-shops, their private residence or on heritage sites itself. Generally the questions during such interview focused on archaeological site management, risks to the sites, conservation approaches carried at local and state level, future conservation approaches and also topics related to archaeological crimes in and around the sites. As sites in Kichkabadh has been excavated multiple of times by the State, some core people residing close to the site were invited to have a group discussions and

information session (Names provided on Appendix- E) on site management, conservation approaches, local beliefs, views about prospects and progress.

Telephonic conversations with the priests and the local committee members were held to rule out any doubts or missing information undertaken in the field. This ruled out the obligation to visit sites again and again for trivial reasons. Also it would be fair to mention hereby that as the research was ongoing on the global pandemic of COVID, this researcher had at times to rely on telephonic conversation with the priests and local committee members whether the annual religious festivals at archaeological sites were held or not. And if they were held how they were held. To much surprise, it was being informed that in Kichkagadhi Morang priests and the few locals assembled to conduct the annual worshipping rituals..

Besides all these, community beliefs and views have been given utmost importance to frame the research because archaeology alone cannot stand without them. Hence this research is guided by an epistemology that community's belief have to be picked up unbiased, sometimes filtering issues that can harm the research's conclusion. In Vaisabadi of Kichakbadh region, community people (with the help of a local person ) were informed to gather on a selected venue to discuss agendas on local government initiatives on developing the site, people's affiliation and interests towards the site and most importantly whether they were satisfied with the archaeological or heritage ventures on their site.

Most importantly their views on site's tourism potentials and site- ownership were valuable evidences to link how community should be prioritized in heritage conservation. Sometimes interviews with the local committee members yielded information that were quite contrary to what the people in the nearby community shared. The contradiction mainly centered on looting of the sites, exploitation of site's

findings or management of the sites. Sometimes people were dissatisfied with the shared benefits from the site or it was found that people did not have the slightest idea that there should have been shared benefits of earnings through the site or equitable opportunity of participating in the local committee.

### **3.2.1.3 Focused Group Discussion**

FGD were held in Jhapa's Vaisabadi and Department of Archaeology, Kathmandu. FGD helps probe into subjective ideas of certain group and research scholars often rely on this to raise an issue and collect ideas from a single sitting. The FGD conducted during this research are briefly described below:

#### **3.2.1.3.1 FGD in Vaisabadi**

Focus group discussion was quite important for this research. As "the focus group approach offers the opportunity of allowing people to probe each other's view" (Bryman 2012, p. 398), the discussion provided this researcher insights on many important aspects of communities living by the archaeological heritage sites, their views and ignorance regarding ownership of sites and affiliations to these sites:

Vaisabadi is a small village of Rajbanshis that live by the banks of the Mechi river. The agrarian community is almost homogeneous village by caste and ethnicity. The FGD was planned to be held on 14 October, 2020 in the afternoon when most of villagers would have returned from their fields and would be available after lunch time. The FGD was held in an open rendezvous place under a tree (Fig. 3.2). Tole Committee leader Jaya Singh Rajbanshi was informed of the meeting and to invite the participants. Many interested villagers flocked to the site and main participants sat on the Chautari. Keshav Dhungana, the priest of the Satidevi temple, Kichakbadh assisted in the FGD and this began with the introduction of the researcher and by welcoming the participants for the discussion. The names of the participants are



provided in Appendix- A. The discussion was centered on whether or not the local indigenous Rajbanshi who lived just about 2 km south of the Kichakbadh knew about the excavations that went on here for long time, how they associated with the site, how often they frequented the site and like questions. The discussion helped the researcher to know loopholes of site management especially when indigenous representatives take interest in the site only on festivals and it showed that there is a dire need to educate people, involve nearby communities in taking ownership of the site.

The findings revealed that most people from this village frequented the Kichakbadh mound only on religious occasions. They accepted that they knew very less about the excavations and few of them even did not know who were digging the land and what were they taking out of it. They also accepted that they did not represent the committee although they told that their caste and tribe is closely associated with the site since their forefathers' time. Jaya Singh the leader on the spot along with others accepted that they would like to see a representative member in the local Kichakbadh Conservation Committee and the researcher incited them to hold dialogues and encouraged for the same. When the discussion was centered on excavations, they knew almost nothing about the decade long state-led project at Kichakbadh. It was not a surprise for the researcher when one of the participants asked "Who digs the site and why do they do it?"

It was also revealed that nobody from the village had participated as a helper in the series of excavation conducted there. On researcher's question whether they had been to the excavation site, few approved that people from their village had been among the crowd that collected inquisitively during excavation, others had heard about the findings but they did not pin interest to. Such indifference of the locals point

to many factors besides lack of public archaeology for example their own busy life style, day to day struggle with the floods and responsibility, and their lack of knowledge about the site. The discussion lasted for about an hour and concluded by the researcher giving some insights about the site and ways to connect with the site.

This discussion helped the researcher to suggest on how scientific excavations should abridge with the nearby indigenous, how public archaeology should cater on to link communities to the archaeological site.

### **3.2.1.3.2 FGD in Department of Archaeology, Kathmandu**

FGD with DoA was held on 10 March 2022 in the Conference hall of the DoA building in the presence of 12 participants- 10 from the DoA, a media personnel and a Professor from Tribhuvan University. The list of names of the participants is provided in Appendix-B.

The FGD (Fig. 3.3) was held after site observation in all three districts of Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari. There were 4 main questions that centered on AHM. (The questions are provided in Appendix- H).The FGD started with the introduction of the researcher and the academic research. Firstly, this researcher made a brief presentation of the condition of AHM in the eastern Terai through videos and photos. Various pictures were showed relating to the mismanagement of archaeological sites, various natural and human-induced risks were shown to the participants to hook their attention into the power-point presentation. After the presentation, the floor for discussion was opened and various issues of the archaeological heritage management were discussed vibrantly. The researcher tried to probe into the present problems of the sites and politely demanded about the role of DoA, its way forward and plans in the federated states, its manpower and challenges to work on through decentralized mechanisms.

Answering on a question regarding whether the Eastern Terai of Nepal had been laid off in archaeological activities (ventures), the DoA officers did not agree. They pointed that archaeological activities run as per national priorities but the Eastern Terai had not been underestimated. Many excavations in Kichakbadh and conservation approaches in heritage sites were exemplified. The main problems were identified as DoA's limitations in its manpower/ units, budget, priorities and lack of impact of the trainings they had delivered to the local people including teachers. It was learnt that the DoA at times delivered trainings to the local people but they were without impact.

FGD with the DoA yielded some important answers and information. Its "Regional Directorate" in Dhankuta, Surkhet and Pokhara are now under Province government. At present they are trying to educate the local policy makers by delivering training to the local representatives and the initiatives had already been taken in Province- 2 and Province-7. This indeed gives a good picture that the DoA is working out to coordinate with the local level. The researcher also briefly pointed on establishing heritage units and devising a possible model following good practices that have been incorporated at global levels. The FGD discussed about the need of local units and Ram Kunwar the spokesperson of DoA assured that 90 percent of the problems in archaeological heritage management can be curbed through setting up of a unit in each Province. The Spokesperson stated that the new and virgin sites like Kichka Gadhi acknowledged by this researcher would be surveyed for its whereabouts. The DoA discussed about few instances when it had intervened in the local projects if they did not align with the rules of managing heritages. It had been dispatching letters and trying to coordinate with the local levels for AHM. The FGD concluded with the importance of effective decentralization of the DoA and

importance of incorporating local people, community and local government for effective AHM.

### **3.2.2 Secondary Data**

For this type of research both primary sources as well as secondary sources are important. So research articles, journal articles, books on archaeology, religions and culture and myths aided to be the main secondary sources for both study and reference. International Conventions and Charters related to AHM and ICH were also important to collect information to aid to the findings of the primary data.

### **3.3 Research Philosophy**

The research not only explores the ancient archaeological heritages of the eastern Terai but also follows the epistemological perspectives of knowing about community beliefs and how they relate such sites to the Mahabharata. Observing and exploring archaeological ruins as separate objects by underestimating how the communities see them would also underestimate the age –old ICH ( intangible cultural heritages) of the community and the indigenous people living for generations over such places. Hence hereby the research takes help of the ethnographic strategies like observation of their belief patterns to certain sites and temples, interviewing key persons about rituals and their oral stories related to the sites. These have helped to know about sites local beliefs, and aid in analysis of heritage management at community level. By visiting over dozen of such sites related to the indigenous people and local community have shed insights to interpret and suggest sustainable archaeological practices that can be modified and incorporated to similar sites. Hence this venture has connected this researcher to the sites upto that level where at the end this researcher sets his own suggestive measures to conserve and manage the sites

well. Hence the research is based on an interpretive epistemological research philosophy.

Archaeological field methods, popular policies on conservation, global good practices of conservation of heritage sites and archaeological sites and examples of archaeo-tourism were studied to incorporate them in the research.

### **3.4 Theoretical Framework**

Theories of integrating community and public to the site management, globally accepted Conservation acts and popular concepts and theories of Public Archaeology have been suffused in the research. Internationally accepted popular conservation acts on cultural and archaeological heritages and good practices on international and national level have been of great help to frame the research theoretically to support recommendations for improving AHM in Eastern Terai of Nepal

The research does not intend to test these theories. The intention of suffusing theories is to compare on the global advocacies on conservation and management approaches on cultural, and archaeological heritage sites and not to test them. This research adheres to the concept of “salvage or rescue archaeology” because archaeological heritage sites are important for the construction of regional or national history. Salvage archaeology has been important in the sites where there are looting or development programs. The effort to collect archaeological data or evidences before they are destroyed is the main theme of the salvage archaeology.

Different writers have given importance to related theories of salvage archaeology such as Cultural Resources Management (CRM). Thus, in planning for the site management there is also a dire need for salvage archaeology - " the initial task of documenting archaeological sites before they are lost forever is the domain of

salvage or rescue archaeology (Moloney, 1996, p. 118); response to excavate whatever can be recovered before a site is destroyed (Sharer & Ashmore, 1993, p. 587; Renfrew & Bahn, 2003, p. 73) by construction works.

Integrating Community to archaeological heritage sites and benefits earned from them is the recent advocacy of new researches in AHM. Such concepts have been gaining grounds in different names. One is “Public Archaeology”. Fagan and Durrani (2016) write about public archaeology as that which encompasses a myriad of activities (p. 353) are listed below:

(a) Museum workshops for children run by archaeological societies and museums. (b) Publication of leaflets and web pages summarizing new work. (c) Many superb public outreach programs run by cities.

Hence, public archaeology is to be understood as a new concept which attempts to link stakeholders ranging from community people, visitors to conservation practitioners to archaeological sites. Moshenska also has written of public archaeology as that “which straddles the great divides within the archaeology between professionals, academicians, amateur, between the local and the global, between science and humanities.” (2017, p. 3). This points to the importance of letting public inside the domains of archaeological benefits, conservation approaches regardless of their level of archaeological knowledge.

Conservation theories too need to be understood from international Charters that define Conservation and advocate for adopting them as per the need of archaeological sites at home country. Article 1 of the ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage defines “archaeological heritage is that part of the material heritage in respect of which archaeological methods provide primary information. It comprises all vestiges of human existence

and consists of places relating to all manifestations of human activity, abandoned structures, and remains of all kinds (including subterranean and underwater sites), together with all the portable cultural material associated with them. and article 2 mentions it a“a fragile and non-renewable cultural resource” (ICOMOS Charter)

The meaning of conservation has been time and again explained by international charters and interpreted by researchers. Conservation theory on heritage management relies heavily on such globally accepted and practiced policies or charters. The General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS, meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka, at its tenth session from July 30 to August 7, 1993 adopted a set of guidelines that at one point states “ the object of conservation is to prolong the life of cultural heritage and if possible, to clarify the artistic and historical messages therein without the loss of authenticity and meaning” .Simplifying on this concept, Bauer, Sinha and others write “conservation can be defined simply as any action taken to safeguard the material integrity of the cultural heritage in order to respect the significance in all aspects (cultural, artistic, historical, religious etc ) (2017, p. 99).Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013 defines it as “umbrella term to mean all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain what is important about it or its cultural significance. These actions include repair, restoration, maintenance and in some instances, reconstruction”

Linde and Williams (2006, p. 111) appreciate the Burra Charter for giving importance to local community in managing archaeological sites but mention that they fail to address the ethical management of the archaeological sources. They also point to the linkage of suggested archaeological models to other international frameworks. They ask:

Are issues of poverty relief (for example the Agenda 21: United Nations 1992) and sustainable communities given sufficient attention? How do we balance the contemporary needs of the local community and wider society with the management and presentation of the archaeological resource? Most managements are future generations- as the core activity, but we need to accommodate the vital role the resource can play in meeting the needs of current generation. (p.111)

In today's conservation procedures, conservation is also linked intricately to site management especially when dealing with archaeological heritages.

Thus, this research intakes the conservation and management approaches of archaeological heritage sites that see the sites not as separate objects but as something invaluable associated with the local communities, indigeneous people and concerned stakeholders. This comes true in regions like that of Eastern Terai of Nepal where a considerable indigeneous people attribute the archaeological sites as sites of performances and sites of inherent religion.



## **Chapter Four**

### **History of the Development of Civilization in Eastern Terai of Nepal**

Eastern Nepal region, with its profound natural, ecological, social and cultural heritages does not have a clear historical chronology. The ancient history of Nepal as scholars often critique on being Kathmadu-centric does cripple the regional history here. This is because of the absence of concrete adequate evidences like inscriptions, coins and artifacts of eastern Nepal and most importantly informations on eastern Nepal were not mentioned in any major inscriptions found and interpreted for the interpretation or construction of Nepal's history. While analyzing the history of the eastern Terai and trace the development of civilization, it is also necessary to analyse the incidents of the epics and religious texts for the purpose of addressing local folklores and the sites so claimed.

This chapter is not intended to prove the historicity or authenticity of the archaeological sites studied for the purpose of the research. This chapter is just intended to trace the historicity of the region through analysis of different types of secondary resources and interpretation of archaeological finds. Therefore, wise analysis is important. It is much assumable like what past historians and researchers had stated that the region had been ruled over by the past kings of whose different territories are now in India or also by the kings whose past territories are now in the hills and mountains of east Nepal. It is also an accepted and much expected logic that this region had been at some connection with the then Nepal (the Kathmandu Valley) during the Lichhavis. It would be relevant to start with the prehistory of the region.

#### **4.1 Pre- History of Eastern Nepal: Analysis and Surmises**

Some regions in the eastern Terai had been fertile playlands for the pre historic people. The most convincing example can be pointed to the recent discovery

of the prehistoric remains in Betana, Morang. This will be discussed later but it would be wise to go chronologically as of now. Pandey and Regmi had stated that a Neolithic axe measuring (8.2×6.7×2.1) cm was retrieved (found) by a local in Vaijanathpur, Jhapa 9 ft below the surface, and sent to the Department of Archaeology in 1984 A.D. (2040 B.S.). This implement according to the writers was identical to the implement found by Sthcenko from Nawalparasi. The implement found in Vaijanathpur is made of Filite and Quartzite (B.S. 2062, p. 65- the plate of implement in plate 42.1 same book). The recent findings of the Betana region in Morang justifies about the prehistoric human occupation in the region. Gudrun Corvinus, who along with archeological researcher Sri Janak Lal Sharma of Nepal explored the Rato Khola rregion of the Mahottari district has stated about the scientific c-14 dating of charcoal remains found there and mentioned that a minimal age of 7000 BP has been traced (2004, p. 36). Although Mahottari is not the region of the study for this present academic research, however relying on its proximity to the land of the Eastern Terai, prehistoric sites in the region cannot be negated. The recent Betana excavation in Morang has proved this.

They have given short information on implements retrieved by different people at different places of eastern Nepal like Charikot, Dhankuta, and Sankhuwasabha and stated that tool technology has been said to be similar to that of North-East Indi and Assam.

A short article titled 'Morang ma Puratatwalai Khotalda' written on behalf of the editorial board from '*Morang ek Parichaya*' [An Introduction to Morang] also states briefly the name of the local 'Deven Rajbanshi' of the Vaijanathpur V.D.C. who had retrieved the axe while he was digging a fish pond (B.S. 2054, p. 23) and they also stated as the neo-lithic period has been placed at 10,000 B.C - 6000 BC, this area

can be concluded to have been inhabited since this pre-historic period (B.S. 2054, p. 24). Along with that of JhapaVaijanathpur, a brief descriptions of Bhediari, Dhanpalgadhi, Harchangadhi and Sunbarshi pond have been provided in the text (B.S. 2054, p. 23-25). In their concluding paragraph, the dire need of archaeological research in Morang and the periphery has been emphasized mentioning some names of places like Kichkagadhi of Haraincha, Panchayan, Chilagadhi, Chandbela, Charaiya, Gangama, Himpatgadhi of Belaha and Jaltha (B.S. 2054, p. 25). Similarly, these places have been suggested as places of ruins in another article *Morang Jillako Sadarmukam Biratnagar rakhnuko Sarthakta* in the same book (Shakya, B.S. 2054, p. 43).

It would be very relevant to mention hereby that this researcher during the field exploration of Morang has (in detail) studied some of these ruins in Morang. The remains and findings as indicated by the locals point to a thriving civilization of which we know nothing, but can be surmised contemporaneous with that of the Bhediari and Kichakbadh so may be dated at least to the 2<sup>nd</sup> c AD at the latest. The details are summarized in the later part of the research. The name of one place Kichkagadhi is somewhat identical to Kichakbadh of Jhapa. During the interview session of the local committee and locals of Kichkagadh Haraincha, it was found that the place in local belief is related to be the palace premises of Kichak, a character of the Mahabharata. This debates with a local belief in Jhapa district where Kichakbadh ruins is believed by most of the local people to be Kichak's palace.

Haraicha's Kichkagadhi, now in Sundar Haraicha municipality-01 is just left over one and a half bighas of a small mound, said to be destroyed by the river Lohandra (towards its east) and many cases of local retrieving archaeological valuables from here has never been scientifically studied, explored and excavated.

The heritage management approach which are in detail studied in the latter part of this research, but still undoubtedly, this place's detailed archaeological excavation can reveal a lot of eastern Nepal's history and chronology.

The chance-discovery of stone axe from Jhapa Vaijanathpur cannot just explain pre-historicity of the site. Unfortunately further investigations were never carried on the region. This is critical and woeful for the present researchers.

Khatiwada briefly states that the region of Vaijanathpur could not have been an appropriate settlement area for the men then (B.S. 2068, p. 15). He has this conclusion because pre-historic people lived near water resources and chose those place which could conceal them from other hunter groups, so Vaijanathpur could just be a site where they dropped the implement during their hunting venture (B.S. 2068, p. 15-16). Although not with strong claim, Khatiwada gives his assumption that the prehistoric man could have arrived here from the hills of Morang Sunsari's Suryakunda, but he has not provided details on when and how did he survey for this fact. But it is quite assumable that many places in pre-historic times were mere-transit spots for the nomads of the pre-historic time. It was learnt that now there are village settlements in Vaijanathpur. Nothing extraordinary has been heard of again.

However, a recent state-led excavation on the wetlands of Betana, Morang revealed some pre-historic implements in the sites. The Betana findings of stone artifacts, shouldered implements and others now possessed by a local (Fig. 4.10-4.19) which are elaborated in the later part of the research also give a clue of pre historic and ancient settlement in the region.

In addition, the two idols found during BS 2010 landslides in the northern edge of the Varahkshetra, one kept in GuruVaraha temple, measuring about 156 cm 77cm and another small kept in Laxmi temple has similar features of Gupta art are

dated by Bangdel and Ramesh Jung Thapa as 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century respectively. (Khatiwada , BS 2066, p.118). Mishra, an archaeologist and excavation officer at Bhediya at one stance of his article 'Purvi Nepal ko Itihaas ra Gauravka Gaathabaru' (History of Eastern Nepal and its stories of Glory) has given his opinion that Brahamanas, Mahabharata and Ramayana have numerous descriptions of warfare between the Aryans of the east and the Kiratas (B.S. 2054, p. 27). Mishra also refers to description of the five Pandavas defeating the Sapta-Kirats in different six foreign lands and their conquering and settlement therein. He gives his feelings that it may be why archaeological sites of the east respectively Bhediya of Biratnagar and Kichakbadh pond of Jhapa carry the stories of the settlements during the Pandavas forest exile (B.S. 2054, p. 27). In fact there are more than dozens of such places in the region.

Interestingly, local communities in many places of Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari imbue certain religious beliefs over ancient ruins, temples and ponds and such sites are related to the forest exile period (incognito) of the Pandavas. In some of these places, large annual fairs are held among thousands of devotees.

The prehistory of the region can be traced as back as to the Stone Age now; mainly due to the Neolithic finds in Betana. However, scientific dating is necessary. This traces that the before the beginning of a civilization, nomadic tribes roamed around here. At least we have an unknown cultural occupancy apart from the previous findings of Vaijanthpur. The wetlands around here should not be underestimated.

#### **4.2 Ancient History of the Eastern Nepal**

Firstly, it would be wise to interpret Mandeva's Changu's inscription. The first dated inscription of Nepal (found until today dated Samvat 386) as equivalent to B.S. 521 in the Changu Narayan temple premises of Bhaktapur, takes us as far as

king Mandeva of the Lichhavi dynasty. In the inscription are inscribed some noteworthy valuable information along with Mandeva's advent of going to the east direction. The terminology "east direction" is important to note hereby. The inscription's version's can be translated as "I will go to the east (direction) to destroy enemies with my courage and for those who want to stay under my control, I will accept them" (Vajracharya, B.S. 2053, p. 15) and after getting permission from his mother (just widowed) took the road towards east and the inscription unfolds the events that the eastern kings had to bow their heads, their crowns fell off to the ground (Vajracharya, p. 16). This specifically give a very clear impression, to which most of historians and wise academicians have agreed upon. Nepal at that time was the Kathmandu valley with today's eastern and western regions as controlled states where smaller kings, chieftains were officially regarded as *Samanta* (Vassal kings), and who were to stay and behave under the central power. Pradhan (2009) in his *The Gorkha Conquest* has too used this terminology "vassal kings" associated with the rulers of the Kathmandu valley. Vajracharya in his *Lichhhavikalko Avilekh* has also surmised that smaller kings/chieftains were under the control of the central power. The inscription's mentioning of Mandeva then coercing them to remain under control moved boldly towards the west like a lion spreading its claws (Vajracharya, p. 16). The west specified by the words 'Gandaki' to arrive upon Mallapuri (unknown until now). Vajracharya while trying to analyse the then rulers of east thinks that in the inscription the word '*shat*' has been used to refer to the vassal kings. He assumes from this that the vassal kings of the east were Kirat, because the word '*shat*' is derogatory (B.S. 2053, p. 23). He brings information from *Gopal Vamshawali* where its authors have stated about 32 Kirati kings during the time the chronicle was written, Kirats were between the Tamakoshi and the Arun River (B.S.

2053, p.23). He further writes that the chronicle indicates that after the Lichhavi's established their rule (by taking over Kirats), some Kirats had moved towards east, but in absence of other evidences, nothing can be further said about (Vajracharya, B.S. 2053, p. 23).

Until now history of Nepal traces and relies on the premises that there were two dynasties prior to that of Kiratas. The first rulers of Nepal were the cow-herders called the Gopal, followed by buffalo herder Mahispal, Kirats, Lichhavis and then Mallas. So in order to trace the history of Nepal, it would be very much wiser to trace the history of Kirats because of the heavy population of the Kirant descendants in the eastern hills of Nepal. It would be relevant to refer to two texts *Yoginitantra* and *Gopal Raj Vamshawali* that have been cited in (*Mechidekhi Mahakali*, Part- I, B.S 2031) to depict the Kiratas. As such *Yoginitantra*, briefly states that Kirats were born out of the physical relation of Mahadev with a beautiful lady Kankati, who came from Kush Island and *Gopal Raj Vamshavali* states that Kiratas defeated Gopal and Mahishpal and 32 Kirat kings ruled here (as cited in *Mechidekhi Mahakali*, Part- I, p. 14). The book also refers to Vajracharya's article "Lichhavi Kalko Itihaasma Kirat Kaal Ko Prabhav", published in *Purnima*, who wrote that the descendants of whom today lives in the land between the Tamakoshi and the Arun Koshi to refer to the Kirats (Vajracharya, as cited in *Mechidekhi Mahakali*, Part- I, p.15).

Contrary to these types of details, Chemjong claims that a Kirati king called Vanasur was the first to rule over central Nepal (B.S. 2051, p. 5- in the translated version by Sher Bahdur Ignam Papo Limbu).

By Central Nepal, Chemjong refers to the then Kathmandu Valley (Nepal). Chemjong further states that according to Kirata legend, Krishna (of the

Mahabharata epic) sent a strong troop of Yadavs under the leadership of Bhuktaman who killed Vanasur and established the Gopal dynasty here but then their capital was on west Tistung (B.S. 2051, p. 5). The Gopals ruled over 8 generations until the reign of the last king Bhuwan Singh who was defeated by a Kirat of the same (Vanasur's) genealogy Yalambur, killed him and established Kirata dynasty then Yalambar expanded the country from Tista until Trishuli in the west and the capital was shifted from east Yalung to Thankot (Chemjong, B.S. 2051, p. 6). If this is true, then today's eastern part of Nepal was already in the ancient Nepal but had become free states until P.N. Shah again had to unify Nepal. Although Chemjong's account gives scholars grounds to suspect that the writer himself being a clan of Kirat may have exaggerated the details in a desperate attempt to glorify the Kirats' history, his account cannot be underestimated while we study the history of eastern Nepal. Because one of the main reasons is that scholars need to understand how he weaves the migration pattern of the Kirat clans even linking them to the Hwang Ho Civilization of China.

It is important that the word Kirat comes at certain contexts in the Mahabharata text too. The term Mlekcha, probably indicating to a hunter tribe also appears in some contexts simultaneously with the Kirats in the Himvatkhanda too. They are portrayed as residing in the Varahrtirtha (*Himvatkhanda*, p.342) and in one context along with the Kirata follow the lord Shiva disguised as a Kirata (p.1043). In the Mahabharata the Lord Shiva taking disguise of a Kirata to test Arjuna's penance (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, p. 142) could justify that Kiratas were some ancient tribes, known widely as hunters during when the Mahabharata was chronicled.



In the widely accepted history of Nepal, Lichhavis came after the Kiratas, the period of their coming which is debated (2<sup>nd</sup> C.A.D. or 5<sup>th</sup> C), owing to the life size statue of Jaya Varman (dated Samvat 106), assumedly a Lichhavi king, the statue being retrieved in Maligaun Kathmandu gives a vague indication that by 2<sup>nd</sup> C.A.D., Kiratas were outdone by the Lichhavis, who had come to Nepal from Vaisali, India. Nepal (B.S.2040) in his '*Nepal Nirukta*' boldly writes that prior to the Lichhavis, Nepal was ruled by the Kirats. He gives reasons that the terms used to refer to tax and revenues in GopalVamsawali, Pashupati Puran and during Lichhavi's reign also supports this (Nepal, B.S. 2040, p. 7). In the endnotes he gives examples of words like *Kutherwati, Lingwal, Mapchowk, Pitalza, Solla, Sinkar* etc. (p. 28).

Concentrating upon Eastern Nepal's history, Pradhan has written:

Eastern Nepal has generally been neglected by historians. The first researcher to have made efforts to discover its past was Hamilton, whose work remains our only source in many respects. Since then, stray references to the region's history have been based on Hamilton's study and the few documents discovered later on. Chemjong, more than a century after Hamilton, tried to reconstruct the history of Kirat, but as noted before and as will be seen later, his sheer enthusiasm often resulted in the presentation of an inaccurate and unconvincing picture. (2009, p. 69)

Pradhan, heavily citing on from Chemjong and analyzing the details comparatively with other sources feels lacking evidences in some of Chemjong's details. Apart from Hamilton's account of eastern Nepal and Chemjong's history of the Kirats of east Nepal, the few other documents that Pradhan mentions most evidently indicates to 16<sup>th</sup> C. Sena documents, some official letters that have been retrieved which probably

tell only a tiny fragment of east Nepal's history just some scores of year's ahead of P.N. unification campaign.

Particularly when we focus onto the eastern Terai history, Changu's inscription of Mandeva, briefly referring to the east, could also be referring to the eastern hills rather than eastern Terai. There is also a premise to assume that Mandeva's inscription should have mentioned of "South-east" direction if they had really intended to mean the Terai. But when people want to travel to the Terai from Kathmandu, they simply refer to the "east" even today rather than mentioning "south-east". Hence it would not be wise to interpret that inscriptions should have been so exact of mentioning of the direction. Generally cardinal directions are used in communication unless need be. Hence the mentioning of the "east" in the inscription can be justified although there is a serious space to consider whether it meant to the hills or the Terai.

This researcher through interpretation of the geo-location of archaeological sites found now in the Terai also feels (like many scholars) that the eastern Terai was mostly under the territories of past kingdoms/ republics now in India. A scholar of the eastern Terai Khatiwada has written about Bhediya (Morang) at this context of the past territories, mentioning of innumerable ruins scattered throughout the Nepal- India border and across (B.S.2068, p. 69). At certain time- frames of the modern history, the Terai lands were annexed to/ controlled under the eastern hills state administration too of whose we have evidences. Clearly there is no indication of the east beyond the Koshi river in Mandeva's Changu's inscription where so clearly Gandaki river has been mentioned. However, the inscription makes clear that there were many vassal kings, noting on the fact that plural pronoun is used in the inscription.

Pradhan has stressed on the study of history and chronicles of Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet and Koch Bihar and for a comparative study of chronology of eastern Nepal. He particularly emphasizes on chronicles of Sikkim, and says that they had been helpful in cross checking and in reconstructing a sober chronology as both were involved in the Gorkha conquest, (Pradhan, 2009, p. 69). But as this is related to the modern history, for the earlier phases, unluckily eastern Nepal's identity history and chronology of dynasties are all under clouds.

When we want to relate the history of the Eastern Terai of Nepal, we cannot skip the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata because of the pertinence of the oral narratives to which sites are linked. The historians doing further research into this region should clear on the division of *Matsyadesh*. This *Matsyadesh* has been attributed in the Mahabharata too. Khatiwada (B.S. 2070) takes reference of *Vabishyapuran* to say that this *Matsyadesh* was divided into *Angadesh*, *Bangadesh*, *Pondadesh* (p.69) and claims that in the ancient time was ruled by the Kiratas and so called *Kiratadesh* (p.71).

Regarding its relation to the Mahabharata epic, Khatiwada takes reference *Dharmashastra ko Itihas* to mention that the epic Mahabharata gives a description of its importance mentioning that Pandavas had performed the ancestral rite *Shraddha* in the Vishnutirtha to pay homage to their relatives who faced death in the Kurukshetra (Kane, P., as cited in Khatiwada, B.S. 2066, p. 150-151). The Vishnutirtha is assumed to have been KokamukhVarahkshetra (Khatiwada, B.S. 2066, p.151).The importance of Varahkshetra and the pilgrimages around it has been mentioned in *Himvatkhanda* (Nepal, B.S. 2040, p. 310). Nepal (B.S. 2040) relates the story in this religious and sacred text where a Brahmin degraded in the

society of the Kiratas (during Kirata period) spread the fame of the lord Varaha (p.310).

The Kirat period mentioned in the *Himwat Khanda* may most probably have referred to a distant past. A Brahmin, named Vishnu Sharma on the state of being killed after having been captured by the hunter Kiratas, was out of blues offered his daughter by one Villu Kirata, (Nepal, BS 2040, p.311) although sheds light on the sheer luck of the very fortunate Brahmin (but also his bad luck to have himself immersed within Kirata society) gives one very valuable information on the tribes of the Kiratas as hunters, with their livelihood around the Koshi region, especially around the Varahkshetra.

According to Pandit Yogesh, 'in accordance to historians, the chief idols of the region are more than 4-5 thousand years old. (B.S. 2073, p.57). The chief priest of Varaha temple told this researcher that after rescuing the earth from the demon Hiranakshya Vishnu settled in the form of *Vishnu Vighraha*. The same idol (Fig. 1.1) is worshipped with great reverence by the priest, the locals and the devotees. The *Vishnu Vighraha* is in the center of the main temple which is called "*Shyam Shila*" or "*Chandan Shila*" (Yogesh, B.S. 2073, p.26).

The clear historicity of the region has been analyzed by historians and researchers on the light of the information of an inscription of Budh Gupta's from north Bengal (477 A.D. 494 AD). In this time a trader called Ribhupal had arrived at the confluence of KokaKoshi and in his return to his country had established the idols of Kokamukh Swami and Swet Varaha Swami. He the established a *guthi* in the Damodar region. (as narrated in Khatiwada, B.S. 2066, p. 117-118; also in Nepal, B.S. 2040, p. 173). PanditYogesh also mentions about a stone inscription at Dinajpur Damodargram in north Bengal that mentions of Ribhupal keeping a *guthi*

for Varahklshetra, renovating the *paatis* and temples even after some years in his mother's name the inscription having mentioned the renovation of the broken idol of Varah (B.S. 2073, p. 56-57).

The word 'Rang' in both the words 'Morang' and 'Rangeli' is worth noting for further etymological interpretations and there are some Chinese phonemes in the word 'Rang' like that in 'Hang', 'Wang', 'Rang' etc. the word which came with the names of kings frequently in Chemjong's History of Kirata. These have been interpreted by Chemjong. According to Chemjong a group consisting of 700 family had come to east Nepal in 700 A.D. via North Burma, North Bengal and Assam from Mokwan Province of Yunan China. They were led by Mung Mawarong. They were the second lot to come here, called SenMolewan. They cleared the forest in the Terai and named it 'Maw Rong', that became famous as Morang. They built their first fort called 'Rang' (meaning king's palace) that in the later years became Rongeli and Rangeli, but could not withstand the 10 Limbas and fled to Tibet (B.S. 2051, p. 7).

It is to be noted that Chemjong (B.S. 2051) also says that in Tai language (one of Chinese forms) *Mong* means (country), *Maw* means name and *Rong* means chief (p. 7). This gives space for future researchers to look for ruins in Rangeli area. History of eastern Terai during ancient period (5-7) century and it that Limbus of east hills had also ruled over here. The 10 Limbus references are often cited by historians. They are regarded as the first lot to come here by the name Sen Mokwan.

The naming of Biratnagar, though in the later period is a result of popular and strong local belief that the area was ancient, kingdom of King Virata (of the Mahabharata period). Historians cite that the nomenclature of the place was during KesharShumsher's period; this researcher also learnt during the field interview

session that a huge iron pad-lock (weighing approx. 30-35 kg) was found in Rangeli area which was immediately shown and reported to Keshar Shumsher and conceding to the ruins found in Bhediyari, local people's belief and age old rumors of the Mahabharata incident the town was named Biratnagar in B.S. 1976. Although the name is just 100 years old, it is so much assumable that the belief of Virata's palace in Bhediyari area and the peripheri must have been an established and well believed incident in the folklores and hearsays of indigenous settlers here. These indigenous settlers could be Koch, Rajbanshis, Dhimal, Satars or some group of Terai Kirats. So the medieval history of the eastern region clearly infers that the administrative headquarters had been shifted from time to time from Vijaypur to Rangeli to Gograha to Biratnagar.

Indeed there are many places in the eastern region that has been named after the incidents and characters of the Mahabharata. They are Krishnathumki, Arjundhara, Pandavpur, Viratpokhar, Kichakbadh, Surunga, Satashidham, Ghailadubba, Biratnagar, Kichkagadhi, Dhanuskuti, to name some few. Numerous other ponds, caves and temple premises carry typical local narratives with different versions of locally inferred (also transmitted from generation of generation with some changes) tales of the Mahabharata relating them to the 12 years forest exile and 1 year of incognito of the Pandavas.

Interestingly the intangible aspect result from these concrete belief patterns add glory to the sites due to popular festivals, worships, fairs and esoteric rituals carried out in certain sites. The archaeological ruins transform into anthropological sites during annual fairs in some sites like Kichakbadhi, Arjundhara and Kichkagadhi.

The first lot of Shan Mokwan (Limbus) were according to Chemjong (B.S. 2051, p. 49) one generation of same tribe who established their capital city in Hwang Ho river in 2692 BC (p. 49-50) and with course of time came to east Nepal via Assam (p. 50). This east Kirat land was ruled over by 8 kirat chiefs before their arrival. The Limbus sought the chiefs permission and started living there.

According to Chemjong conflict arose between the 8 chiefs and the Limbus when the latter's population increased and became influential in the area. They took vows in a creating a sacred place by planting 3 mango trees to defeat or either die in the wars with the Kirat chiefs. They eventually succeeded in overpowering the chiefs and established a Limbuwan kingdom. The borders were Tibet (North), Jalalghad near Purnaya (South), Tistariver (East), Duhkoshi (West) and elected 10 chieftains to rule over 10 different regions specified within the Limbuwan Kingdom. (Chemjong, B.S. 2051, pp. 51-57).

It becomes relevant to cite one king here Soi Yaklado Hang. He is said to have ruled over the then Bodhe district who ruled over castes like Chemjong, Majhi (Waji), Tharu, Dhimal, Koche and others. (Chemjong, B.S. 2051, p. 56). This quite gives spaces to rethink that the tribes had been living here before 700 A.D.

The period of the 10 Limbus is not so clearly stated by Chemjong but from his another description of event of the arrival of second lot of Shaan Mokwani led by Murrey Hang is dated (by Chemjong) as the outset of 700 A.D. (B.S. 2051, p. 86), which gives somewhat a rough assumable date that Limbuwan was formed by 10 Limbus much before 700 A.D. if taken that Chemjong's account is true.

Chemjong (B.S. 2051) also states that when the second lot of Limbus had come to Limbuwan and established their fort in Rangeli, they had a fight and the leader Maw Rang had to retreat to Tibet (p. 86). So Limbuwan was formed before

700 A.D. Taken again that Chemjong's account is true that the first group/lot of Limbus defeated the 8 Kirat chiefs, it is much assumable that before 700 A.D. the time before Limbuwan was established, east Terai was ruled by the elderly generations of the 8 Kirats. So this gives space to infer that during Mandeva's reign the east Nepal was ruled by Kirant, which can be boldly said if Chemjong's account is true.

Because Chemjong's description of many events lack proper date and when sensitively looked upon, there are many hazy descriptions, most historians and scholars will doubt (have doubted) on the authenticity of his history. Most of them will take it as a biased writing, because Chemjong himself being of Kirat tribe seems in many stances of the book over ambitious to glorify the tribe. However, following Chemjong's account SoiYakladoHang is said to have build a fort (*gadh*) is Sanguri and his area was specified to Samawa (North) and Jalalgadh, Purnaya (South). Because all these places seem to have ancient names, the exact fort location is hard to locate at present, but MawRang's palace was (according to Chemjong) built in Rangeli. So fort remains of (700 A.D.) in Rangeli area can be one important venture for archaeologists to prove authenticity of Chemjong's history or to be least for new Rangeli can be said to be a potential archaeological site.

The most convincing sources of eastern Nepal's history should have been archaeological sources but they too have a pitiful unclear origin here. Most of them are related in local narratives, folklores and to the Ramayana's or the Mahabharata events. Particularly the archaeological ruins like that Kichakbadh, Bhediyari although dated comparatively to 2<sup>nd</sup> C.B.C (Sunga-Kushan) period, all the details which will be dealt in the latter part of this research, indicate that at some unknown point of time, the kingdoms in east Terai had collapsed for hundreds of years until they ruins were



found by local settlers. Similarly numerous man made ponds, water sources, temple structures and features like well, boats etc. (which are elaborately discussed in the finding sections of this research) in different places of Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari indicate to the ancient and the medieval history of the eastern region which are concretely unknown hitherto.

Almost all those spots are through multifold versions of local folklores related to the events of the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. However, the past researches verified that this region has an ancient history of 2000 years back, the justifications are the sites like Kichakbadh, Bhediyari and Varahthirtha. This researcher thinks that this could go back still. In a surface exploration of those places, particularly because of the names allotted to the places and also because of their close proximity to each other the local stories of the Mahabharata connections may look true to common men but due to the lack of inscriptions, and also particularly because history is strong only when there are dated or elaborated archaeological sources like coins or inscriptions, many learned people archaeologists and sensitive historians and anthropologists will regard oral narratives and epic versions as mere mythical. This researcher feels that when the Western Terai – Kapilavastu, Lumbini, Ramagrama etc had been inhabited, there is no point to surmise that the eastern Terai could not have been inhabited 2500 plus years back by a civilization that could be egalitarian. The present ancient date of the region dated to 2<sup>nd</sup> C BC (Sunga- Kushan) could go back to the Maurya period although we may not have the evidences now.

#### **4.3 Analysis on the Medieval and Modern History of Eastern Nepal**

The proper beginning of the medieval history of the region is shorouded in mystery. There we can surmise that cultural occupancies and primitive civilizations

flourished and faded away in different spots of the region. For now it would be wise to go by analyzing the past secondary sources.

Vijaypur in region Sunsari, said to be ruling region of the successors of great king Mukunda Sen of Palpa Makwanpur has significant remains to be discussed while dealing with the history of eastern Nepal. This is because the medieval period of eastern Nepal as per historical narrations was ruled over from Vijaypur. Even after the Gorkha conquest of B. S. 1831 Vijaypur remained as administrative headquarters of the east.

Dahal in his article *Morangko Aitihāsik Ruprekha* (Historical Facades of Morang), while narrating on the evidences of political existence of eastern Nepal since 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. writes that:

Eastern Nepal has been ruled over by different dynasties over different period of time. According to general opinion, Morang got its name from Murrey Hang, who comes from Kirant dynasty. After Kirant, this region is said to have been dominions of Tharu, Rajbanshi and Pal dynasty and to some extent Kirat kings also had their influence over the Koshi region during 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (B.S. 2054, p. 30-31)

The name Murrey Hang is also mentioned by Khatiwada (B.S. 2068, p. 15) as he cites from Dahal to mention the king's name being popular in one folklore (*Kimwadanti*) but Chemjong has stated about a king Maw Rang, who built a fort in Rangeli came to this region in the outset of 700 A.D. (B.S. 2051, p. 86 taken from the book translated into Nepali by Sher Bahadur Ingnam).

Chemjong's account say that the place later on became popular as Morang. In this context, 'Morang' name seems to be more than 1300 years old from now. But the king had to retreat to Tibet (Khampajong) after a clash with his first descendants who

had arrived here via Assam, and Burma, their origin as traced by Chemjong goes back to centuries to China Hwang Ho region Maw Rang (as described) is said to be a Shaan Mokwan. Maw Rang is depicted as the second lot of descendants to this region and the people of his tribe who come before Maw Rang and his people later on established Limbuwan Kingdom, and called themselves Limbus in the time that followed (B.S. 2051). But the real identity and time of Murrey Hang is confusing. Khatiwada in his 'KausikiSanskriti (B.S. 2070, P. 72, 74) mentions him as a ruler of early medieval period. And it is also, for the time being, a risky conclusion to say that how and when Morang got its name as today.

The region had been collapsed by some unknown reasons and remained fairly uninhabited may be except for the few successful tribes who roamed the forests here. Literary sources and history show that the kings in the modern times brought forth popular programs to rehabilitate the area. The popular programs were campaigns to provoke hilly people to come and own the lands.

In the later period, the territory of Morang became quite clear. During 1802 and 1803 when Hamilton intended to describe the country in his 'An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal and of the Territories Annexed to this Dominion by the House of Gorkha' at one reference writes:

Morang, in general sense, extends in the low country from the Tista to the Koshi, for the level of the country, that formally belonged to Sikkim, has now been annexed to this district. Its extend, therefore, from east and west is rather more than eighty seven miles. On the low hills, it extends from Kankai to the Kosi, which is about forty eight miles. It includes very few or none of the mountains and none of the alps. (2007, p. 140-141)

The region west of the Mechi river upto Tista, being lost after the Sugauli Treaty in 1816 A.D. to the then British India company reduced the territory of Morang.

Hamilton in his account has also mentioned briefly about the most remarkable places in Morang. Those places as mentioned in his account are Vijapur, Samrigarhi, Chaudanda, Satya Raja, Kichakjhar, Sorahbag and Varahakshetra (2007, p. 141).

Pathak (B.S. 2054) in his article *Morangma Awadikaran Tatha Punarwas Karyakram ra teska Asarharu* (Inhabitation and Rehabilitation program and their impacts in Morang) writes when in 1774, Morang was annexed to unified Nepal the government of Nepal brought over rehabilitation and land utilization programs (B.S. 2054, p. 38).

According to Dahal, during the end of 1774, Governor General of the East India Company had sent a request letter of Prithvi Narayan to let over the control of Vijaypur, which the British India Comapny took as a region of Bengal to which Prithvi Narayan had responded through a letter that owed some honoured gifts for a long period. However the demise of king Prithvi buried the debate (B.S. 2054, p. 34-35). Dahal further writes that, after Vijaypur's annexation, an inscription has been found here dated B.S. 1836 (1779 ) that was made to be engraved by 63 traders who had come to Vijaypur from Banepa, the traders some of whom were Newar, Khawas, Thapa (Dahal puts that this gives a glimpse that after Vijaypur's annexation, Banepa's workers and traders had reached Vijaypur (B.S. 2054, p. 35).

However, it is also much assumable that many parts of the eastern Terai, which was full of forests were inhospitable for living and settling. Historians and foreign writers have written about the grave dangers of the Terai forests of the eastern Nepal. Dahal (B.S. 2054) has written how high officials like Badahakim imported Soda water from Kolkatta and civil servants took their job placement in

this region as punishment (p. 35). Pathak (B.S. 2054) writes due to the grave dangers of malaria, heat-flu, mosquitoes, snakes, tiger, bear, elephant, flood etc. people did not want to settle here, and he also writes that civil servants took their job placement as punishment (p. 41).

The vast dense forests and their growth the region has been briefly documented by Hamilton and one can reason as why and how forests overgrew here for centuries before they were cut down for resettlement programs. Hamilton writes:

Before the conquest by the Nepalese, the petty Rajas who governed in different portions were so much afraid of their neighbours, that they did not promote the cultivation of this low land. They rather encourage extensive woods, and contented themselves, in a great measure, with produce of the forests in timbers, elephants and pasture; even them, however, many rich spots were occupied and were very productive; but they were so buried in the forests as to be little observable. The Gorkhalese, being more confident; have cleared much of the country, although still a great deal remains to be done. (2007, p. 60)

The forest fort (*Vanadurga*) as described in ancient Hindu texts (as that of Chanakya) constituted small kingdoms with petty kings in the eastern Nepal as what Hamilton observed.

Pathak has also written that in the years after month of the unification, war, revenge, encroachment and lack of social security led to a mass migration of settlers of eastern hills and Morang towards Muglan apart from tax-terrors levied to local zamindars, Chaudharys and disagreeable administrative patterns of biasness (B.S. 2054, p. 38).

This gives us reasons to think low forests have overgrown in previously settled areas for considerable time-period. Pathak also clarifies that after a sharp fall of population in the area, revenues fell short for rulers who were habituated in luxury, no increasing settlements here was the only alternative remained. To implement this the then government declared on Falgun 15, B.S. 1856, settlement program and following it on Magh 29, B.S. 1988, then government had published another notice of re-settlement program (B.S. 2054, p. 38). The 1998 program decided on setting up villages in the region that fell within east of the Koshi river, to the west of the Bakraha river, south of the highway, the region of 50,000 to 60,000 bighas of forest north from the Indo-Nepal border (Pathak, B.S. 2054, p. 39). Pathak puts his reason as far as claiming that the government was so desperate to increase population and settlement in the area that in certain specified places even criminals who were at large for more than 12 years in Muglan on crime accused of murder and other rape-related crimes, or debt crimes of those who had stayed in Muglan for 2 year etc. were given clean chit if they returned and settled in the area (B.S. 2054, p. 41).

It is obvious that the vast forests of the Terai region was transformed into sporadic settlement areas slowly over many decades. Many ruins, ponds are features of archaeological importance were for sure being revealed in the process, but with little regards from the conservation view, it is also clearly assumable that many sites of archaeological importance were destroyed by the ignorant settlers forever.

It would also be quite relevant to state hereby that this researcher has met and conserved with some elderly people in Jhapa district who had discovered ancient remains in the course of their settling process during B.S. 2033. This is also discussed in the later part of the research.

Nepal (B.S. 2040) describes that Nepal started to divide after the Lichhavi period and during the 12<sup>th</sup> century of Vikram Samvat. Nepal saw struggles between the 3 power centers - Khasas in the Karnali region, Doyas of the Karnata and Mallas of the Nepal valley (B.S. 2040, p. 6). He further writes during the 17<sup>th</sup> century of Vikram Samvat. Nepal suffered a complete division in the east and the west, only the Nepal valley remained as Nepal kingdom, even then there were 3 kingdoms Patan, Bhadgaun and Kantipur. The kings started to take title of Nepaleswor, Nepalchakrawali and Nepalese of the east and west themselves started to understand and call the valley as Nepal. Texts documented in this time devalued the meaning of Nepal in this limited sense (Nepal, B.S. 2040, pp. 6-7).

Taking this reference and other sources mentioned earlier, it becomes clear that eastern Nepal (as what is it today) along with the western Nepal was for almost all the historical periods part of (center) Nepal although some parts of the east region was claimed to be under Bengal during East India's company reign in India.

Khatiwada in his *Kausiki Sanskriti* has included and cited many previously acclaimed works of Chemjong, DC Sarkar, Gyanmani Nepal, Hamilton, Vishnu Ghimire and Dhanavajra Vajracharya to analyse the history of this region. It is important to note that according to Khatiwada after the fall of Simraungarh in B.S. 1362, the Koshi region fell under the Muslims while the hills were ruled by the Kirats, but the Muslims didn't get to rule for long here (B.S. 2070, p. 72). According to Dahal (B.S. 2054), Morang region also has a history of being ruled by the Prince (Nawabs) of neighbouring Purnaya (Purniya, India) during the rule of ShuvaSena (Makwanpur) and BidhataIndraSen (Vijaypur) who were caste reduced by the Nabaws, until Bidhya Chandra Rai from Kirata Pradesh chased away Nawabs and Mahipatisen become king of Vijayapur (p. 33).

Khatiwada also cites a handwritten fascimile "Narapatijayacharya Sworodayatika" written during Jagajotir Malla's time which claims that the Koshi region was under the influence of the Mallas, citing Yaksha Malla's extension of his kingdom to Bengal in the east and Ganges to the South (BS. 2070, p. 73). Dahal has also given the reference of this document and said that there is a description that Yaksha Malla with his courage defeated Mithila, Parvate king and got victory over the regions of Bengal to the east, Ganges to the South, Gorkha and Palpa to the west and seven days route towards the north (B.S. 2054, p. 31). Dahal (B.S. 2054) further clarifies his assumption that Mithila probably means Simraungadhi, Bengal border means Morang and in the east he must have defeated the Kirat chief (p. 31). Regarding dynasties and reigns of different dynasties in the Morang he also writes that prior to the Sens, Morang and it is seen had fallen into the dominions of Tinuhats, Kathmandu, Palanchowk Dolakha and by the local folk narratives in Morang even Brahmins like Laxmi Narayan, Vijaya Narayan, Rup Narayan etc have rules over here, but which lacks historical evidences (p. 31).

A research report prepared by Sharma (B.S. 2055) in his *Biratnagar ko Aitihāsik Adhyān* has stated about etymological interpretations of Biratnagar. According to the report the name Biratnagar in its initial phase was called Nepalgunj (B.S. 2055, p. 6 ; also in Dahal B.S. 2054, p. 36). Shakya (B.S. 2054) also writes, Biratnagar's initial name was Nepalgunj and in B.S. 1973 when its headquarters was shifted from Rangeli to Gograha, it was called Gograha and in B.S. 1976 when Keshar Shumsher came to Morang for hunting, he named it Biratnagar (B.S. 2054, p. 44)

Among some remarkable places that Hamilton mentions in his account is Vijaypur. He writes:



Vijaypur, the residence of the Sufah and of a former dynasty of princes, is situated on the higher part of the low hills. ... The fort is always garrisoned by regulars and a Serdar very commonly resides in it, superintending the conduct of the neighbouring civil officers and watching over the frontier.

(2007, p. 141)

Hamilton also with suspicion, portrays people's impression of this hill region that its air was healthier than the surrounding. He does not bother to give the architecture and other details of the residence, the information, had they been provided would have been of great importance today.

During the research venture, it was learnt that (according to Som Khatiwada) there are two sites for residence related to Vijaypur palace. One is in the Vijaypur hills, a top of Panchyakanya temple, where locals relate it as Bhatabhunge darbar (palace). Locals have it that, it was formerly a palace and with the course of time when it turned into ruins, people started picking the palace contents like doors, windows bricks, stones vandalising and looting until nothing of any importance remains today. A small site is fenced with barbed wire where a platform for worship (*thaan*) has been consecrated. According to a long time researcher of this region (S. Khatiwada, personal communication, 2022), this is actually the fort remains of the medieval rulers probably the fort remains of the medieval rulers probably of the Senas in the eastern frontiers and not necessarily the Vijaypur palace from where the Senas ruled over the Morang region.

Khatiwada has written briefly in context of Morang's history. Vijayapur was Morang's headquarters during the medieval period. It is to be understood that this Vijaypur is not Dharan Vijaypur but a region of Lalkot Rangmahal atop of Chatara; VijaypurBhatabhunge was its eastern frontier and Sagurigadhi, Suryakunda and

Chatara were other forts. Thus Lalkot was permanent capital city whereas Chatara Bayarban was temporary capital city. They ruled from two different locations according to seasons (Khatiwada, B.S. 2068, p. 20)

Taking Khatiwada's description above Hamilton's description of Vijaypur can be inferred as the fort in Dharan-Vijaypur because he has used the word 'fort' to describe it. So it is much assumable that during Hamilton's visit, this so called Bhatabhunge palace now was quite intact and in very good shape. 'Bhatabhunge' is most evidently the latter period's development of local nomenclature of the site literally meaning 'distorted totally'. So the locals' versions of this site as often portrayed in media as belonging to a king called Bhatabhunge is absolutely absurd.

However the name of a king Vijay Narayan is often contested in the history of eastern Nepal. Historians and learned people in this region relate Vijay Narayan as founder of Vijaypur kingdom. Even his whereabouts like where he came from his origin, his successor his tribe his death have been contested. There are multi-versions of his description in history books although few in number. Khatiwada (B.S. 2068, p. 21) writes among all the debates, it is seen that Senas dominated Vijaypur after Vijay Narayan.

Although there is no clear evidence of Vijay Narayan's existence, nor any any concrete history where and how he died, he seems to be contemporaneous with Lohang Sen, the then king of Makwanpur and youngest son of Mukunda Sen, Chemjong relates Vijay Narayan to be have started established capital city of Vijaypur in 1584 A.D. (B.S. 1641), Lohang Sen completed it in 1609 A.D., (B.S. 1666), and conquered by P.N. Shah in 1774 A.D. (B.S. 1831). (B.S. 2051, p. 150). Lohang Sen's time period is given as 1609-1649 A.D. (Chemjong, B.S. 2051, p. 154).

Vijay Narayan is said to have descended from Kamrup (Hamilton, 2007, p. 123; Chemjong, B.S. 2051, p. 150). Whatever has put Vijay Narayan's end in the reason, Lohang Sen is said to have indulged in the kingly affairs after him.

History has it that Morang fell into Makwanpur Kingdom along with Lohang Sen's intervention and then Radhav Sen, Harihar Sena ruled over it respectively eventually Hariharsen divided the kingdom into two the west of Koshi region to his yonges Son Shuva Sen and east of the Koshi region to this grandson Indu Bidhata, the later crowned as the king of Vijaypur (Upadhyaya, B.S. 2061, p. 130) And eventually Mahipati Sena and Kamdutta Sena became the kings of Vijaypur respectively (Upadhyaya, p. 133).

The history of Sena dynasty in the eastern region is quite clear and surveying historian's works, it is also agreeable that the chronology is in unison, generally with similar details. The ministers of the king generally the KirataRais position was maintained hereditary from Lohang Sen's period (Hamilton, 2007, p. 124).

The last king to rule over Vijaypur is generally agreed upon as Karna Sen in whose time Vijaypur was annexed into unified Nepal. A detailed and well versed medieval history of Eastern Nepal has been written by Pradhan (2009) in line with comparative study of Sikkim's chronology, citing and analysing works of many historians, that of Chemjong Hamilton to name same to them.

Because, this research is projected at unravelling archaeological sites and heritage management of the eastern Terai, it would likely be irrelevant to narrate and analyze history more than necessary. It has been clear that the modern periods of Shah and Rana reigns took policy of populating the eastern Terai with different package of relief programs and rehabilitation campaigns.

Today's eastern Nepal, heavily populated almost has marginalized the previously indigenous settlers who undoubtedly settled here prior to any other tribe and they are the Kirats, Kochs, Rajbanshis, Satars, Dhimals and Tharus, who were ruled over by different rulers and tribes in the eastern historical chronology. This eastern region's history is also hitherto debated because of the doubts of many historians whether actual Nepal of the past continuously included territories other than the territory of the Kathmandu valley. The present geography of Nepal is shaped after the Saguali treaty 1816 and the gaining back of the *Naya Muluk* (Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur). The present size of Nepal is mostly is credited to the unifier king Prithvi Narayan Shah and his advent that he started in B.S. 1799, as soon as he became the king of Gorkha. Many historians consider other parts of Nepal as free states linked to the center (the Kathmandu Valley) only through taxes raised from vassal kings or chieftains ruling over them. Fortunately, east Nepal is referred to a historic inscription though scarcely.

#### **4.4 Eastern Nepal's History: Still in Limbo**

It is actually a head-racking riddle to find out who ruled over the east in different timelines of the past. Was/Were there separate state/states? If there were, how many? What tribes or castes ruled them? What tribes here were contemporaneous to Lichhavi's kings or did they pay tax to the Lichhavis? What tribes built those fort like palaces of which we have only ruins now in Jhapa Kichakbadh and Morang Bhedyari? Were they part of Indian rulers? Where were their territories? What obligation or disasters hit them to abandon the places? Do they really belong to the Mahabharata period as claimed in today's communities' oral narratives? Did the territories of some kingdoms extend beyond the rivers or were they part of some bigger ancient empire probably that now which lie in Nepal- India border? These are

many of the questions with no concrete answers to date. Hence through this research the researcher would like to attempt to trace the history of the development of civilization through analysis of archaeological and literary sources.

Hamilton has cited from father Giuseppe, who witnessed war of Gorkhalese and Nepal considered Kirats (Ciratas) in the year 1769 to be independent nation (2007, p. 7). Except for some historians like Chemjong, who claim eastern Terai including all Nepal and even the Indian continent to be first inhabited by the Kirats prior to the Aryans most researchers and historians only can begin the legacy and history of east Nepal only after the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Mostly through the Sena dynasty, that originated here from Makwanpur. Chemjong goes on as far as mentioning that when Aryans first came to India, they had to fight a Kirant king called Shamba Asur, who after being defeated moved to Kinnardesh (now in Himanchal province) and established a fort here. In this place a group of Mangol mixed with the Kirats and a big clan/caste of Kirant was established who expanded continuously towards east and established themselves in Nepal (Chemjong, B.S. 2051, p. 5).

There is also a brief account of Mahabharata's Arjuna's warfare with a strong and sturdy Kirat Vassal King as Chemjong claims to have cited from Bharavi. During the war, Arjuna sensed that the strong king was as strong as the lord Mahadeva or any other major god so he apologised with his counterpart and pleaded him for 'Pashupatastra' (Chemjong, B.S. 2051, p. 6). He also writes that when Arjuna did not return on time the Pandavas came to the hilly himalayas here looking for him and first of all in the Terai, they were welcomed grandly by the Kirat kings Subhav and Pulinda. The Kirat kings helped them to go to Indrakeel hill-top (B.S 2051, p. 6-7).

Actually this place mentioned by Chemjong as Indrakeel, where Arjuna fought with the strong Kirat king has a different version of local legend in the eastern Terai

of Nepal. This researcher while exploring the site and collecting data of archaeological materials found in the area, was left amazed by the shivallingum(now kept in the Dhanuskuti temple) and other lithic religious materials found in the nearby hills of the Kankai river at Dhanuskuti.

In Jhapa district, Dhanuskutidhaam in Kankai Municipality is very popularly referred to and believed to be the same place mentioned in the Mahabharata where Arjuna fought with a Kirat king, who was Lord Mahadeva himself in disguise. But Chemjong has written that Arjuna's counter part was a strong Kirata ( B.S. 2051, p. 6). The local legend also tells that lord Shiva had come to the spot with Parvati and her associates and after being blessed by the lord and gifted with 'Pashupatastra' (a bow), Arjuna has established a *Shivalinga* and worshipped it. Just 15 years back, local travelers during B.S. 2061 had accidentally discovered a *Shivalinga* along with other idols of gods and goddesses 5 km north of where a modern temple has been established now. (Sigdel, B.S. 2072, p. 6) claims that the *Shivalinga*, now consecrated in the temple is the same that Arjuna had established. This researcher has until now never seen such a unique *linga* (Fig. 4.1), with clear and real-looking dome-head. Some lithic idols and a sandal (named locally as *Shiva- Kharau*) retrieved from the nearby sites (Fig.4.2 and 4.3) also are worth of comparative dating.

It is interesting to note that the naming of the place as Dhanuskutidham was just 17 years from now. This was after some lithic idols were discovered by some timber collectors in the nearby region. The educated circle of the region assembled and invited a learned man called Ananda Prasad Sigdel who said to be well informed on subjects of Sanskrit, literature, archaeology and astrology after observing the site and location named it Kirateshwor Mahadeva and Dhanushkutidhaam amongst many local personalities in a program (information retrieved from a locally published

memoir-*Dhanushkuti*, B.S. 2072 from Publisher's preface). Since then plans to develop and promote the site into religious pilgrimage has been going on. Some ancient appearing idols and religiously revered in Varahkshetra Krishnathumki quite give an impression of the objects of distant past. One consecrated in Varahkshetra called "*Vishnuvigraha*" has been said to be very ancient. One idol of Krishnathumki has a distinct mark of cow-shoe and human feet locally believed to be that of lord Krishna and his cow Nandini. The lithic finds of Betana collected by a local Bhim Kumar and showed to this researcher point to the prehistoric occupation of the region. Similar mark stone bearing foot mark ( so called by locals as *Vishnu paau*) is also consecrated in Dhanushkuti temple premises, Jhapa.

Keeping the local belief and oral narratives at bay now because these will be discussed in the finding sections and sites of study in the latter part of this research, there are other important archaeological finds in the region ranging from brick ruins to pieces of wooden implements and wooden boats (Fig. 4.4 and 4.5). Definitely, there are local myths created as the boat being of lord Krishna. However, these findings do reveal that there had been quite a number of tribal civilization living their livelihoods in the region before the region was abandoned and taken over by forests. The rivers like Krishna which is so small now that it is impossible to imagine big boats rowed here were definitely wider and deeper in the past. Some kingdoms unknown definitely flourished here in unknown times of the past.

Chemjong states that king Virata mentioned in the Mahabharata was a Kirat. Kirata history (according to Chemjong) gives a bold interpretation of Eastern Terai of Nepal being under influence of the Kirata Vassal kings, even during the Mahabharat period. Chemjong goes boldly as far as writing that the Pandavas in their one year of incognito had spent time in disguise in the palace of in the Kirata king Virata (B.S.

2051, p. 7). The huge ancient ruins and hoards of artifacts recovered in Bhediyari, Biratnagar has been locally related to the king Virata of the Mahabharat period, but in Chemjong's history of Kirats, Virat king is said to be of Kirata origin. However, whether king Virata existed or not or even when he existed, whether he was Kirata or not until now cannot be proven. Shakya in his article 'Morang Jillako Sadarmukam Biratnagar rakhnuko Sarthakta' writes that according to local folk lores, the queen of king Virata was a Kirat lad (B.S. 2054, p. 43).

However, what century does the Mahabharata period exactly refer to? Which time frame did the characters live in? Or in what century did the Pandavas and Kauravas live? Is Mahabharata a history, an exaggerated ballad of history or a mere myth, just a fiction? These questions have always been debated.

Prabhu writes "this epic describes the war fought about 1000 BC ... according to some authorities, the epic in its present form was being knit up by several writers between about the 4<sup>th</sup> C. BCE and the 4<sup>th</sup> C.A.D" ( in Rapson, E. J.'s *History of India* as cited in Prabhu, 1995,p. 10). Many historians and writers like Prabhu have reasons to assume because of its vast and vague plots that it was not written by one person although Hindu religious texts credit the Mahabharata to have been written by a sage Vedvyasa. Hence, because of the mentioning of the east in Changu's inscriptions we have but no option other than to refer to Mandeva at this point.

Khatiwada also expresses, while writing on history of Morang that most probably during Mandeva's time Kirats had been ruling over Morang, which may have annexed a huge territory of the eastern hills and there is also a probability that Lichhavi's may have taken control over east Morang during 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century (B.S. 2068, p. 18). However, Khatiwada also admits that whether the then Morang was



ruled by Kirats had taken control over a big territory of eastern hills lacks further evidences (B.S. 2068, p. 18).

The most important thing to be noted here is while Changu's inscription of King Mandeva clearly mentions the river "Gandaki" for his west ventures, sadly does not mention about crossing of the river "Koshi" for carrying out his eastern ventures of keeping (maintaining) control over the Vassal kings of the east. This gives a space to think whether Mandeva actually crossed the Koshi. The Vassal kings of the east may also have been used for the kings of the Dolakha, Sindhuli, Makwanpur regions. Anything further can be said clearly only through any other inscriptions, documents or concrete evidences that have reinstated the venture of king Mandeva, if any. If not, most of the gaps would have to be assumed or carefully interpreted.

Relating Morang's history to the medieval history, Khatiwada has written "after B.S. 1154 when Nanyadav established his kingdom of Karnataka is Simraungadh, Morang was also under their control for a long time until B.S. 1382, when the Simraungadh collapsed Morang is assumed to have been again a free state (B.S. 2068, p. 19). By the term Morang, he means to refer to the eastern Nepal.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Many sites like Biratnagar, Arjundhara, Surunga, Dhanuskuti and so on are new names linked by the locals to that of the Mahabharata incidents. Kichakbadh, Bhediari are too, likely to be new namings although stories of the Mahabharata linked here might have been age-old. These names could have been born out of the stories by a little earlier civilizations that came hereby before the first settlers of the resettlement campaign. The site called Ramdhuni in Sunsari that is related by the locals to the story of the Ramayana also lacks concrete evidences of ancient past at surficial observation.

The excavation materials in Kichkabadh which have been comparatively dated to the Sunga dynasty of India do not prove that this site was under their rule however, this definitely points out that at least the influence and trade were there between the Sunga-Kushan and the then inhabitants of the now eastern Terai of Nepal. It would be absurd and bogus to write anything without a detailed scientific study. Analyzing multiple facets of myths with result and directions shown by excavations in Kichakbadh and Bhediyari, it is an undeniable reality that Eastern Terai (Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari) is historically important region of Nepal. The excavations at Betana has proved of its pre- historic importance. Betana has and given a very valuable lesson that wetlands are not only to be made fun parks, they can be important from pre historic point of view.

Numerous ponds, sites, mounds, pilgrimages, sites of local-performances carry interesting and philosophical myths since the ancient period. This researcher has understood about a subdued reality that this region from Kichakhadh of Jhapa to Morang's Bhediyari have in between such multiple sites that all could be part of a developing civilization. Some forms of war, epidemic, natural disaster etc. could have been the reason of the collapse of this historical region. The nature of ruins, materials and their spatial spots and locations indicate many civilizations at multiple time – periods.

There are indications of civilizations which built ponds remarkably large in size at different places. The researcher has been to many of such ponds which now locals render to the Mahabharata characters. The ponds indicate a well settled agrarian societies. The researcher's interviews with the first and early settlers after the resettlement campaign at many places of Jhapa, their encounters with strange ponds during felling of trees or ruins that were celebrated as that belonging to the

Mahabharata period have given a clue that some sort of civilization had flourished, died away or migrated to other locations for unknown reasons. This region is likely to hold a contemporary history with that of the Gautam Buddha-2500 years ago from now. There is no reason to believe that when western Terai could have been inhabited by a civilisation some 2500 years ago that the eastern Terai could have been left aloof. The chances are many. Ruins and collapses, comparative datings by archaeologists if analysed properly can indicate this beyond the Sunga period of 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC. Chiefly the fertile lands of the Terai could have been inhabited thousands of years back. Betana's lithic arrow head (Fig. 4.14), collected by a local Bhim Kumar Rai and shown to this researcher indicate a pre-civilization or an emerging civilization in the eastern Terai. Even more the lithic blades (Fig. 4.13) resemble the Mesolithic stone blades. It is interesting to note that the DOA officials excavated at Betana after the call of local initiatives but seemed not to be connected with the locals. This researcher endeavoured to connect to the locals and brought these information out and has informed the DoA to analyse the historicity of the implements so found by the local person.

The resettlement of the human societies in some places of this flatlands have only a history of 63 years. The Terai was a dangerous place because of dense jungles, mosquitoes and wild animals. Few places must have been occupied and inhabited 400- 500 years back. The history of the Terai since 5<sup>th</sup> century AD- 15<sup>th</sup> century AD is a dark age. Few archaeological sources, idols of the Varahkshetra, ruins of palace like structures do not indicate the continued generations of people living in these flatlands because there is no evidence of anything here dated to be of that period.

Hence, the herculean task of tracing the history of the development of the civilization in the eastern Terai of Nepal takes us back to pre-civilization era or an

emerging civilization era because of the abundant findings in the Betana region. The civilisations that flourished here rowed boats, built palaces, forts, ponds, domesticated elephants (there are marks of elephant chains in the old trees of the Viratpokhar, Jhapa) and ruled the jungles here. However, it is reasonable to humbly admit that multiple or more than one civilization flourished over here in different parts of the eastern Terai in intermittent centuries prior to the advent of the Sena and the Shah dynasties 17<sup>th</sup> century AD. As Upadhyaya (BS 2061) mentions during early medieval period, Nepal was divided into three- Khasa, Tiruhata and Nepal Mandal. The Tiruhats had influence over to the Mithila (p.102), the period may have had influence in the Koshi region too. So prior to them we have the evidence of the Sunga period ruins in the eastern Terai. In Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari, the development of the civilization of the Terai region cannot be left aloof from the history of the eastern hills. Prior to the 15th century AD, this region of the Terai had seen multiple civilizations at different places as evident in history and archaeological findings. This can be summarized as:

(a) Prehistory of the region had been placed up to the Neolithic period from 2000-1000 years (Pandey & Regmi, B.S 2062, p.66) based on the finding of a stone axe from Vajjanathpur, Morang. (b) The recent prehistoric excavations made by the DoA in Betana, Morang reveals the prehistoric occupation of the region. The findings made by a local person Bhim Kumar Rai and shown to this researcher (Fig. 4.10- 4.19) reveal some implements indicating that the region had been a fertile land for hunters/ Prehistoric men before the advent of a civilization. (c) The region in the Koshi region at Varakshetra had been a religious site famous in today's North Bengal region as evident in Budh-Gupta (477-494 AD) inscription in India. The mentioning of a trader Ribhupal keeping a guthi and renovation of an idol of Varah proves that it was older

than 5th century. This place had already been a religious hub. Archaeologist TN Mishra has placed Bhediari to be of 200-100 BC whereas Archaeologist Uddav Acharya has placed Kichakbadh within the same timeline. (d) Multiple ponds existing today and undated (at Viratpokhar, Chillagadh, and Goldhap) were seen by the first settlers of the region with whom this researcher has met. These ponds indicate an agrarian civilization that grazed cattle, reared fishes or used irrigation measures. (e) The boats (Fig. 4.4) and wooden/ceramic/ well findings (Fig. 4.7-4.9) shown to this researcher in Devichaun and Shantipur village respectively indicate a civilization that rowed boats in the Krishna river, now reduced to a small rivulet. The dating of the boat is necessary. (f) The jewellerys and decoratives (Fig. 5.2. and 5.5) retrieved by locals in Bhediari show an advanced civilization that honoured beauty and aesthesim. (g) The trees in the Viratpokhar region still bear mark of elephant chains. The unknown people of the unknown civilizations reared elephants and used them.

Tracing the chronology of the civilizations of this region before the 15<sup>th</sup> century is only possible through scientific datings and further study. Tribes came and again left for unknown reasons or simply died away before the modern people took them over the places and their ruins. The researcher strongly believes that these civilizations or at least cultural layers were different at different sites and may have been contemporaneous in the northern and the southern belts but with different chieftains or rulers. The then Central Nepal most probably had their influence only in the hilly region during the Lichhavis. The Southern belts obviously were ruled by rulers of the kingdoms whose landmass are now in India. This researcher through interpretation of archaeological sites found now in the Terai also feels (like many scholars) that the eastern Terai was mostly connected to the territories now in India.

Some scholars like Khatiwada also have written about Bhediari (Morang) at this context, mentioning of innumerable ruins scattered throughout the Nepal- India border and across (B.S.2068, p. 69). At certain time- frames of the modern history, the Terai lands were annexed to/ controlled under the eastern hills state administration too of whose we have evidences. The Mechi river now seperates India and Nepal, in the past it could have been under influence of a single kingdom. In the medieval period, the Tiruhats had expanded upto the Mithila region (Upadhyaya, BS.2061, p. 102).

The Kirats, the Kochs, the Rajbanshis, the Dhimals and the Satars are the pre settlers here, the descendants of whom still worship many archaeological sites of this region. The ruins here need to be scientifically studied in association with the new sites found time to-time. Many sites might be lying stray to be discovered in the *Charkoshe Jhaadi*. When nomadic indigenous groups like Koch, Dhimal came here before human settlement in the modern era (before the resettlement campaign), they might have brought some hear-says and myths of this place from their places of origin where their ancestors had connections with the places of the eastern Terai. Due to local people's endearing belief-patterns and myths, such many sites have been preserved.

## Chapter Five

### History of Archaeological Heritage Conservation in Eastern Terai of Nepal:

#### Selected Sites of Study

##### 5.1 Concept of Archaeological Conservation

The meaning of conservation has been time and again defined and explained by international charters, contested and interpreted by many researchers. *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013* defines it as “umbrella term to mean all the processes of looking after a place” and Conservation theory on heritage management tend to follow globally accepted and practiced policies or charters. The General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS, meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka, at its tenth session from July 30 to August 7, 1993 adopted a set of guidelines that at one point states “the object of conservation is to prolong the life of cultural heritage and if possible, to clarify the artistic and historical messages therein without the loss of authenticity and meaning”. Bauer, Sinha and others write “conservation can be defined simply as any action taken to safeguard the material integrity of the cultural heritage in order to respect the significance in all aspects (cultural, artistic, historical, religious etc) (2017, p. 99).

Archaeological studies as they seem have always been less thought of and least prioritized in Nepal. It has been sensed that the eastern Terai does not have any archaeological sites that have been highly prioritized by Nepal. History of archaeological conservation in here does not date back too long. One reason is we are just at the crawling stage of understanding archaeology. With immense potentiality of prehistoric and ancient historic settlements because of its favorable climate, rivers, hills, mountain ranges and species of flora and fauna, Nepal still remains in its infant crawling stage in the progress of archaeological studies as of 2022. Lately scientific

explorations using GPR (Ground Penetrating Radar) or aerial photography and Cambridge KE model 3000 tests have been used in the World Heritage Sites of Lumbini. Other sites in its proximity like that of Kapilvastu, followed by excavations and rigorous analysis have too been systematically dealt with. The eastern Terai, in this phase of time seems to be in woeful state in terms of conservation, research and management.

Conservation and community cannot be separated. The basic element and ground-root cog of managing site is incorporating community in its management. This has been prioritized of late but not of much avail. Community has been a striking terminology these days when associated with heritage management. Communities living nearby heritage sites, while at one hand are agents of conservation, on the other hand are sources of destruction and agents of risks.

Focusing on maintenance and conservation, *ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage* emphasizes on local participation in heritage management. It states:

Local commitment and participation should be actively sought and encouraged as a means of promoting the maintenance of the archaeological heritage. This principle is especially important when dealing with the heritage of indigenous peoples or local cultural groups. In some cases it may be appropriate to entrust responsibility for the protection and management of sites and monuments to indigenous peoples. (A part of Article- 6)

Communities around sites like Kichakbadh, Kichkagadhi, Bhediyari, and Dhanpalgadhi imbue certain degree of mythical beliefs in their conducts turning them into more of religious and mythological place rather than archaeologically important sites. But archaeology and myths do not go hand in hand. The labyrinth of mythical



interpretations by communities around historic sites can sound absurd and bogus to an archaeologist. Similarly, the tedious and tortoise-pace of archaeological ventures are meaningless to local people who only know that the sites have been there since the times mentioned in their myths. But for a researcher, sensitive to both anthropological and archaeological aspects, interestingly, the invaluable riches of language, rituals, historical characters, universal norms and moral values are best preserved in local legends, myths and folklores representing both the dead and the living. Models and rationale for management of heritage sites have been debated and rethought upon time and again. For example many experts argue that models depend upon the nature of site. There is no any universal method that fits all. Taking reference of western model/ rationale of heritage management Sullivan has quoted authors like Byrne(1991) and Wei and Aaas (1981) and explains that “in particular, many non- western cultures have a spiritual rather than material view of what of their past is valuable. They see individual objects and places as vehicles of great value for communicating deeper spiritual meanings” (2012, p.642).

The sites of eastern Terai as locals see through their heroic characters of the epic or religious stories justify the acts why a man of Satar tribe sings to the modern idols of Bhima dueling with Kichak at Kichakbadh, or why the lithic idol of Shree Vighraha in Varakshetra is seen as lord Vishnu. This may justify the act of why any material finds of Bhediyari is related to the Pandavas of the Mahabharata.

When we talk about community in eastern Terai there are Koch, Satar, Rajbanshi, and Dhimal as indigeneous tribes mixed with other castes. In many places, they have clustered together near such sites and define themselves to heroic characters associated with the sites in the past. Particularly Bista’s (2004) impressions

about the Rajbanshi and their history with Kichak of the *Mahabharata* is interesting to refer hereby. At one point, he writes:

Original Koch and now Rajbanshi, are among the very oldest people of the area. They are mentioned in the Mahabharat, the famous epic which is believed to be more than 3,000 years old. Koch chiefs were recorded to have fought on the battle field of Kurukshetra during the Mahabharat period. (p. 160)

The recent theories, conventions and policies on managing archaeological site management have tried to advocate for the equitable benefit of all levels of community people while the sites are being used for tourism or so.

Linde and Williams (2006) while writing on how popular archaeological models fail to address ethical management of archaeological resources. In particular reference to the Burra Charter they write as:

Among several possible types of management, the model that emerged through the Australian Burra Charter has acquired wide currency, mainly for its approach to the issue of local community involvement and ethical and ideological concepts of valuing the resource. (p.111)

This is one of the important suggestions to incorporate into any archaeological model or conservation because the living present communities can only be interested in conservation of the sites for the future if they are satisfied by the outcomes of the conservation in the present. Linde and Williams have also pointed out the loophole of today's site management which focuses more on future generations but they should be focusing on the present generation too (2006, p.111). Such theories highlight the importance of using sites wisely or using the resources of the sites wisely for the benefit of today's living community.

*The Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Heritage*

1990 suggest that “active participation by the general public must form part of policies for the protection of the archaeological heritage. Participation must be based upon access to the knowledge necessary for decision-making. The provision of information to the general public is therefore an important element in integrated protection” (1990, Article -2).

Besides addressing the local participation, there are issues of looting in the sites of study that have to be dealt while investigating on conservation approaches and history of conservation.

### **5.1.1 Looting and Vandalising:**

Conservation of sites are affected by looting. It was informed to the researcher by some local people that sites around Kichakbadh have been dug numerous times by local people in search of treasure, precious and semi-precious stones and ancient objects of antique values. Mismanagement of heritage sites have time to time been discussed globally. Mcglade’s article on Hadrian World Heritage Site, UK depict how after opening of Hadrian’s wall path national trail (a 135 km recreational walking route ) did damage to the archaeological fabrics of the wall (2018, p.189). Several man made walking routes have been left as it is over archaeological ruins in Kichakbadh mound. Trespassing, cattle grazing and littering are common and not recognized as faults in the area. Thousands and thousands of people attend the yearly festive in the month of *Falgun*. (on Full-moon day). This has changed the destination image of Jhapa and called on urgent measures to protect it from effects of human activities, management loopholes and safeguard this cultural property from natural disaster like river-floods too.

Sharer and Ashmore rightly ascribe to looting as a long time companion of archaeology (1987, p. 52). They further explain the financial motive of looting:

In particular, a European and American colonial powers expanded into previously unexplored areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, proprietary claims were staked over ruins in these areas, and archaeological sites were often mined like mineral deposits, to stock the shelves of museums and private collectors alike. For instance, from 1801 to 1821, Claudius Rich, a British consular agent in Baghdad, collected and removed thousands of antiquities and sent them home to England. An extraordinary Italian, Giovanni Belzoni, working for the English government, systematically looted Egyptian tombs; he even used battering rams to enter the ancient burial chambers.

(1987, p. 52)

This description from Sharer and Wendy just exemplifies one of many such historical acts of vandalizing to help understand contexts of looting prevailing in other forms around the globe. Among many factors that spoil the archaeological records and understanding, human activities have been ascribed to the most dangerous one.

Wenke writes “The greatest destruction, however is caused by people – and not just in our own industrial age ... still, our own generation is the perhaps the worst despoiler of antiquities” (1990, p 41-42).

Looting was a big problem in Kichakbadh too. Towards the south-east mound of Kichakbadh mound, a small island like topography called *Aadradigi* is surrounded on all sides by artificial narrow water bodies. Today it has been owned privately and a small tea garden planted. In the past, peasants working in the field found dead bodies, many of them which had stone ornaments valued in the area. The local diggers increased, and the whole area was exploited. The priest of Kichakbadh Satidevi

temple and the locals said that most of these necklaces and stone ornaments have been sold in borderlands of India. The researcher could not get a glimpse of these but can be assumed to be of semi-precious types.

Similar types of stone ornaments (semi- precious in nature) had been shown to this researcher in Morang's Bhediyari by one local Kamal Kishor Yadav who claimed them to have been owned by Draupadi the wife of the *Pandavas* mentioned in the epic Mahabharata. However, modern archaeology disapproves all forms of imaginative mythical interpretations that twist and turn the already established norms of facts and findings. The voluminous epic Mahabharata is also considered as non-historical account- a big myth by many. Therefore archaeological places named with characters from this epic raise serious questionable issues for sensitive researchers like us. This is only one of many incidences that can prove that Community's nature of ownership and behaviors invite both conservation practices and risks in archaeological sites like Kichakbadh. Both aspects of heritage management are important to convene risk mapping around the place and develop the locations around Kichakbadh into well managed touristic destination.

Owing to the hoard of materials that locals have themselves collected and kept in the private museum of Kamal Kishore Yadav, there are rooms to think about treasure hunting that went on publicly in the region. Similarly archaic materials were said to be found in Kichkagadhi Morang too. The conservation committee members denied of any materials that were personally taken from the site because of fear of deities but a local woman nearby sadly said to this researcher that there had been incidents that precious materials from their were taken by people. But without proof this cannot be justified. Even in Dhanushkuti area important lithic finds are time to time found by the locals in the nearby hills but except some that are preserved in the

temple, there are almost no traces of other materials. There are few emerging examples that locals have tried to preserve and conserve archaeological objects. Such objects are most of the time preserved because of its religious or mythical local beliefs. It would also be right to state that people have started to become aware of conserving such sites as of late.

### **5.1.2 History of Archaeological Activities in Nepal**

Prior to discussing the history of archaeological conservation in the eastern Terai of Nepal, it would be relevant to succinctly start with the history of archaeology in Nepal as a whole. Bidari (2007) states that archaeological progress in India began as early as 1784 after the formation of the Royal Asiatic Society by Sir William Jones and then followed by countrywide explorations by Sir Alexander Cunningham during 1871; but Nepal lagged behind because the rulers kept the country closed to foreigners and no archaeological investigations and activities were allowed (p.50-51).

It was only in 1960 that Tony Hagen emphasized on the importance of scientific researches on the line of the probability of settlements of prehistoric men in *ThakKhola* region (Western Nepal) while he was rigorously surveying on Nepal's geophysical nature (Pandey and Regmi, B.S. 2062, p.36). Pandey and Regmi also write that prehistoric researches initiated in Nepal in 1960 after the visit of Amalananda Ghosh, the then Director General of archaeological Survey in Nepal (BS 2062, p36). Then in intermittent periods, prehistoric researches have been carried out by different foreigners and Nepali scholars and almost all of these are centered in Western Nepal.

The eastern Nepal's prehistoric chronology has been laid down to Neolithic age from 2000-1000 BC by Pandey and Regmi (BS 2062, p.66), based on the findings of an axe from Morang's Jhapa Vaijanathpur and lithic implements published by

JanakLalsharma found in Charikot, Dolakha and some collections of Mahesh Raj Dahal in Dhankuta (Pandey and Regmi , B.S. 2062, pp.64-65).

Saptari, the adjacent district of Morang in its west also has a history of excavation in a site called Khoksar in 2001 (Darnal, 2002, p.43), that shows evidently the archaeological richness of the Eastern Terai of Nepal.

Joshi who surveyed the Kathmandu valley in Sep- Oct 1961 on behalf of archaeological survey of India for any prehistoric evidences has written:

The limited search for prehistoric remains in the country of Nepal did not turn out fruitful. But it must be mentioned here that the area surveyed so far is about one percent of the total area of 140, 000 sq.km ... there is still a sizeable portion of this country that awaits exploration and until it is done it will not be proper to say that this country has no prehistoric past. (1996, p.80)

Joshi (1966) in his article about the prehistoric exploration of the Kathmandu valley has briefly suggested to undertake two major projects in Koshi and Gandaki and traverse them as they are permanently likely to go under water (p.81). About the projects he has not mentioned.

In his article "Archaeological activities in Nepal since 1893 A.D. to 2002 A.D." Darnal , takes March 1893 in its title referring to the discovery of Ashokan pillar by Major Jaskaran Singh citing from Mukherjee (1969, p.2) (Darnal, 2002, p.39), but this year is just a marker initiation of archaeology activities that followed intermittently in Lumbini and Western Nepal. The eastern Terai however remained virgin for two more centuries even thereafter. The excavation of Lumbini, Ashokan pillar in 1899 by PC Mukherjee, followed by Kaiser Shamsheer only in 1933. The DoA Nepal that was established only in 1953 indicates the woeful conditions to our archaeological needs in the country only of 70 years old is still infant as of 2022

Kunwar (2005) cites that “P.C. Mukherjee’s extensive explorations and a few excavations at Lumbini and the Kapilavastu region whose report was published in 1901 was the first scientific archaeological research in Nepal”(p.78). The advent of Fuhrer in 1896, Mukherjee 1898-99, Devala Mitra 1962-65, S.B. Deo 1964-65 all set some milestones in the field of Archaeology here in Nepal.

Excavations followed in Talaurakot and Kathmandu but the first excavation initiation in eastern Nepal was in 1970 A.D. in Bhediyari. Features of temple ruins and punch marks coins and other antiquities are mentioned by the archaeologist TN Mishra in his article (B.S. 2054, p.28) but such findings were destroyed when Singhadurbar caught fire (Darnal, 2002, p.41). Corvinus, G. had explored the Dun Valleys of the Dang Deokhuri in 1984 in the Siwalik foothills in Western Nepal and area along the RatoKhola in the Mahottari district of east Nepal. She informs about a special prehistoric technique of making weapons named as Patu industry (named after a village in Mahottari) and findings of Mesolithic implements like adzes, choppers, corescrapers etc. (2004, p. 35). She writes that human occupation in Nepal can be dated back at least to the latter middle pleistocene with the discovery of handaxe in Nepal (2004, p. 38). Eastern Nepal's Patu in Siwalik hill of Kamala, Ratokhola in Mahotari district discovery by Gudrun Corvinus (also stated in Darnal, 2002, p.41) has also been a brief history of pre-historic studies in the Eastern region. However sadly, the potential region, east of the the Koshi, had never been in the highlighted studies before..

Banarjee, N.R. the then archaeological advisor to the then HMG who along with archaeologist from Nepal ( SriJanakLal Sharma) in 1969 had explored the regions around the Narayani river starting from the TriveniGhat of Nawalparasi district in his article has mentioned about the Koshi region too. He writes:



“The basins of the Mahakali, Karnali, Rapti, Narayani (Gandaki), bagmati and the Kosi would lend themselves to systematic explorations for the remains of prehistoric man in Nepal (1969, p.9)”. Indeed, the Koshi basins and many regions nearby rivers and rivulets are until now *terra incognita* for both prehistoric and archaeological researches. A small region in the Betana wetland of Morang district has recently highlighted about a prehistoric occupation around and near the region, the details of which are discussed in the latter part of this research. Until now state led excavations in the eastern Terai east of the Koshi region has been undertaken at three regions.

As of today in 2020 even archaeological interests and government-led archaeological researches are still in infant stage in Nepal. However, with co-ordination from UNSECO, universities of Europe or other occasional sponsors from international spheres, modern, regular scientific excavation sessions are being held in Lumbini, Kapilvastu, Mustang and their peripheries by DoA, Nepal. Western Nepal of Nepal should be termed lucky through archaeological lens as interests in unravelling the birthplace of Lord Gautam Buddha began as early as 19<sup>th</sup> century. State-led excavations started since 1895 (by Fuhrer, Khadga Sumsher) followed in 1899 (by Mukherjee), in 1933 (by Keshar Shumsher), in 1962 (by D. Mitra) (Bidari, pp.159-170)

However, in the eastern Terai in province in the region of three districts of study, the history of first scientific excavation under DoA, Nepal is credited to Tarananda Mishra in B.S. 2025 (1968 A.D.) at Bhediari, Morang. Also Series of excavations started at Kichakbadh since B.S. 2058 (2001 A.D.) under DoA, Nepal under leadership of Uddhav Acharya. The other excavation the region till date is at Betana, Morang in 2015, under leadership of Tarananada Mishra and Ram Kunwar of DoA, Nepal. Recently there has been another excavation in Bhediari under DoA's

Bhaskar Gyanwali as of Jan-Feb 2022. Scientific explorations in the region would be a far fetched talk to write about. This researcher for the purpose of unravelling potentialities of archaeological sites has carried out site survey (observation) around Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari, which will be discussed in the chapters throughout the research.

## **5.2 Excavated Sites of Eastern Terai of Nepal**

In the region of this study only three sites have been excavated at the government level. The sites are Bhediyari (Morang), Kichakbadh (Jhapa) and Betana (Morang) in chronological order in accordance to the year of excavations. The details are provided below:

### **5.2.1 Bhediyari**

Bhediyari lies in Budhnagar municipality in the southern corner of Biratnagar. The etymology of the name is interesting to note here as with folklores and apocryphal is related to the epic Mahabharata.

'*Bhedi*' means 'detective' and it was learnt that when Pandavas hid here in disguise of laymen during their one year of incognito, Duryodhana had sent detectives (*bhedi*) to spill the beans and hence the name of the place is Bhediyari. There are other references to its etymology as calling of fox as *bhediya* that were abundant in the area to calling this site of mound as *bheed* to rearing of sheep (*bheda*) by locals in the area through which this place got its name (Khatiwada, B.S. 2068, p.69-70). It is obvious that the place with huge land-mass and abundant of archaeological riches got its name lately after the indigenous migrants who came here 500-6000 years ago, the findings slowly being linked to folklores connected to the Mahabharata as the population grew.

History of archaeological excavation in Bhediya in 1968, under leadership of Tarananda Mishra, DoA, Nepal conducted a scientific excavation in one of the mounds at Bhediya. This is only a single excavation in the massive area of Bhediya, where many some settlements of different villages have been established. So large is the area of Bhediya that the archaeological ruins extend beyond the Indo-Nepal Border in the South. DoA did not conduct further excavations then for many decades until recently an excavation led by Bhaskar Gyanwali, an archaeologist of the DoA conducted 18 days excavation at the same site that of T.N. Mishra.

Archaeologist Mishra (who excavated Bhediya) in his short article 'Purvi Nepal ko Itihas ra Gaurav ka Gathaharu' in a book *Morang Ek Parichaya* (B.S. 2054), writes briefly about the findings he had had retrieved during the excavation in 1969. The excavation sessions did not continue as the site was comparatively dated to 200BC -100 BC old, as per the findings in Bhediya, through excavation of Tarananda Mishra (BS 2054,p.28) has mentioned about an ancient temple ruins with oval epicentre (*Andakar-garbagriha*). The ruins were laid out in two phrases that Mishra dates as 200-100 BCE. Baked bricks formed the ruins that measured (47\*45\*7) ft. Atop it other oval epicenter measuring 23 ft. (North- South) and 11 ft. (East-West) rested and Mishra cites from 'Dictionary of Hindu Architecture- (1995,p.344) to name such shaped temple as *Kukkut-Anda- Sadisham* type of temples which were used to house ancient goddess Matrika.

Mishra has also written about retrieving of 40 punch- marked coins which the DoA bought and have displaced in National Museum, He dates it back to 200-100 BCE. The excavation sessions initiated in BS 2058 in Kichakbadh under the leadership of Udhav Acharya has also revealed that the site to belong to the similar

period. In this way, the sited Bhediari and Kichakbadh seem contemporaneous and both are in local folklores related to the epic events of the Mahabharata.

#### **5.2.1.1 Findings Retrieved by Locals of Bhediari**

An influential local person in Bhediari municipality known by the name Kamal Kishore Yadav who is also the chairman of Virat Durbar Conservation Committee showed this researcher the findings collected by locals and himself. At all cost, these indicate what valuable riches have locals retrieved accidentally or intentionally from the sites, what they can retrieve further and also sheds question on whether there was/is mass and organized treasure hunting in the Bhediari area.

Yadav claims himself to be a conservationist and as he claims this, it can be inferred that he has been actively promoting the place as the land of King Virata. However, he attributes each finding to the epochs, episodes and characters of the Mahabharata (K.K Yadav, personal communication, 2018). This may seem funny sometimes to archaeologists or researchers. This tendency is typical behavior (stereotypical) of the locals in the eastern region. He has amazing collection of archaeological riches like stone querns, elephant bone dice precious and semi-precious stones that he happily shows to researchers and visitors. He has set up a small museum in his house. He assured this researcher that he has dedicated his life to promote and safeguard the place. But according to the law and policies of Nepal only DoA can legally excavate the potential sites.

The locals herein have doubted of treasure hunting and illegal digging of the sites in search of antiques. The findings collected by Yadav has also been mentioned by Khatiwada as Precious stones like Shaligram, clay dishes, dice, inscription engraved *Ram laxman Janak Jawanhar manak* with 5 images of humans in the center

(B.S. 2068, p. 72-73). Some of archaic looking ceramic and lithic objects were shown to this researcher by Yadav in 2018.

Yadav had a lot of (archaeological materials) /objects to show to this researcher. Some of them are listed below:

(a) Wooden carved beams and pieces in fragile conditions: According to Yadav these were retrieved while constructing railway track of dry port nearby and handed over by the workers to him which he kept in his cow shed. He tried to explain and convince this researcher that these are pieces of cart of King Virata. This interpretation gives a glimpse of how locals relate findings of this place to the Mahabharata. (b) Quern pieces and (pestle like implement) (c) A clay goddess and ceramic objects (Fig. 5.1 and 5.2)) (d) Stone balls and lithic circular plates probably used for hunting (Fig. 5.7) (e) Rice grains (interpreted by Yadav as grains used by Draupadi) and baked bricks(Fig. 5.4 and Fig. 5.3) (f) Stone beads, bangles etc (Fig. 5.5 and 5.6 ) (g) Semi-precious stones (Fig. 5.8 and Fig. 5.9)

Khatiwada (B.S.2068) has also mentioned among many local findings one is an idol of RadhaKrishna measuring 9.5 x 7.5 cms and other female idols (p. 72).

These all pose serious questions on:

(a) How can such sites be taken care through legal government authorized bodies? (b) How can archaeologically ignorant communities be trained or encouraged in promoting ownership of the sites with such valuable findings? (c) How can local museums be set up in such places with effective display strategies and with authentic information? (d) How should these hinterlands be used for cultural tourism?

Although at one level there is at least appreciable quest of locals for taking ownership and promoting the place but at heritage management level personal collections of archaeological riches, tilling of lands with hopes of antique treasures

and interpreting findings by linking it to epic characters are against archaeological ethics. But at the other level, it is also true that while there are no archaeological excavation reports, no concrete state level quick response to rescue of heritage artifacts, at least some locals although with little/no knowledge of archaeology are teaming up with collections helping researchers by providing information upto their level and more than that developing enthusiasm to promote tourism in the site.

Hence Bhediyari is one of the most vulnerable sites from the aspect of archeological crimes- (intentional and unintentional) and ill- management of heritage monuments. Tractors and other vehicles commute by the exposed ruins here and there and trees have engulfed the ancient looking ruins that can be observed at the surface (Fig. 5.10 and 5.11).

#### **5.2.1.2 Conservation Approaches in Bhediyari**

No concrete approaches to conserve Bhediyari have been observed during the research. On site exploration reveals poor heritage management, most of which has been left at the hands of the influential community person well-known in the area as Kamal Kishor Yadav as described earlier here. His residence has turned out into a small unmanaged museum, where visitors are led and each finding is associated to the characters of the Mahabharata. Yadav claims to be a conservationist of the area and does not believe that DOA, Nepal has capability to protect and document about the area (during the interview session in 2018). He questioned this researcher that DoA, which cannot protect 3 *Kattha* of land enclosed within the excavated site, how can it propose for cordoning villages for further excavation which is in fact such a large area? Did the state plan for another excavation? Cows were grazing in the excavated conserved site as observed by the researcher. Also building of dry port poses threat to

the archaeological remains of the sites therein. Yadav also showed some strange wooden bars (seemingly of an oxen-cart/horse cart) that were found by the workers who were digging land to the north from the excavated site for railway tracks. This points to a clue that the railway track might have passed over some ancient structures or objects beneath.

According to some locals, the dry-port and railway tracks also have destructed the ancient ponds near the excavation site. One time excavation at a single site cannot do justice to unfold the vast archaeological riches in Bhediyari region. However it was learnt that an international team along with DoA had used scientific exploration in some areas the reports of which are due still. Another excavation followed after decades through DoA in 2022 at the same spot where T.N. Mishra had excavated. Also local treasure- hunters need to be identified and citizen-responsibility needs to be promoted in this area. This is quite urgent.

Also a regretful expression by Pandey and Regmi have been put in their book *Nepalko Pragitihās* as '1974 fire in Singha Durbar has destroyed neo- lithic implements too (B.S.2062, p. 37). However, the text primarily focusing on the pre-history of Nepal, there is no mention on what other archaeological riches haven destroyed therein. Also regretfully, there is no authentic report available through DOA, Nepal on the consequences and damage resulted from the disaster.

Mishra (B.S.2054) himself has predicted that there are many ancient sites in Morang and there is dire need of exploration and research (p. 28). Many historians and learned people have emphasized on this fact but because the process and ventures are costly, technical, tiome consuming, full of ideological religious and academix challenges, so there are less archaeological exploration over here. And it is a sheer

fact that DoA, Nepal , itself cannot reach out to several sites due to many reasons like manpower, budget, policy, yearly target etc.

Khatiwada has written that ruins of ancient buildings and walls can be discovered in hundreds of bighas of land. The bricks measure 10x 10x 3.5 -13x 9x 1.5 inch (B.S. 2068, p. 70). He has also thrown light on the nomenclature of the term Bhediari (p.69) After the region became popular as the ancient kingdom of Virata, the whole of region was named as Biratanagar during KesharShumsher's visit to the eastern region in his hunting campaign B.S. 1976 (Shakya, B.S. 2054, p 44).

This name Biratnagar quite helped the region to get on popular as the place with the history related to the Mahabharata-incidents. This increased local people's respect towards the regions as well.

However the crux or the actual vertex from where it started was the ruins of Budhnagar or Bhediari that unfortunately was far off neglected in terms of development, preservation, conservation and management. Only in B.S. 2025 when the state led excavation under leadership of the archeologist Tarananda Mishra began, it gained space as historic site in the eyes of the local community. This is in fact the first history of scientific excavation not only in Biratnagar but as a whole in the eastern region of Nepal. Unfortunately, the excavation session did not continue.

Locals around here gave hazy description to this researcher that there was a sort of conflict between the locals and the archeological team, but it was also learnt that it did not hamper the excavation process. The excavation exposed features compatible to date 100-200 BCE but the report was not officially published.

The researcher quite clearly can infer that the excavation simply aroused excitement in the locals' minds and triggered their curiosity to dig into lands in search of antique treasures.



The unseen mass digging dens not need any evidence that went for years , Locally retrieved implements and artifacts can now be seen in private collection of Yadav, chairman of Bhediari Durbar Conservation Committee, There can now be no accounts on what type and where precious and semi- precious stones were traded.

According to Yadav, there were local and state level initiatives to conserve the sites followed by a visit from the Minister of Tourism, Chakra Prasad Bastola in B.S. 2052. Budget was laid out for construction and local initiatives taken to form a committee. A local called SatyanarayanYadav donated one *kattha* land; buildings, temples, guard house, wall- fences also with the aid from Nepal Tourism Board.

The amenities of the total 3 *kattha* land still remains with excavated region conserved. There was an old information board. The whole premises was in a sorry state. A cow was tethered there for grazing during 2018 when this researcher visited the site . No one was there to provide information and this can be as well justified because the site where no visitors arrive for weeks or months it is not questionable as why there is no one to provide the information of such a historic landmark. The researcher and his team had to go around villages to look for people who could tell something about the site. Spread in a huge mass of land, it can be without any sort of skepticism can be inferred that the villages are set up on surface, underneath where layers have ancient ruins, wells and other features. Occasional findings of well structure and other artifacts and features simply point to this woeful fact. Roads and makeshift roads have been constructed over ancient ruins. Tractors and other vehicles commute over exposed features of red bricks. Tree- roots have engulfed ancient structures beneath that can be seen if researchers go around the mounds.

The sites within hinterlands are populated by tribal people and peasants most of them who are themselves busy in their own world of struggle and day to day

survival. Mound edges have been haphazardly dug to retrieve soil-clay for plastering / colouring/ polishing hut walls and floors. The community people are illiterate. It is also assumable that there are no visitors to this site year round except for handful of researchers or school –college visitors.

With construction of a dry port nearby, the urban development would risk damaging the ruins beneath the surface of the periphery.

### **5.2.2 Kichakbadh**

It would be first relevant to refer to Hamilton's mentioning of the word Kichakjhar. Hamilton during the outset of the nineteenth century has given brief description of some of the most remarkable places in Morang (by Morang he meant the low country from the Koshi to Tista, and in the hills from the Koshi to the Kankai river). Among them he writes one is Kichakjhar. He writes:

Kichakjhar is also a ruin, which is said to have been the residence of Kichak, the brother-in-law of Virat, King of Matsya, celebrated in Hindu legend. I am assured by the people of the vicinity that in a very thick wood at Kichakjhar there are ruins. (2007, p. 141)

Hamilton does not give any further detail and landmark location then after so at present condition, nothing can be said with surety which site he was indicating to. This is because, during this research venture, the researcher has identified two places with similar names in the eastern Terai, where respective communities claim to call ruins of the residence of Kichak. One is Kichakbadh, Jhapa at Prithvinagar and another is Kichkagadhi at Haraicha, Morang. Some people also claim Kichakbadh, Jhapa to have been the dance-centre of Kichak or dance theatre of King Virata. The Mahabharata also uses the word "Upakichaka" to address the brothers of Kichaka

who had decided to burn Draupadi along with Kichaka's dead body. (Mahabharata, Part- II, p. 1083).

Kichakbadh lies in Prithvinagar metropolis formerly called Maheshpur now in Bhadrapur village municipality by the south -western banks of the Deunia river. It is spreadover 10 bigaha of lands, which is itself a mound. This mound has ruins of fences, house-structures resembling palace, and monuments linked to intangible value so it is regarded as an archaeological site. On the mound, there is one spot where a modern idol of Bhimasitting on the chest of another idol, who is undoubtedly Kichak is the prime site of the whole mound. Since 2002, under the leadership of archaeologist Uddav Acharya series of excavations have been conducted in the mound. Local people revere their heroic character Bhimsena, offer flowers and bowhere for his might and victory over Kichak. The modern idols gives a quaint impression of interference in this archaeological site.

The whole region of Kichakbadh is a religious site in Jhapa district. According to the Mahabharata, Kichak was brother-in-law of king Virata, his queen Sudeshna's own brother. Kichak had misbehaved with the queen of the Pandavas and had strayed his lustful eyes over her. Bhima, then ruthlessly killed the Kichaka. The place where he was killed is related to be Kichakbadh in Jhapa.

The flatlands of the eastern Terai and regions around the Chure specifically in the Terai regions are inhabited by people who relate themselves to numerous events of the epic Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Periods of indigenous settlements have been debated here. Dealing with regions East of Kathmandu at one point Gurung writes: "In 1961, Jhapa district with a total population of 119,700 represented speakers of more than 27 languages and dialects derived from Indo-Aryan, Tibet Burman and Munda families" (B.S. 1980, p.359). Thus the immense variety of

languages indicates that Jhapa has been a much sought-after place for refugees in search of land from diverse sources.

Excavations in Kichakbadh- in south Jhapa so far conducted do not date this site earlier than 2nd century B.C. According to the unpublished report of Uddhav Acharya, (provided to this researcher through Department of Archaeology, Nepal)- about 10*bigah* of the site was surveyed before dividing it into grids. After points were determined for grid, trench layouts started since 2059/10/02. The grids were divided from A to Z (except 1 and 0), that were done only later on (p. 1). Along with red pottery shreds, findings such as bricks of  $42 \times 30 \times 5 \text{ cm}^3$   $39 \times 28 \times 7 \text{ cm}^3$  and  $28 \times 28 \times 14 \times 5 \text{ cm}^3$  have been documented in the report. (pp. 2 - 3). In his another unpublished report, his second of excavation series, findings of pottery, corded wares, and roof-tiles (p. 3) and most importantly of stratigraphy (p. 4) of the site have been reported. The report states that within 180 cm of the trench KB A2 8/4 seven layers were revealed. (Acharya, p. 46)

Local people around here tell that when Kichaka was about to die, he asked Bhima for water. To quench the thirst of his counterpart, the mighty but soft-hearted Bhima dug a triangular pond (Fig. 5.12) with his elbow. This pond is tied up with another myth. This myth tells that Kichak had built a palace here so he himself built this pond. Kichak was a devotee of god Varun so this is still called Varunpokhari (Dahal, B.S. 2066 P.8). Now this pond, having religious importance for people as far as India and Bhutan has been protected by a cemented fencing through a generous businessman's funding. The Priest of the Sati and Mahadeva temple of Kichakbadh told this researcher that Koch, who are the oldest inhabitants call Kichak as 'Kichak Thakur' and Bhima as 'Bhima Thakur'. Kichak is also sometimes related to be one of these Kochs (K. Dhungana, personal communication, 2019); In the context of writing

on Koch and Rajbanshis, Bista has also stated that locals in this area believed Kichak was the king of the Kochs; Kochs had participated in the war of the Kurukshetra. They firmly believed that Bhimsena had killed Kichak here. (2004, p. 160). Exploring the historicity of the Kochs, Bista has further mentioned that Kochs gradually left their religion and tradition and converted themselves to Hindus and Muslims; later on Brahman Kochs started calling Muslims Rajbanshis as Kshetriyas (2004, p. 160). Nepal writes that before the advent of the Royal Shahs, along with Rai, Limbu, Koch and Sens, had ruled Vijaypur, but their reign had been terrifying for people (B.S. 2040, p. 279). Sharma writes that there were 6 types of forts in tradition during the Mahabharata. They were *mahi*, *giri*, *manusya*, *jal* and *vanadurgas* (fort) (B.S. 2055, p. 7).

Kichakbadh site shows combination of three forts-*mahi*, *jala* and *vana*. In the excavation sessions the ruins of bastions were found in the south-west and in the North side of the Kichakbadh mound. These too indicate that this might have been a place of importance of a powerful personality of the past-period, whose history we lack. The probability of village settlements of common people around this place of repute cannot be denied. Some locals have narrated their own tales- recounting on their hear-says that this site might have been a 'naachghar' (theatre- house) of the king Virata or palace of the Kichak himself.

An annual festival called *Maghe Purnima* is held in the site. Preparations are heavy and hasty that begin months prior to the festival. Traders from nearby hilly areas and India assemble and start preparing for temporary make shift settlements in and around the sites. As there are no hotels and inns, the small mound of Kichakbadh seems dangerously tiny and vulnerable amidst mass of more than 2-3 lakhs of people who assemble during the one day festival. Thousands and thousands of people attend

the yearly festive that generally falls in the month of Falgun, (On a Full-moon day). This has changed the destination image of Jhapa and called on urgent measures to protect it from effects of human activities, management loopholes and safeguard this cultural property from natural disaster like river-floods too.

According to an informative article *Kichakbadh: Hijora Aja* published in the local memoir *Kichakbadh smarika* the 10 bigah of archaeological mound housed a modern temple of Satyadevi built privately in BS 2024 by a retired Indian Army *Hawaldar* Janak Bahadur Thapa, formely with clay idol in a small make-shift temple which was again rebuilt in concrete in BS 2028 (Kadel, BS 2066, p.45). For excavation ventures, the temple has been shifted towards northern lowland in BS 2076 with new constructions. The beautiful idol of Satyadevi is a centre of faith for a huge congregation during religious annual fair of *MaghePurnima*. Another centre of performance in the mound is a modern idol of Bhimsen atop of Kichaka, the duo on a wrestling pose first built in BS 2038 by the then conservation committee (Kadel, BS 2066, p.45).

There are other concrete constructions in the mound representing Ganga built by Ram Prasad Das in BS 2038 and rebuilt by Kubir Dewan (Kadel, B.S. 2066, p.45). The major amenity is the Kichakbadh Pond also called Varunipokhari, a natural spring, in the form of small pond, concrete fenced by Satya Narayan Agrawal in BS 2007 and renovated by a local man Kumar Limbu (Kandel, BS 2066, pp.45-46) The mound also houses a shiva temple built in BS 2026 by locals Rajbir Khaling Rai and Santu Khaling Rai, formely in a make shift temple, turned into concrete temple by Rajbir himself in BS 2051 Kadel, BS 2066, p.47) A well built in B.S. 2027 by a local Jay Bahadur Thapa on request of a pious saint Dhiren Baba, (Kadel, B.S. 2066, p.47) is also another amenity in the mound.

A modern police building to the south –east of the Shiva temple houses policemen that can also be taken as interference to the archaeological mound. Some sect of locals are dissatisfied with the quaint modern idols and building structures in the mound. The conserved territory in the mound (Fig. 5.13) are ruins of walls and ancient buildings that speak of nothing to the interested visitors. There should be some informative signage or information board that interacts sufficiently about the site.

### **5.2.2.1 History of Excavation in Kichakbadh**

Kichakbadh has a very odd history of excavation. Its first excavation seems to have really started with an objective to test the belief of locals about the Mahabharata episode of Kichak. According to an article “*Kichakbadhko Aitihāsikta*” published in the *Kichakbadh smarika* (B.S. 2066), in B.S. 2033, the History department of Mechi Multiple Campus started excavation and yielded bricks (both raw and baked) pottery sherds, clay urn etc that were afterwards seized by the DoA, Nepal after intervening with the excavation project (Dahal, B.S. 2066, p. 9). The excavation project of the enthusiastic student teams of the Mechi Campus was illegal and it can be wisely surmised that the excavation could have been a terrible waste of archaeological records and a mess on the scene created by the amateurs. The then 29 year old Nepal's Ancient Monument Preservation Act, 1956 (B.S. 2013) which has clear provision through its article 16 (1) was undermined by the student team. It clearly states "Any person or institution, willing to do an archaeological excavation at a place where ancient monument is located, shall have to take prior approval of Government of Nepal as prescribed" (B.S 2013, p.17).

It can also be assumed that those involved in the excavation knew less about the Act. In archaeology, this excavation can said to be a crime.

However, one very positive thing it did was it really triggered for the attention of the DoA, Nepal to the site. Dahal in one of his articles has written "the site was kept under control and conservation of the DoA only allowed for the fair but the cultivating was prohibited and the site started being much seen as religious than historical "( B.S. 2066, p 9).

The real scientific excavation led by the state, under DoA's Uddhav Acharya started only in B.S. 2058. It is somewhat quaint and regretful that DoA scientifically intervened the area only 25 years later, after the first amateur excavation of B.S. 2033.

Kichakbadh's mound of 10 *bigah* is a huge place with many sites of various archaeological riches, that has been revealed by series of state led scientific excavations in the years (B.S 2058/59, 2060/61, 2067, 2070 and 2071/72) the archaeological ventures some of which are briefly mentioned in archaeologist's Acharya's articles and preliminary reports (unpublished) shed light on the process of excavation, findings and difficulties during the excavation's. The stir that the first excavations had on local's curiosity who surrounded and gossiped each day on the linkage of the site and its every new finding to the Mahabharata times has been also documented in the preface of Dharawasi's novel *Radha*(B.S. 2067, pi-ix ) seemingly first hand experiences and quite trustworthy details..

According to Acharya's article, they fixed the North- West corner of the 10 Bigah land as a datum Point (base-point) and prepared a 10 x 10 m grid naming it A, B and so on running from the West to East and 1,2,3, so on running from North to South. They divided the grid into 4 quadrants and started a survey. They began trial excavation at 2 quadrants and found 2 types of walls in the trench KBP 3/4. They assumed the big walls to be security walls and small walls to be the ruins of a



building. They also found bastion with holes to look through outside (Acharya, B.S. 2066, p.1).

The first excavation that lasted for only 15 days (Acharya, B.S. 2066, p. 1 ), confirmed the importance of the mound through the presence of the watch-house (bastion) and a big wall, assumed to be security wall. The second excavation set for 41 days in 2058/59 revealed further findings and end points of the walls that were traced in KBP 3/4 after they followed the wall. They further traced the 6 room ruins of a house- structure (Acharya, p.1 ) The third excavation set for 70 days in B.S. 2060/61 (Acharya, B.S. 2066, p.1 ) gave way for more evidences of the archaeological riches in the mound.

According to the information provided by Acharya in his article published in the *Kichakbadh smarika*, the findings of Kichakbadh are listed below:

(a) Walls-security walls (b) Watch house (bastions) (c) Ruins of rooms and ruins of buildings (d) Baked bricks (36 x 26 x 5 ) cm to (32 x 26 x 5) cm (e) Roof tiles (jhingati) (f) Foundation walls (g) Iron arrows (h) Needles (points) (i) Knife (j) Precious beads (k) Precious marbles (l) Clay marbles (m) Lithic object that looks like toy (n) Clay pot with tube (o) Punch-marks for designing patterns in clay-pots (p) Iron hooks (ankus) (q) Bowl (paatra) for the purpose of melting gold.

Acharya comparatively puts these findings in similar chronology with that of Bhediari and places them to Sunga-Kushan period (Acharya, B.S. 2066, p. 2-3 ).

#### **5.2.2.2 Conservation Approaches in Kichakbadh**

This site has been a major tourism and educational hub in Province-1 now named as the Koshi Province and has really evolved as a destination image of Jhapa district. A large concrete gate at Sagarmatha *chowk* welcomes the visitor and a recently widened inlet of road leads visitors towards the archaeological mound,

The community around are quite active. The Community towards its south in Charali *chowk* also has agate built by youth of the village and their friends who had been to Qatar for abroad-job. This speculates the active participation of the communities around here to develop it into a destination image. Comparing the conservation approaches to Bhediyari, Kihcakbadh is in fine line with enthusiastic locals and conservation committee. They have taken ownership of the site but with very less knowledge of archaeology. It was also learnt that a Master- Plan is in process much focusing on tourism of the site.

A local committee under the chairmanship of Dil Bahadur Thebe, has been keen to promote the site in to touristic destination but mismanaged touristic ambiances and children park in the mound can be threat to the archaeological richness therein. A Police building in the mound has also been questioned to this researcher by a local whether it is archaeologically proper or not. Picnicking and merry making are common in the area, however, excavated sites have been conserved by barbed wired fences. But during the annual festival of Maghe-Sangrati, that usually falls in February- March, the archaeological sites here are in huge risks due to massive inflow of visitors and devotees herein. Proper control of People's activities is of dire need.

Risks of river Deunia has dwindled but still it poses threat to the mound in the northern side due to its proximity with the mound. The description is further analysed in next chapters however, Kichakbadh, relating to its grandeur archaeological evidence need clear budgeting from the state, province and local level. The present local conservation committee needs to take advice from the experts and seek expertise help and must not only randomly take the Kichakbadh site as a tourism hub.

Analyzing the table format and headings in which DoA Nepal allocated Budgets, the sum allocation for conservation of Kichakbadh during fiscal year B.S. 2067/068 is rs. 200000/- (Nyaupane, B.S 2069, p.57) and for the fiscal year 2069/2070 is Rs. 500000 (Shrestha, 2071 , p. 39).

The importance of the site was understood or realized beyond its religious essence lately by the community after the archaeological excavation. The evidence is that the local committee changed its name from *Kichakbadh Dharmik Sthal Samrachan Samitee, Prithvinagar- Mhaeshpur Jhapa* to *Kichakbadh Dharmik, Aitihastikatha Partakiya Sthal Sam rachan Samitee, Prithvinagar, MahespurJhapa* in 2066/5/28. The committee in its former name was first established in 2063/10/29 (Kadel, B.S. (2066, p. 49).

Few educated people in Jhapa area have been involved in publicizing the destination image of Kichakbadh through articles and coverings in local media but these are subdued voices, read and soon forgotten. The novel *Radha* by Dharawasi that won the prestigious national award for literature called MadanPuraskar for the year B.S. 2062 is set around on the backdrop of Kichakbadh. Its preface has first hand information on the excavation of the site and psychological connections of the findings to locals' belief of the episode of the epic "Mahabharata". Giri through his article "*Pustak तथा पत्रपत्रिका Kichakbadh*"(B.S. 2066) confesses that the novel "Radha" has played much more important role for the publicity of Kichakbadh even more than a peace ambassador (p.24).

The local conservation committee here has been organizing week long *Purana, Mahayagya*, different competitive programs on festivals apart from managing the annual festival and Kichakbadh festival (*utsav*) that helps publicize the site and raise funds (Kadel, B.S. 2066, p. 51-53).Some local youth clubs like

*Sayapatri Yuwa club, Sirijanga Sporting Club, Purnima Yuwa Pariwar* have had coordinated with the local committee to organize different events for the welfare of the site that has been mentioned by Kadel in his article *Kichakbadhhijoraaja* (B.S. 2066, p. 53). These are good signs in the conservation and marketing of the site. The committee has tried to link its conservation approach with international partners too. Kadel briefly writes in his short article about a fund proposal of Rs. 500,05,000/- presented to Netherland's Prince X Claus Fund for fencing around the site. (B.S. 2066, p. 53). Kadel also informs through the article that the state has been providing fund for conservation and developments of the site and included Kichakbadh in the Red Book of National Planning Commission since the fiscal year B.S. 2066/067 due to the local endeavors (B.S. 2066, p. 52). Besides, some enthusiastic private donors have also helped to construct water tank, toilets and other amenities in the site. (Kadel, B.S. 2066, p. 54)

Different mechanisms of State, Ministries and private cooperatives have from time to time have been providing fund for dam building in the Deunia river to building of community building and other petty activities around the site. The descriptions of table provided by Kadel enlists Rs. 1500000/- handed by the Home Ministry in 2063/64 and Ministry of Local Development in 2065/66 the sum of Rs. 2500000/- for construction of community building along with other table figures (B.S. 2066, p.50).

However, whether the funds have been wisely and sincerely used, whether the funds met the target, these are issues to ponder upon. Hence monitoring the site and evaluation of different projects are necessary for the sites like Kichakbadh.

### **5.2.3 Betana**

Betana is a small wetland just nearby the Mahendra Highway in Morang district. As the excavated sites are on a raised plateau like small island and within the forests of the wetland, visitors, almost all who come here for the recreational purpose do not come to this site. Because findings during the excavation revealed neolithic materials that could as far as go back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (according to officials of DoA, Nepal), there is a dire need in the Koshi province to popularize it as a region of prehistoric occupation. An information board revealing short details and findings of excavation could really help visitors who are history of Archaeology enthusiasts. The whole site of Betana is conserved as per wetland Conservation policies. Fun Park, Children amusement park, information office, boating ambiances all are quite at reasonable distance from the archaeological mound. Some astounding archaeological finds are with local persons whom the researcher has met during the research. One who has kept them is willing to hand over the materials to the DoA with a condition that their names be credited along with the finds.

### **5.3 Representation of Sites on a Map**

The 17 sites of study in Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari all lie within explorable proximity to each other. The sites when represented on a map can give an overall information of their location, their direction to each other, their positions on the either side of the Mahendra highway and the districts in which they lie. Thus an attempt has been made hereby to locate them in the map of Province 1. The representations are made by this researcher on the map and are not in scale.

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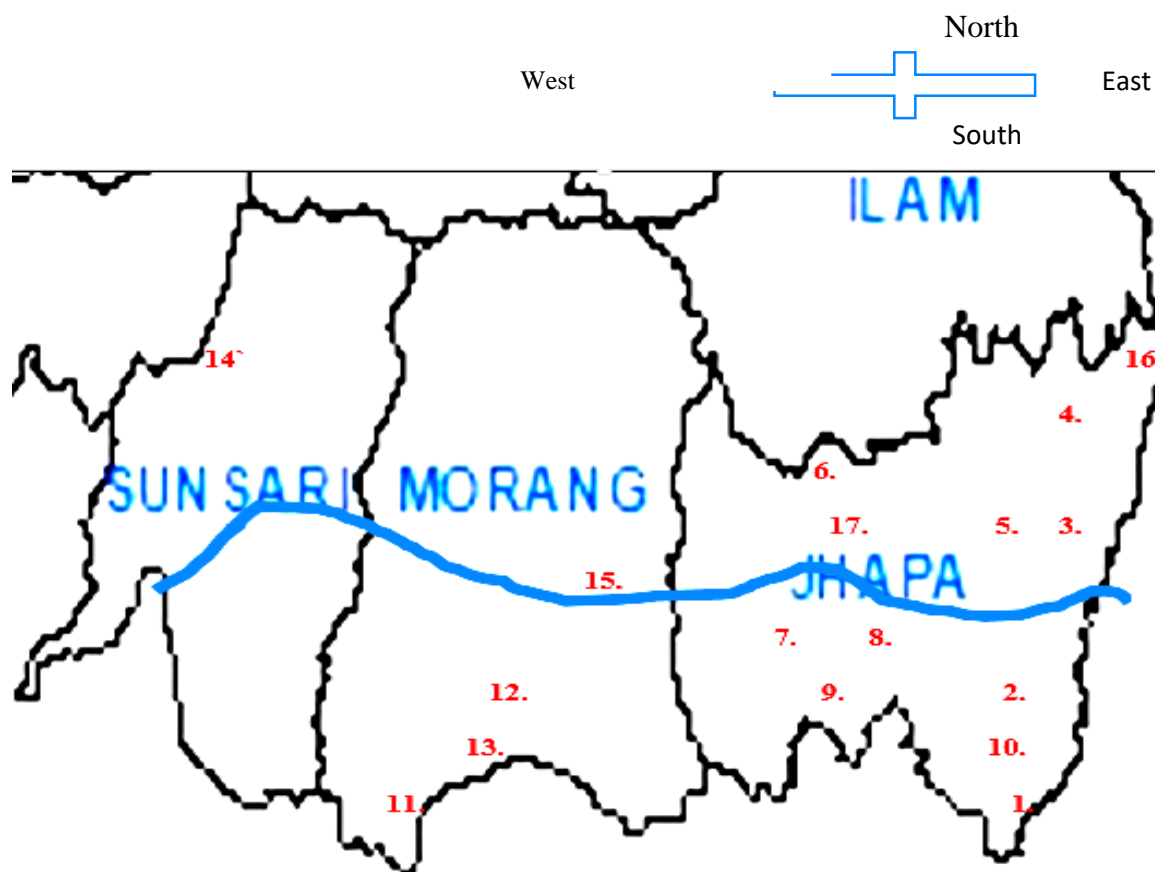


Fig.B. Representation of sites on Map

The representation of the sites on the map are not in scale. This is just a rough plotting of the sites made by this researcher on a simple map of Province -01 retrieved from <https://www.dhakalvivek.com.np/2020/09/provinces-and-local-levels-of-nepal.html>

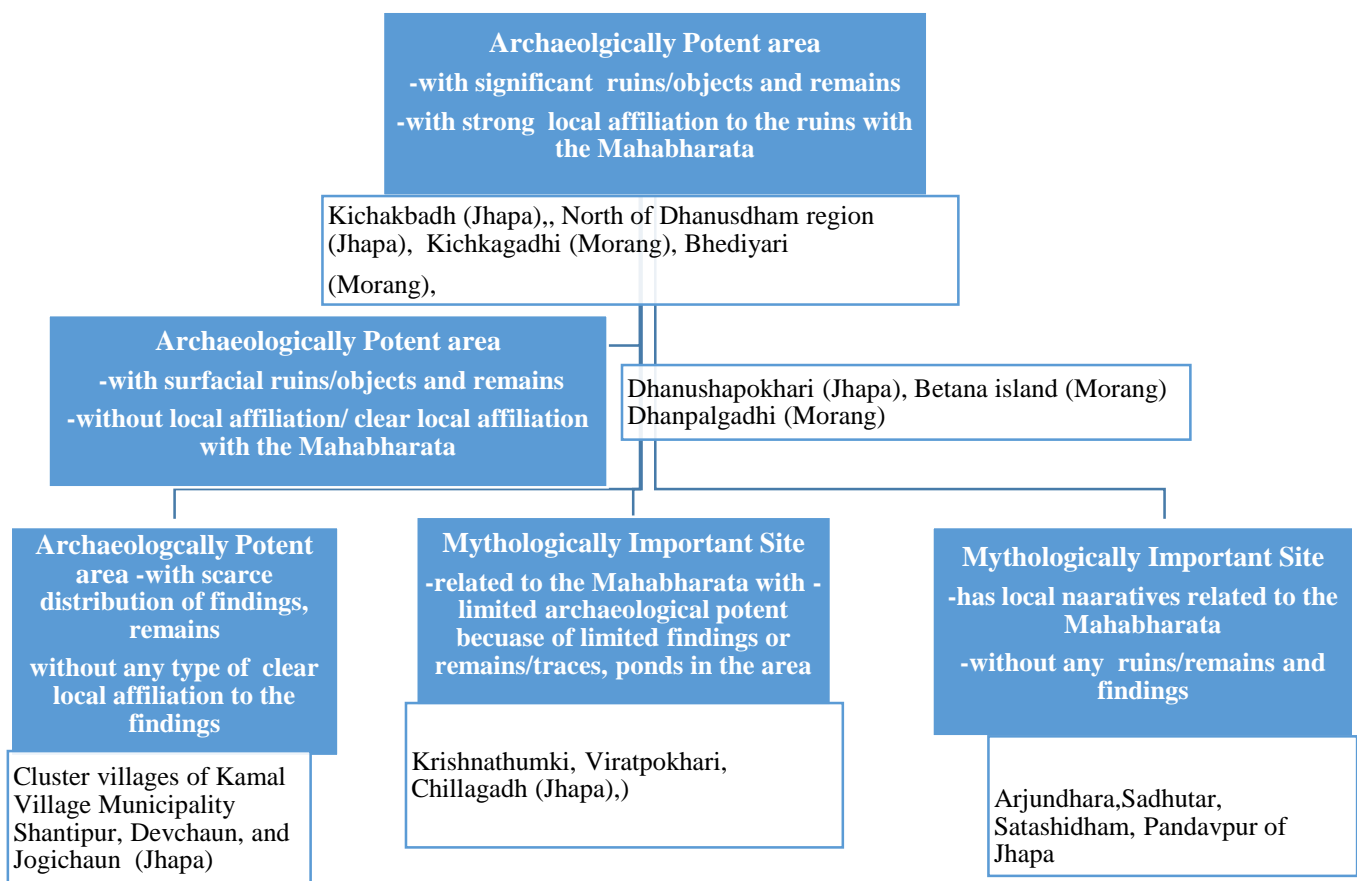
**LEGEND:**  **Mahendra Highway**

**Sites:**

- |    |                                      |     |                                |
|----|--------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Kichakbadh                           | 9.  | Jogichaun village areas nearby |
| 2. | Viratpokhari region                  |     | Gauradha                       |
| 3. | Arjundhara                           | 10. | Dhanushapokhari                |
| 4. | Sadhutar                             | 11. | Bhediari                       |
| 5. | Pandavpur village                    | 12. | Kichkagadhi                    |
| 6. | Satashidham                          | 13. | Dhanpalgadhi                   |
| 7. | Chillagadh                           | 14. | Varahkshetra                   |
| 8. | Shantipur village areas nearby Damak | 15. | Betana                         |
|    |                                      | 16. | Krishnathumki                  |
|    |                                      | 17. | Dhanuskutidham                 |

#### 5.4 Hierarchy- Chart of Sites in terms of Archaeological Potentiality

The sites mentioned in this hierarchy-chart only includes the sites observed, explored or sites found and studied by the researcher in Eastern Terai encompassing three districts. This chart is briefly organized as:



Varaakshetra region has significant artifacts (idols) but except the place and the river Koshi itself, these idols are not related to the Mahabharata, so is also an archaeologically potent area but without the affiliation of the findings, to the Mahabharata but to the Lichhavi period.

Fig. 5.14. Hierarchy- Chart of Sites in terms of Archaeological Potentiality

## 5.5 Sites in Jhapa

Kichakbadh has already been described above. There are many other sites in Jhapa district that need to be interpreted. During the research, sites of religious importance, temples, sacred places, sites of performances around the archaeological sites or to their proximity were also studied for the purpose of investigating authenticity of their individual or connected history, myths and oral narratives. Therefore, some sites of study are not at all evidentially archaeological sites but are only potential archaeological sites with mythical importance to the communities living around. In the eastern Nepal, during the research venture, much emphasis had to be laid upon sites related by the locals to the Hindu epic Mahabharata.

In archaeology, "sites are spatial clusters of artifacts, features, and or eco-facts (Sharer & Ashmore, 1993, p. 16). They further explain that as site may consist only one of those but all sites identify where humans have occupied the landscape (p.16). Carver also (2015) puts that "a site is a term used for a concentration of features and structures, which imply former human occupation and " also used to denote any place at which archaeologists have focused their investigation (p.4). Here in the study along with sites considered to be archaeological, religious heritage sites linked to the Mahabharata episodes by the locals are also studied, hence sites of study encompass both site typology.

Observation on the spots like Varakshetra and careful study of various history and literatures it comes clear for a researcher that there are possibilities of multiple phases of human and cultural activities because of the religious materials therein. However, there are possibilities that in such places at some periods, humans have abandoned them due to unavoidable causes or consequences which at present can only be assumed. Some sites mentioned herein are new (never published/publicly known/



unknown to wider public other than the core community living close by). Even if the sites were known, they were known only to the local people in the site periphery.

Many such sites have oral narratives somehow connected to the incognito years of the Pandavas of the epic Mahabharata. Needless to say that many astrologers, historians or academician also consider the Mahabharata as a history rather than myth.

In eastern Terai region, a thin line separates cultural heritage sites from archaeological sites especially where the locals relate them to the Mahabharata epic. Usually physical remains like ponds, rivers, ruins, trees make up these unique sites. However, not all such heritage sites are archaeological sites but the vice-versa. Because archaeological excavation are themselves acts of destruction, many sensible researchers take excavations sensitively because once a damage is done, the compensation is out of question. Archaeological sites are also vulnerable sites and their delicate nature is time to time reiterated by archaeologists and writers. Also described as “non renewable sources” because “the disturbance of the arrangement of artifacts, even by proper excavation, is permanent” (Haviland, Prins & others, 2007, p. 95).

The heritage sites that were selected and observed only if they were or met any one of the bases mentioned below:

(a) Had archaeological ruins in the region (b) Sites with close connection to the myths of archaeological sites nearby (c) Sites with stories and incidents of accidental findings of archaeological artifacts. (d) Sites widely believed by the locals to be of the Mahabharata period. (e) Sites with history of archaeological excavation.

### **5.5.1 Sadhutar**

Sadhutar is a peaceful religious site in Jhapa district that lies to the border of Ilam district. It is a small developing village located at the north-east region from

Sansichare or Khudnabari. Geographically, this place with sparse residence settlements and forest regions is an elevated land so as literally the name goes as "tar". The spot chosen for heritage research was a school premises of Shree Ved Vedanga Sanskrit Vidyalaya also called Shanakarcharya *peeth*. The then 83 year old (as of 2018) Kedarnath Khatiwada, chairman of the school showed this researcher a medium sized tree of Sami (Fig. 5.15) where a hoarding board that hung down the tree had information claiming that the tree was used by the Pandavas to conceal their weapons (bow- arrows) before leaving for the kingdom of King Virata.

The Mahabharata interestingly describes the journey prior to the one year incognito of the Pandavas and Draupadi in Viratnagar. This country is named in the epic depicting it to be the prestigious occupancy and rule of a *dharma*, by a devout king called Virata. In the thirteenth year, when the time of incognito for the Pandavas arrived, Yudhistihira asks Arjuna to choose a destination that could conceal them from the spying troops and advents of Duryodhana. Arjuna proposes 13 nations (the then *janapads*). He says "there are many janapds in all directions of the Kurudesha. They are Panchaal, Chedi, Matsya, Surshen, Pattachar, Dasharna, Nawarastra, malla, Shalwa, Yugandhar, Visal, Kuntirastra, Saurashtra and Awanti" (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, pp. 1001- 1002). Out of these Yudhisthira chooses Matsya and he provides a genuine reason referring to the power, traits and King Virata's deep respect for the Pandavas (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viatparva*, p. 1002). then the epic describes them of seeking advice from the holy saint Dhaumya and the ways of approaching the Viratnagar. They are depicted as walking by the Yamuna river's southern banks heading towards north from the nation of Darshana, south from the Panchaal and through the mid of Yakrilam and surshena. At this pont it is how they come across a bif Sami tree close by which lies a *Samsaan*

(a secluded burial place). On the instruction of Yudhisthira, Nakul conceals all the weapons there including the *Gaandiva* of Arjuna. Then they tie up a dead corpse to the tree so that its rotting smell deters any approaching passers-by from discovering their valued weapons (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, p. 1016). During the war between the Kauravas and the Viratanagar's prince Uttar, Arjuna disguised as an eunuch and discharging his duty as a cartman to the prince ordered the Prince Uttar to bring down his weapons from the Sami tree and revealed his identity. (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, p.1129)

The information provided in the epic and the all the settings, biome, natural environment and directions even the names of the nations cannot at all provide today's researcher on the exact spot of the Sami tree. It is hard to imagine even if all the depictions are true history that a Sami tree so age-old could be surviving today. However, to utter surprise, in this place Sadhutar of Jhapa a Sami tree (Fig. 5.15) is worshipped in this context and is believed to be the same tree.

It is also important that this spot at Sadhutar has been turned into a religious spot although not with much historic or archaeological evidences. The octogenarian preacher (*guru*) told this researcher this place in ancient time was a spot where 36000 saints worshipped due to its religious aura, so as to the name goes Sadhutar (K.N. Khatiwada, personal communication, 2018).

This site was chosen for heritage study here in this research because of its close proximity to the famous Arjundhara of Sanischare and Pandavpur. Towards the north of the Sami tree, a dense forest has claimed the land and nearby is a small hut-structure (like a *grmathaan*) with stone gods and goddesses.

Sadhutar can be declared as promising site for further archaeological excavation only if evident structures of archaeological importance are found and

reported. It is also at close proximity with Garuwa bazar (Jhapa) and Sukani (Ilam). These both places are also locally attributed to the events of Mahabharata. Garuwa etymologically comes from *Gohara* (*go-* meaning cow and *hara* meaning kidnapped) so as to relate place where the Kauravas kidnapped the cows of King Virata and *Sukani* now famous for a Martyr Park (related to the revolution during the *panchayat*) is said to be a distorted name of *Lukani* (*lukan* meaning hidden or associated to kidnapped cows being hidden at the spot)

In one of the events in the Mahabharata, the Kauravas kidnap cattle and cows (mentioned also as *godhana*) of King Virata and hide them. Arjuna helps the prince Uttar Kumar by retrieving the weapons they had hid in the tree. He wins the cows back and whilst he finds the cows to be extremely thirsty and without any water resources nearby uses his arrow to pierce the land and retrieve water for the thirsty cattle. This place is known as Arjundhara. Interestingly all the places are nearby each other to justify the myths. It can also be assumed that places are so named after the popularity of places like Arjundhara.

According to an article titled *Sadhutar* published in Dhanuskuti memoir, Khatiwada (B.S. 2072), writes that while the Pandavas were planning to set off for Viratnagar they had arrived at Sadhutar Siddheswori ancient *peeth* and Yudhistira had worshipped Siddeshwori goddess who appeared before them and blessed them with forecast of the defeat of the Kauravas (p.149). He further writes about a local incident of how a local resident Tulasiram Khatiwada (still living then) in B.S. 2029 while fetching for cow grass had found a trident, ribbon and flowers in the spot nearby. He had turned blind after returning home. His family members along with social enthusiast worshipped the shrine with offerings of milk, grain, flowers etc among

other religious paraphernalia and after reciting Chandi he got back his sight. Since then the devotees started pouring herein (pp. 1490-150).

The incident traces that the place of Devi (*Devasthan*) was already a prayer site in ancient time which got lost in the jungles until this grass cutter happened to re-locate it by accident during his domestic chore.

The epic Mahabharata has it that the Pandavas before going a year of incognito had to hide their weapons (like that of Arjuna's Shiva Dhanu gifted by the lord Shiva) so that their real identity would be concealed. Only then they could unhesitatingly go to the palace of King Virata in disguise. In eastern Terai the tree is chiefly claimed to be in 2 locations:

(a) The first oral narrative says that the tree is atop a difficult hilltop of Satashidham-claimed to be seen by few local people this researcher met. One of them said there is a small area used for meditation by Yudhisthira amidst beetle nut trees.

(b) The other one is the tree mentioned here at Sadhutar, Jhapa.

In an interview section included in an article of *Kichakbadh smarika* (B.S. 2066) Dil Bhadur Thebe, chairperson of the Kichakbadh Conservation Committee informs to the interviewer Madhav Bidrohi about a folklore of Pandavas hiding their belongings in a big Sami tree that in the past stood at south east of the Varuni pond in Kichakbadh (B.S. 2066, p 38).

These types of oral narratives point to a fact that the story of the Mahabharata referring to a Sami tree where Pandavas had hidden weapons before leaving for the kingdom of the King Virata has been taken by the locals around here seriously. Any big Sami tree in and around sites can be locally related to this event of the Mahabharata bringing out folklores. It was realized that caution should be applied

while researching on archaeological or historic perspectives where myths, oral narratives and legends are very popular.

### 5.5.2 Arjundhara

This site of study is a religious premises around a modern temple of Shiva that lies in Arjundhara municipality-7. It is a landmark religious heritage in Jhapa and it would not be an exaggeration to write that it can represent the whole of eastern Nepal relying onto its popularity and local belief upon the historicity of the site. The local stories relate this place to the epic Mahabharata in the context of Arjuna's victory over Duryodhana's army to retrieve cows they had abducted from the Kingdom of king Virata. The epic describes the Kauravas as entering the kingdom of the Virata from the north and abducting sixty thousand cows (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, p. 1114). The local folklore relates a natural pond as being in existence after Arjuna darted an arrow to ooze out water for the thirsty cows. The epic describes a fierce war between the Arjuna and the Duryodhana's army in this context.

The main literary source for such religious sites are the *smarikas* that the temple and conservation committee publish at times. A short informative article written by Oli, Co-ordinator of the temple committee gives a detailed historical background of the site. He writes that according to Yogi Narharinath this spot is linked with ancient King Virata. In the past there was a small pond that originated from a natural spot wherefrom water oozed out continuously. It was then that his spot was known as Parakhopi. Only in B.S. 2032, the place started to be called as Arjundhara. There in BS 2023 a saint, a staunch devotee of the Sun-god (and who is said to have offered one hand to the Sun-god) and had underwent strict '*Maunvrata*' had signaled with his left hand showing towards the water-spot that it was a sacred place. He had suggested to establish a temple of Lord Shiva. A small temple was then

established through local initiatives and with rising local initiatives the temple site soon turned out into pilgrimage. (Oli, BS 2076,p.xvi) . An introductory article in the same memoir-'Arjundhara Jaleswardham' it is written that the *Khadebaba* after giving information the curious people who surrounded him that this place had sheltered Lord *Bholenath* (Shiva) , picked up his trident and belongings and moved hastily to the water spot but he had stayed here for only six hours (BS 2076, p.28-29). In B.S.2023, Paush 6, the religious initiation of the temple construction had been performed under chairmanship of Harbilas (BS 2076, p.29), now the government of Nepal has listed it in tourism destination (p.29).

The main temple (Fig. 5.16) premises has other temples of Laxmi Narayan,Hanuman, Natraj Ganapati and has a very attractive main gate. The heritage has been supported by numerous persons of the eastern Nepal and often cited as 'Pashupati of the east'. However, if looked through archaeological lens, apart from a small natural pond, nothing of any archaeological sources has been discovered/retrieved from the region.

A short article Arjundhara Jaleswordham *Mul Mandir: Ek Parichaya* written by Subedi (BS 2076) in the same local memoir states that the main temple was designed by the writer in pagoda architecture and was decided to be constructed in the same spot of the old temple. During construction right in the center, the biggest natural water hole was discovered , that cracked the concrete –bases so the water was diverted through a pipe towards the adjoined pond in the north(Subedi, B.S. 2076, pp.104-105). During the interview of the researcher with the main priest (interview with A. P. Sigdel in 2019), the researcher was told that the sample of water had been tested by some Japanese investigations team because the water here kept for many days

in a bottle does not contaminate with moss etc. This indicates to the locals believing upon the purity of water in religious faith too.

The beautiful temple of Shiva has a stone *Shivalinga* in the centre and the adjoined pondas known is always full of natural water. In the centre a modern life-size concrete idol of Arjuna, aiming his bow towards the ground with 2 thirsty cows is a collective representative image of Arjundhara in the town of Sanischare, Jhapa.

In another article published in the memoir *Mero Dristima Arjundhara Jaleshwordham*, Bhattarai, (B.S. 2076), states that the temple premises has facilities for mourners, a library of religious text for learners (p. 54) and towards the northern side of the temple premises, an idol (image) of Khadebaba is being set up, as a humble bestowing on the belief that he was a devout (messenger of God) (p. 53).

The local sources reveal many interesting information of the site. The heritage management of the site is comparatively much better looked through the parameters of local community's initiatives. According to the temple committee members a new scientific Master Plan is underway. However, there is no any object of archaeological significance till date. The epic *Mahabharata* is attributed to this site by the local folklores and believed widely.

### **5.5.3 Pandavapur**

Towards the southwest region of the popular religious destination of Arjundhara, a small raised plateau-like topography is named as Pandavapur. Relating it to the ancient time where Pandavas had set up temporary settlements during the incognito year, the locals undoubtedly take pride in its historicity. The name signifies this fact. The place lies now in Arjundhara municipality-5. This spot can also be reached via Laxmipur towards 3 kms north. Pandavpur, less known in the region, although is in close proximity to Arjundhara though with similar fames of being sites



related to the Mahabharata. To this researcher's knowledge hitherto, this place has been undocumented even in local media and informative brochures.

The village as learnt from a local person covers 9 *bighas* 13 *kattha* (the area is not exactly verified, just informed through a local) is now a small village with humble settlements of Dhimal, Rajbanshis, Tamang, Kshettris and Brahamins. The area of the place should be traced through reliable information if need be. One elderly local recalled a local narrative that this place was (in ancient times) used by the Panadavas as a grazing ground for their cattle and villagers assumed that Pandavas had built temporary bamboo huts for the cattle in this spot (D.B.Ghising, personal communication, October 29, 2019). Close by in the west are the rivers called the Fulmati, the Biring and the Kankai.

During the enquiry and cursory site survey of the region, nothing of any archaeological important information/ any report of findings was revealed. Locals probably have nothing to say about any ruins, because the area is less known and development actions are on rapid underway. Had there been any archaeological finds, rumors would have spread far off. As of now, here are no such stories.

It was learnt that the whole area of Pandavapur with "*ailani*" land was in the name of the local Fulbari government school. For the purpose of promoting religious tourism locals have formed a local committee that has brought forth development agendas for religious space, road networks and temples. In the course of promoting it as a historic heritage in the province, life sized idols of 5 Pandavas, Shuvadra and Draupadi have been erected in the eastern facades of a popular temple called Bageshwari.

Heritage management seems to be in embryo stage but for now a good step to fame its existence in local tourism market was sensed by this researcher.

#### 5.5.4 Viratpokhari Sarovar

This is a more of a religious heritage site than an archaeological one. Locals assume that there may have existed nine ponds, but as of now only four eminent ponds exist in the municipality region and another as said by the locals to be in Varadashi village municipality. The sites collectively called Viratpokhar sarovar has an interesting linkage to the character Bhima of the Mahabharata.

The ponds are attributed to his enormous strength and locally said to be dug by him. Some go as far as telling that Bhima dug these ponds all at one night. The huge pond complex at modern times makes anybody doubtful whether they were dug at one night.

Among the five existing ponds, one chief pond known as Virat Pokhar is said and estimated to be in four *bigha* of mound. Locals have preserved it owing to its religious and mythical importance. It is also seen as a famous pilgrimage site and locals believe that scars in the girth of a huge *Peepal* tree are there those of elephant chains, the tree being used as stake to tether the huge domesticated pets, hence firmly signifying the site to be the place for the royals or influential ruling caste of the then social hierarchy of the ancient times.

The ponds periphery has also been turned into a popular recreational park site with appreciable amenities and ambiances like sitting facilities for the visitors. The local Committee responsible for managing the pond site recently (in 2019) used excavator to retain the original shape of the pond and also has used the pond for breeding fishes, which it sells for its budgetary uses.

The other ponds associated with the Viratpokhar Sarovar and also called Viratpokhari but less visited are:

(a) Dhanapokhari in Telkani (b) Madhu Pokhari (West) and Sadhu Pokhari (East)

This researcher whilst trying to locate other similar ponds in the region have been shown remains of other smaller ponds now almost with cow grasses growing over. So some locals' assumption that there might have been nine ponds in the region justify herein.

In the chief popular pond of Viratapokhar there is a small Shiva temple towards the southside and a huge complex for elderly people are being constructed on the lowlands south-west of the pond. A two storied building of *Viswa Hindu Mahasangha Nepal Rastriya Samitee, Jilla Sakha Jhapa* has recently being established in B.S. 2075. This researcher observed that the responsible committee farms fish in the pond. Whether this is justifiable or not is an ethical dilemma because the pond is a historic one and scientific explorations may reveal it to be of archaeological importance.

The presence of these ponds are archaeologically and historically important taking account of the fact that they lie in the mid-way between the famous archaeological site of Kichakbadh (South) and famous religious site of Arjundhara (North) both of which are in local legends taken to be the sites of the Mahabharata period. Archaeologically these ponds are important because they may be of the same period to that of Kichakbadh ruins. Through the stories retold and told over times in the region all these there sites, Kichakbadh, Viratpokhar and Arjundhara are all closely linked to each other and all three have in them some physical landmarks of water bodies in them.

#### **5.5.5 Inhabited Areas in Kamal Village Municipality nearby Damak and Gauradaha**

Towards the southern side of Sitapuri nearby Padajungi and Damak in about 3 kms from the Mahendra highway some settlement areas in the neighborhood of a

local person Rup Narayan Dhital is a potential archaeological site. Through careful observation it can be said the villages here Shantipur, Devichaun and Jogichaun have considerable archeological features. Through evidences, the features are be in spatial distribution in the form of old wells, house ruins (yet to be discovered) or any other material ruins. This researcher assumes through information collected from various locals at Devichaun, Jogichaun and Shantipur that a very large area as much as 3 x3 km /5 x 5 km must have archaeological significance. Takin account of the findings of this researcher and rigorous stalking of people who have accidentally come across features, boat pieces and even wholesome boat in the rivers nearby this place at any times of distant past must have been a trade or religious hub with these settlements. In Shantipur, Rup Narayan Dhital and his workers while digging land to extract soil-heap from the field some 300m west from his residence ( nearby the Bhutlung river) found a well under a feet from the cultivating surface some 6- 7 years back. The well marks were revealed afterthey came across a huge root system of a big old dead tree and hadit cut down. According to the locals interviewed during the research then, they had first come across heap of raw bricks (unburnt bricks). During their much excitement they had cleared (destroyed) the heap and when they reached the well mark made by layers of burnt bricks, they were shocked, most probably excited.

In many villages of Nepal, there are local stories and lore that ancestors or inhabitants of the past used to store treasure valuable coins, gold, diamonds, pearls, jewels, precious stones. Much assumably they too had this hope (which of course they didn't say) but the inside of the well was soon dug only to be found some half burnt wood pieces(Fig. 5.17) and some stuff of red and grey pottery sherds as mentioned earlier ( Fig. 4.8and 4.9). These objects were shown to this researcher in 2019. The news of an ancient well had soon spread in the village and when there

were more and more curious onlookers coming by daily, Rup Narayan set up a small hoarding board in front of his house inviting passers-by to have a glance of the *pauranik kuwa* (ancient well). Soon a team from a local television channel came by to interview him and many visitors suggested that the finding of a well reflects that houses ruins could be nearby. This researcher noticed that a small mound towards its north had some trees and bamboo shoots was left untouched until then.

However the story soon turned to the other side when villagers warned Rup Narayan of a possible accident of animals or children into the well so he soon covered the well again and started cultivating crops on the land as if nothing had happened.

When this researcher had reached this site, in October 2019, the field was full of maize crops and upon request that this researcher wanted to have a look at the well Rup Narayan had helped to trace the circular well- mark. After some days when they had finished cutting the maize and cleared the land this researcher and his volunteer had cleaned the surface carefully-re- exposing the well structure (Fig.4.6 ) taking measurement of its exterior and interior diameters. The main objective was to take measurement of bricks that walled up the well to compare to the brick sizes retrieved by DoA in Kichakbadh excavation. The measurement findings are given below:

#### **5.5.5.1 Well Remnants**

A medium sized well of total diameter approximately 58 inch was exposed after scraping and gently digging down about 5-6 inches the already reduced surface at. The walls of the wells laid out neatly with 2 rows of bricks. The condition of the bricks was such fragile that it was almost impossible to retrieve a full brick and have

its dimension measured. The interior diameter of the well was 37 inch. Upon surface examination the bricks were held together by mud (soil).

#### **5.5.5.2 Bricks**

A brick retrieved by the locals during their accidental finding had been shown to this researcher by Rup Narayan which he had just roughly kept for the purpose of showing to the curious visitors. The brick (Fig. 4.7) was measured. It had a base of 20 cms that tapered at the other end at a length of 22cms. The other end surface is 13 cms. The height of the brick was 4 cm. Rup told this researcher that similar bricks had marks like hand on its back surface but this had already faded then. The size of the bricks used in the well construction were found to be different. It was evident that to line up fine circumference of the well in circular pattern, there was obvious need of different sizes of brick. For instance, a brick retrieved in the spot measured 15 cms at the base that tapered to the other end at 24 cms. the other end measured a base of 13 cm and the height was 5 cm. Bhediari's baked bricks measured (47 x 45 x 7) ft (Mishra, B.S 2054.p. 28). Writing about findings in Bhediari, Khatiwada mentions the bricks here measure ( 10 x 10 x 3.5 -13x 9x 1.5) inch ( Khatiwada, B.S. 2068, p. 70). In Kichakbadh, baked bricks measured (36 x 26 x 5 ) cm to (32 x 26 x 5) cm. (Acharya, B.S. 2066, p. 2-3). Measurement of one or two type of bricks may not give the general measurement of the bricks used in Shantipur village, but although small somehow resembles the bricks found in Kichakbadh and Bhediari.

This researcher first assumed that some fields of this existing village now stood on the ruins of ancient village. So a follow up explorations were carried out more than twice at different intervals and years nearby. Surprisingly villagers knew other sites where wells were found. According to one local Bahadur Shrestha, a small well of wood ring was found in B.S. 2022 by the first settlers nearby. They had

cleared the jungle for setting up settlement areas. This well as he said oozed green water after the earthquake of B.S. 2045.

### **5.5.5.3 Boats**

Boat- findings were quite arousing subjects to the locals in the region and stories told here enticed this researcher to have a glance at them. A half-boat structure was found in the Krishna river (Kishney Khola) towards the east from Damak or the Ratuwa river. Boats were found both in the Geruwa and the Krishna Rivers. These rivers are nearby Damak and by the road that leads to Gauradaha. A local informed this researcher that the same Geruwa/Geuriya river nearby Gauradha is called Kishney Khola. The wooden boat now kept in the house of late Durga Subedi at a village called Devichaun is kept at the backyard of his house to make a makeshift bridge to his fields (Fig.4.4). The piece measured 7.5 feet at length and 1.9 feet at breadth which suggests that the boat was not a small one. Locals related this boat to be of lord Krishna. Another big boat retrieved from the same rivers by a group of swimmers was also brought here. But as times passed by the parts were chopped off to use as firewood by the villagers. Luckily the base of the boat (Fig. 4.5 ) now kept in his cattle shed has been used to feed fodder for his cattle. This measured 15.11 feet at length and 1.3 feet at its breadth. According to the son of late Durga Subedi, the boat had some sort of marks similar to Korean fonts. Similarly in another very big wooden boat was retrieved by a group of swimmers from the Geruwa River, It has been now kept intact as found as a religious message to the village in a small museum in Soanpur village where an annual festival of Dhimals is held. The locals worship this boat (Fig. 5.18).

The finding of wells and big bricks, boats indicate that in any times of the distant past this village must have been a fishing or a trading spot or a transit to

possibly a pilgrim sites or these areas may even had ancient settlements of indigenous tribes. The wells in the past could also have been dug at the sides of roads to cater to the thirst of traders and pilgrims.

### **5.5.6 Dhanusapokhari (Dhanusha Pond)**

A very less known to the people is a beautiful pond called *Dhanusha Pokhari* about 3 km south east of the Goldahp market in Haldibari -05 village municipality (formerly Jalthal -08). A local Rajbanshi explained to this researcher that the original name of the pond was *Dhan Uttha* Pokhari, not Dhanusha. "*dhan* meaning goods and *uttha*" meaning to get it. So old folklores related to this pond to a goddess who gave goods/ property to devotees. Local oral narratives also related to stories that many people who ate fish of the pond or mishandled the belongings of the pond turned insane.

The beautiful pond (Fig. 5.19 )as learnt from locals but not verified occupies the area of 1 *bigha* and 18 *kattha*. To the west of the pond about 40-50 m ahead is a small mound in an estimated area of about a *kattha*. In 2020, March during the archaeological observation of the pond periphery, this mound was a heap of ruins of brickbats, much assumedly a collapse site of ancient features. This collapse is an important finding in the region and can be of valuable site for scientific archaeological ventures.

In the center of the ruins a small modern shrine of Kirati (rai) community has been recently built that is called *Sakela Toshi Sthal*. Surface observation of the site revealed big bricks belonging to ancient period. For measurement, the bricks could not be easily retrieved because of the heap mass of the collapse bricks were mostly broken those that surfaced. One flat brick retrieved from the collapse (Fig. 5.20) indicates its ancient origin because of the shape. The debris definitely points to the



fact that the site is ancient of which there has been no documentation at all anything made public until date. Many things can be said for sure only after further scientific exploration of the whole region plus excavation in this brick debris. If there is a need of excavation here, it is important that the archaeologists consult with the community before deciding to do anything of the prayer/worshipping shrine that stands here.

This researcher met few locals who settled here in 2030's. They said the pond and place had existed as it is today. Only the temple structures are modern.

Amazingly in the pond periphery separates prayer shrines/temples for Rai, Limbu, Brahmin/Kshetri (this temple is half- built), Buddhist and Satar. This shows that all caste and people of all origins believe in the power of the pond and this site to be pious. Just by the temple so said to be worshipping temple of the Satars, a small mound consisting of 2 tall trees stand which were also said to be worshipped by Satars.

An elderly local said that locals worshipped here to curb the snake bites during crop cultivation time. Local people seemed quite ignorant of the archaeological potentiality of the area but because of its religious aura this heritage site has been managed quite well in local terms. The site is clean and a pedestrian's street by the north side of the pond links it to an inlet of the way that leads to other villages nearby.

### **5.5.7 Dhanuskutidham**

At present the temple of Dhanuskutidham is situated in Kankai municipality-02 formerly in Surunga VDC-08. A modern temple of lord Shiva is the center of faith here, the temple popularly called Dhanuskuti and the whole region taken as a pious pilgrimage site is called Dhanuskutidham.

The *Shivalinga* which has been consecrated/ religiously inside the temple is said to have been found in the jungle mound 5 kms north of the temple. Taking account of the fact that some other stone idols and heavy stone images were found, now housed in the temple indicates a potential archaeological zone in its periphery. Comparative dating of the idols is necessary to track down ancient human activities and the history of the region. The linga is consecrated in the temple but the buried part consists of a *yonis* structure that is quite alluring (B.B. Dhakal, personal communication, November 12, 2019).

Locally the area around the temple is also related to the Mahabharata epic. It is said that Arjuna performed his meditation here to please Lord Shiva. The *Shivalinga* in the temple is a unique peculiar lithic image resembling closely to male genital, clearly with the head. It is one of its kind and this researcher had never seen any kind like this. An elderly person, Bhanubhakta Dhakal (75 years) at present, takes care of the temple premises who related this temple area to the time of the Mahabharata time. The present Dhanuskuti temple situated in the north east façade of the Domukha dam was first recognized as a sacred place when in Magh month B.S. 2061, local travelers spotted different stone images of gods and goddesses (B.S. 2072, Dhanuskuti, p. v vii). According to the memoir *Dhanuskuti* published by the local conservation committee-Sree Kiratesar Mahadeva Dhanuskutidham, in a short preface article *Adakchya ra sachibko Kalam bata*, locals started offering coins, money on the spot and with active suggestions from learned people of the nearby localities and social enthusiasts, they decided to conserve the area. During the time 5 kms north-east again local people retrieved a *kharau*, 2 idols and a *Shivalinga* in a remote dense forest nearby. Then a mass of people had gathered there; about 20 of the people carried the

heavy *Shivalinga* and now established inside a temple on Ashad 29, B.S. 2062 as Dhanuskuti Shivalaya (Poudyal & Poudyal, B.S. 2072, *Dhanuskuti*, p. vii).

The naming of the place as Dhanuskutidham was just 17 years from now. This was after some lithic idols were discovered by some timber collectors in the nearby region. The educated circle of the region assembled and invited a learned man called Ananda Prasad Sigdel who said to be well informed on subjects of Sanskrit, literature, archaeology and astrology after observing the site and location named it Kirateshwor Mahadeva and Dhanushkutidhaam amongst many local personalities in a program (information cited from local memoir *Dhanushkuti*, B.S. 2072 from Publisher's preface, p. v). Since then plans to develop and promote the site into religious pilgrimage has been going on. Some lithic idols retrieved from the nearby sites (Fig.1.3 ) indicate potential archaeological zones nearby.

According to the same article written by the chairman and secretary of the Dhanuskutidham in the yearly memoir, (B.S. 2072, Poudyal & Poudyal, p. vii), a king called Jagan Pandey had ruled over the hill called Jagan Pandey hill and the people thought the *lingum* might have been worshipped since then. They do not further write about time and details of this king Jagan Pandey. But the oral narratives link the events of Mahabharata to this place.

According to the Mahabharata, Yudhisthira requests Arjuna to go to the north. They had been residing in the *Kamyakvana* (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, p. 134) which lay in the banks of the Saraswati. Arjuna reaches Indrakeel where the Lord Indra suggests him to try to lure Lord's Shiva attention. Then the place where arjuna penanced is depicted in the epic as a beautiful Himalayan region with varieties of flowers, birds rivers, water- ducks, peacocks etc (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, p.140). Sigdel (B.S 2072) referring to the Mahabharata

also writes in his article *Dhanuskutidham: Ek Aitihasik ewam Adhyatmik Chintan*, that in the mean time during Arjuna's penance a devil called Muk had also disguised as a boar was about to kill Arjuna who was in the state of sheer meditation. Arjuna knowing about the presence of the boar hit arrow to kill it.

It so happened that the lord Shiva also happened to hit the boar at the same time. The devil being killed instantly bore a debate between the two as whose arrow had killed the devil (Sigdel, B.S. 2072, p. 6). Both adamant to their decision had a fight with bow and arrow. Arjuna being defeated at last sensed that he was fighting with lord Shiva, came upon his knees to seek forgiveness and blessings of the pleased lord. It was then that the lord provided him with a powerful weapon called "Pashupatastra". Then, Arjuna filled with sheer gratitude for the lord established a *Shivalinga* and worshipped it in the spot. Sigdel (B.S. 2072) writes that the same linga now consecrated in the Dhanuskutidham leaves us (devotees) in gratitude (p.6). The epic Mahabharata mentions the defeated Arjuna making a *parthiv* Shiva in a *vedi* of clay (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, p.147) and offered a flower garland there and when the garland appeared on the forehead of the Kirata, Arjuna was excited and realized that his counterpart was Lord Shiva himself (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, p.147).

The caretaker of the temple Bhanubhakta Dhakal told this researcher that this is the site/region where Arjuna's soaring pride of his strength and archery had been diminished by lord Shiva. Locally this place has become a very popular retreat for people of Jhapa and the pristine banks of the religious Kankai Mai and its close proximity to Satashidham (another pilgrimage) has heightened its religious significance. During the research it was learnt that a Master Plan proposal

encompassing 35 bighas of land was underway as Dhanuskuti- Sukedagi Tourist Area for promoting, conserving and publicizing this heritage.

The Mahabharata incidence of Arjuna pictures him seeking permission from his brother Yudhistira set out for the Himalayas to the abode of lord Shiva with his Gandiva bow and arrows. During this venture, he arrived at the lands of Kirat (Kirat *pradesh*) and enchanted by the base of the Mahabharata hills, started penancing hard to seek the lord's blessings (Sigdel, B.S. 2072, p.210).

The Kirats are the ethnic tribe of eastern Nepal and this word is occasionally mentioned in Hindu texts and ancient books of Nepalese History. The Himvatkhanda, however has another type of description. The names of the places and contexts match with the Pashupatinath region of Kathmandu. The Himvatkhanda describes the goddess Guehkaali (Gueheswori/ Parvati) who appeared out of a cave and hinted the divine gods and goddesses to come to the Tapovana to see the lord Shiva, herself as Kirata along with their Kirata (p.1045) who had taken the disguise in Slehmantakvana (p.1042). It mentions about the lord Shiva who consecrated a linga here in Kartik Krishna Chaturdarshi and worshipped it in nights (p.1043) that was also later worshipped by Parvati disguised as a Kirata damsel (p.1044), a Kirata man (p.1047), and Arjuna (p.1053). The linga is mentioned as Kirateshwor linga. The Himvatkhanda states that the lord Shiva and Arjuna had fought in the same place (pp.1052-1053).

Hence, the names and sites their settings in ancient texts along with local peoples' belief all differ. The science of archaeology will not believe the warfare of Arjuna and the lord Shiva. However, the hillocks of the Dhanuskuti region is a potent historical and archaeological site because of the lithic idols and artefacts.

### 5.5.8 Chillagadh

Chillagadh was an interesting and amazing site of study during the research. This is also a pond-site less known and written about in the eastern region. The pond (Fig. 5.27) was chosen as a site of study due to its local oral narratives that linked it to the Mahabharata period. Because, the major archaeological site of study, Kichakbadh has been strongly attributed to the Mahabharata period, the places to its proximity with similar narratives was necessary to meet relevancy of the study.

The site now falls at Shivasatashi Municipality -09. The main feature of the site is a medium sized pond called Chillagadh, which was said to cover an area of 11 *kattha*. The land around the pond is 17 *kattha* and towards the south-west façade of the pond adjoining piece of land is in the name of late *maata* (religious personality) Aita Devi Kharel, that covers 19 *kattha*. (K.P. Mishra, personal communication, 2019). Mishra, had come here in BS 2028 with his two brothers from Panchthar. He had first hand information about the site and he lived quite close to the site. They had cleared trees here and following the historic visit of late king Birendra in a nearby place called Jhiljhile had like other illegal settlers got oral permission to set up residence in the lands of Terai, known then as 'Malariya –land'

According to Mishra, during the time when they were clearing land and felling trees, the pond was already there among huge trees. He recollected through his memory how the water looked blue-black and huge snakes lived in the pond. The land consisting of the pond (*ailani*) was measured under district administration during B.S. 2033.2034.

Now the land and the pond –site is being conserved by a local body *Pokhari Samitee*. An inlet of graveled road is linked to it. Locals assemble here during Balachatardarshi and Shivaratri.

A local visitor said to this researcher that the actual pond site was constructed as a *Vedi* for a grand *Yajna* by Yudhisthira. In the latter phases water collected in the pond and began known as Chillagadhi pond.

The site is also linked to where saints performed *Yajna*. Saint Dhaume is also often orally related by some locals to have performed *Yajna* over here. At present, Mata Tulasha Devi Kafle takes care of the premises and has built a small shrine for her ritual prayers. Locals come to her to seek advice for healing and advice with astrological queries. The existence of pond here could be related to the ponds in the Viratpokhar region.

#### **5.5.9 Krishnathumki**

Krishnathumki is just near the Indo- Nepal border in the eastern Nepal, by the banks of the Mechi river it is a small hill situated 18-19 kms north of Itavata, a small town near the eastern border of Nepal Kakadvitta. The researcher had visited this site during 2020 because of its local folklore of connection of the site to the Lord Krishna of the Mahabharata. A modern temple had been built on the hill- top dedicated to the lord and some stone idols were revered in the periphery (Fig. 13 and 1.4).

Khanal (B.S. 2072) in his article *Krishnathumki: Ek Parichaya* writes that here are altogether 5 small *Thumkis* on the flatlands. The northern most hill is called Krishnathumki and the southernmost is called Bhimsenthumki. On the base of the Bhimsenthumki is a natural outlet of water said to be linked to the Mahabharat Period. It is said that Pandavas and Draupadi after 12 years of their forest exile had arrived to this place. To quench thirst of Draupadi Bhimsena had hit the spot with his mace and water had oozed out at the base of Bhimsenthumki (Khanal, B.S. 2072, p.19 ).

Pandavas had settled here and Krishna alongwith his Nandini cow had also arrived here searching for them (Khanal, B.S. 2072, p.19). The elevation of

Krishnathumki from sea –level is 550m (Khanal, b.S. 2072, p. 18). Khanal also writes that towards the eastern side of the Krishnathumki a King called Lohasur ruled over his kingdom Lohagadhi, and towards the northern side from Krishnathumki Sattal Sen ruled over his Kingdom Salakpur. This Sen had asked for the help of the pandavas against Lohasur, who posed threat to him. When Krishna came to know about this, he climbed over a hill top to have a view of Lohagadh. His cow Nandini followed him. It is during this time that Krishna stepped upon it and this stone turned upside down and both of them stepped on its reverse too, and the stone bore deep scars on both obverse and reverse of the stone. The same stone is still consecrated in the temple on the hilltop. (B.S. 2072, p. 19).

The stone (Fig.1.5), still bears the marks and is kept inside a beautiful modern temple of Krishna built on the hill top. A very robust modern image of the Lord Krishna is also consecrated on the temple. Some locals also told this researcher that Lord Krishna had attacked Lohasur with his bow from the hill top and similar stone engraved is also found there. According to Khanal it was during B.S. 2055 that in the consent of some local learned people Yogi Narharinath was called upon here for auspicious inauguration of the temple construction initiation in top and for a Buddhist temple on the base of the hill- top. (B.S. 2072, p. 19).

According to Khanal (B.S. 2029) he had for the first time tried to publicize this place through his article in *Gorkhapatra* and states that many developmental plans are due here like the plan to establish a view tower on Bhimsenthumka. There are other peculiar stone idols kept around the temple. The idols are worshipped as Ganesha, Bhairava, Devi etc and beyond this elderly people are also reported to have found unique stone images and tridents hereby (Khanal B.S. 2072. P. 18). Khanal



writes about the potentiality of the spot as with high religious value, it could be turned into "Vrindavan" of Nepal (p. 19).

The tourism potentiality of the site is high in regards to its serene location, religious significance, nearby mini mountain site and to the more its flora and fauna. Its neighborhood Bahundangi region is located in the migration route of wild elephants and the villages having been victimized several times by their attacks now has been cordoned by electric fences. Local youth have cashed this as an opportunity and have built hotels with elegant hotel view.

However, no archaeological findings have been reported in the region.

#### **5.5.10 Satashidham**

It is a pilgrimage site located in Sivasatashi municipality. Satashidham is 5 km north from the Jhiljhile town that lies by the Mahendra Highway.

This place in Jhapa is believed by the locals to be the same place where the goddess Durga appeared before Yudhishtira and blessed the Pandavas just before their advent into the Virata kingdom in disguises. The Mahabharata describes Yudhishtira reminiscing and praying the goddess Tribhuvan Adhishwari Durgadevi and handing over himself to the refuge of the goddess before their advent into Viratnagar (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, pp. 1017- 1018). The goddess blessed the staunch devotee Yudhishtira and assured Pandavas of successful confinement in Viratnagara and their victory in the future (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, pp. 1017- 1018).

The stories of the Mahaabahrata has been taken by the locals very seriously while locating and identifying the places as being related to the epic. Satashidhaam is a serene place, full of waterfalls. Beautiful forests, rivers and big boulders scattered in the river glorifying the beauty of the place. Bhattarai has written that it lies in the laps

of the Menaka Parvat of Ilam and is spread over 76.5 km and the region is linked to a goddess *devi Satashi* with one thousand eyes whose description is found in Durga Saptasati Chandi (Bhattarai, B.S. 2072, p. 91). Apart from being linked to the episode of the Mahabharata Bhattarai cites Iman Singh Chemjong who said that sons and associates of Kirati King Parvat of Kusumpur, Bengal had come to this area with 87 *rishimunis/* saints. Those Saints due to cold could not ascend to the eastern hills of Nepal and stayed in the caves of the Satashi and Satashi meaning 87 in Nepali the place derived its present name.

However, the most popular local folklore states that the region is linked to the Mahabharata period, relating it to the one year incognito of the Pandava. This is related as the same place where the goddess appeared before the Pandavas, pleased with their devotion and suggested them to go in disguise to the palace of King Virata and also assured them of a successful incognito year. The goddess in local folklore is said to be Satashidevi (*satak* meaning hundred or as thousands as goddess with 100 or as some say with 1000 eyes).

Now a modern temple of the goddess has been established here, among other temples of lord Ganesha, Digambeshwor Mahadeva and Hanumana. The Satashi river that flows by the premises from the North is the center of attraction in the religious site and was a site of study for archaeological observation for this researcher.

Towards the North of the temple premises is an attractive waterfall called Akash Ganga along. On the way of the Satashi river, there is another small pond linked to Draupadi. The water is salty here and locals relate a story that by drinking the water from her she was healed. Locals and visitors still believe that drinking water from here cures many forms of illness. (Bhattarai, p. 92) people from as far as India come here to take the water (Ghimire, Gauri, 2076. P. 24).

A pond also called Draupadi pokhari or Surya kunda is said to have been a bathing place of Draupadi and devotees go as far as Siddheswor *gufa* (Bhattarai, Bs 2072, p.93) and atop that there are other ponds called Brahma and Krishna *talau* and beyond that there is a Sami tree where Arjuna had hid his weapons along with Gandiva (Bhattarai, p.93).

Some locals also claim the hill top on satashi dahm to have a big and age- old sami tree, where the Pandavas hid their weapons before goin to Viratnagar. The existence of Sami tree has been debated in the eastern Nepal. One such place has been related to Sadhutar north to Arjundhara. But during this research venture the researcher has met few local people who claimed to have seen the large tree of Sami with its huge girth among beetle nut trees and a small meditation space believed to be of Yudhistira on the hilltop of Satashidaham.

The naturally formed stone images of *Vasuki naag* as cited by Bhattarai (B.S. 2072, p.93) and some stone images of cow udder or unique half carved images along the banks of the river could at one level indicate human activities here in the past. A small temple of Pathivara Kaali is atop a hilltop of Mainachuli (Bhattarai, p.93) and that can be seen from the temple premises but the locals confessed that the path is difficult and risky.

This heritage is being publicized at local and national level. Now, it is popular for cow shelter (*goraksha*). More than one thousand cows, oxen and cattle are given shelter here, there is also a Vidyapeeth here.

According to the chairman of the temple committee, Prasad Subba actual history of the region is overshadowed by stories that seem mythical and have no concrete evidences but the site has been transformed into a religious touristic destination for the Hindus.

The region full of forest, water sources and attractive highlands is also a destination equally important from ecological, environmental and recreational perspectives. Cow as considered pious in among Hindus are abundant here. Acharya Nanda Kishor Bhardwaj, with concrete desire to conserve cows established *Golok Gobardhan Gaushala* in Chaitra B.S. 2071 (Adhikari, B.S. 2076, p.26).

There is also a local folklore that goddess Parvati along with Lord Shiva had mediated here so the cave is called Parvati *gufa* (Adhikari, p. 27), an idol as told to have disappeared in the floods. The northern part of the region is also famous for recreational walks with waterfalls birds views caves and small ponds.

A grand religious ceremony had been organized here with 108 *Yagnya Kunda* during Mangsir 2076, also known as *Mahayagyna* from Kartik 2076 to Mangsir 09, 2076. Ten thousands of visitors and devotes had visited the site during this religious ceremony as reported. This justifies Satashidhaam as an important religious heritage with archeological potentialities in the region. There are other few sites for example Paatal Ganga (near Kakadvitta) and Baradashi (south of Laxmipur, Jhapa ) that are also related by the locals to the Mahabharata and have immense religious significance to the communities living by. There may be other sites in the region with religious importance or with some vague archaeological evidences that are unknown to this researcher because of the delimitation of the research and time constraint.

## **5.6 Sites in Morang**

The same five bases and limitations which were used to select sites of study in Jhapa districts were also used to analyze which places to select as site of study in its neighboring district Morang. Bhedyari and Betana have been already described earlier and apart from these other sites in the Morang region also need to be interpreted for the purpose of the research. Although most of the sites were not visibly archaeological

in nature, nonetheless they had great intangible values as heritage sites and bore mythical linkages with the archaeological sites. Some of them have archaeological riches that can reveal at least a historical chronology in the Morang region. These sites have been studied comparatively with what this field-researcher observed and what had been written by previous researchers, historians about the sites. Some of the places described below are totally unknown in the eastern region itself, but they have significant potentialities to identify with the historical chronology in the region

### **5.6.1 Kichka-Gadhi/Kichkagadh**

The site lies in Sundar Haraicha municipality-01, Morang. During the field observation and a formal inquiry with the locals and members of Kichkagadh/Kichkagadhi *gramthaan* Management and Conservation Committee, it was evident that the small mound which remains now was a huge land-mass with vast riches of archaeological artifacts, all that were lost due to flooding of Lohandra River in the region. Members of the Conservation Committee revealed that swords and ancient silver coins were found while lands around were being tilled for planting rice but with strong beliefs of the locals that taking those valuables would result to misfortune, time and again while such antique artifacts were found, locals would leave them in the fields. Although, they may be true, it seems quite unconvincing that locals would not help themselves to such sheer luck-findings.

These researcher enquired to the near-by house-owner about such findings, to which an old lady responded that many people in the region had taken advantage of the findings. It would also be quite wise to act skeptic for the purpose of researching on heritage management because accidental findings of the traces of antique properties would most of the time lead to consequences of illegal occupying or trading of the objects and not to mention of treasure-hunting that follows for years.

The geo-morphology of the site (Fig.5.21) is somewhat similar to that of Kichakbadh, Jhapa and interestingly both are locally related to the Mahabharata antagonist character Kichak. The locals in the region believe this site to be the ancient palace premises of Kichak, who according to the epic Mahabharata was the chief of army of the king Virata. Interestingly, the site Bhediyari with huge ruins, said to be the palace of King Virata is within the estimated radius of about 20-25 km from Kichkagadhi. The ruins of Bhediyari fall towards the south-east site from here.

It was learnt that Kichkagadhi mound, now with a '*gramthaan*' (protective village deity) (Fig. 5.22) and forests of different species of trees has been reduced to just one and a half *bigha* of land. To its east is Lohandra river and Khoriya river, Panchayan (Pancham) village to the west, Dangitole and Laxmipur to its north and south respectively. This place is unknown to the outer-world other than the people of these villages and indigenous tribes of Tharu, Khawas, Rajbanshis and Dhimal who attend an annual fair held in the mound itself.

Every year on 14 Baisakh, a yearly religious fair is held hereby and roughly about five thousand of people come to attend the fair as said by a local committee member. The whole mound is a popular picnic spot for the local schools, colleges and communities nearby. During the field-observation in 2020, February, I found that the site was prone to cattle grazing, picnicking and merry – making. A graveled road has been constructed to the mound-site but still there are lot to do for the safety and security of the region. It was learnt that on the north-east lowland of the mound, an ancient platform like raised surface was exposed while local peasants were tilling the land. Silver coins were found there and nearby frequently. The members of the conservation Committee revealed that such findings have been reported since BS 2026.

It is however , quite odd to understand that the mound with such local belief of relation to the Mahabharata period, with such intangible aspect of a big religious fair and more importantly with archaeological potentialities have never been publicized , locally written to have literally remained unknown(lost) in the eastern region itself.

As already mentioned, a place called 'Kichakjhar ' is mentioned in Hamilton's *An Account of the History of Nepal*, where he writes about the locals assuring him of ancient ruins(2007,p.14) but with only that brief description and without specific location and nearby landmarks , it is hard to assume , whether he meant Kichakbadh, Jhapa or Kichkagadh , Morang. And to derive conclusions would be hazy because near Bhediari, there is another place called Kichakbadh. However, it is obvious that a small group of learned circle in the Moran Region had known about Kichkagadh's archaeological potentiality as in the mere lists of potential archaeological sites in morang. Their mentioning of this site in the list of potential archaeological sites in Morang as Haraicha's Kichkagadhi proves this fact. Among many other sites, they have named it in their articles. One has been written on behalf of the editorial board and another by Harikrishna Shakya in a book called *Morang Ek Parichya* (BS 2054, p.24 & p.43).

### **5.6.2 Dhanpalgadhi**

Dhanpalgadhi lies in Kaseni Municipality of Morang. The site of Dhanpalgadhi, as learnt, is a potential archaeological site is a huge single mound of 35 bighas. The mound on its edges have colossal wall-ruins which justify the fact that it was either a fort , a palace of king or a residence area of chieftain(s) or a structure of mini city of the ancient period. A small rivulet flows by the eastern façade of the huge mound (Fig. 5.26).

Although mere mentioning of Dhanpalgadhi with brief information has been given by editorial board in *Morang Ek Parichaya* along with other sites in their article "Morangma Puratatwa lai Khotalda" the first real extensive research of the place has been done by Som Khatiwada (B.S. 2069) who has published a brief account of Dhanpalgadhi in His *Raja Dhanpal ko Itihas*.

He has also given valuable information of another site nearby called "Dhanpalsthan" and has tried to research on connection of the same name Dhanpal in two different places of the same district.

The whole site of Dhanpalgadhi is spread in 35 *bigha* and 5 *kattha* (Khatiwada, B.S. 2069, p. 32). This is quite a huge historic site. Until now, not a single state-led exploration/excavation has been carried out in this site.

In the absence of any secondary literary sources, scientific explorations and excavations, Khatiwada has contributed tremendously to highlight and publicize this significantly forgotten and left out site of Morang district. In one context he writes:

There is no any reference to the name of Dhanpal as a person, ruler or a king in the pages of Morang's ancient and medieval history. Fatefully this is the same case with that of modern era's *guthi* [papers, donation or other such types of records. However, Dhanpal is portrayed as a king in the traditional folk rituals of Morang's indigenous Tharus and Rajbanshis. He is considered as a true god in their folk songs, local oral folktales and rituals. (B.S. 2069, p. 32)

However, in a formal inquiry with one influential local personality of the Tharu community thereby known by the name it was learnt that Tharus do not sing songs of Dhanpal (S. L. Chaudhary, personal communication, November 6, 2019). The ponds and big pits inside the mound and findings like wells plus the temple premises of King Dhanpal and his queen portray ample of cultural tourism and archaeological



tourism in the site that has also been emphasized by Khatiwada (B.S. 2069) about the aspects and prospects of Morang's tourism in the backdrop of Dhanpalgadhi.

The most amazing and peculiar archaeological feature is a broad wall ruins around this colossal mound. Khatiwada at one point referring to the size of walls addressed it as a security wall- 12 feet wide around the mound and probably no other site in the region has this width. (B.S. 2069, p.45). This justifies how important the site must have been in its glorious times. A small river flows by the east and there are remains of moat, though clearly not visible at present condition. Actually a huge fair is held in the site that indicates chances of potential damage to the security walls and other visible features inside the mound.

The researcher learnt from the locals in the Tharu villages that their greatest god is Dhanpal. The god is said to bestow blessings and fulfill their wishes. Locals offer animal sacrifice in the Dhanpal temple (Fig. 5.23) which is in the North-east of the mound. The periphery of the temple premises have other idols and deities (Fig 5.25) around however cleanliness of the premises seemed to be compromising for the new onlookers like this researcher. The main temple houses the idol of god like king Dhanpal and his queen (Fig. 5.24) sitting/riding on an elephant.

It would be important to note that Khatiwada has also briefly written about an archaeological site Harischandragadhi near Nepal-India border where locals relate the site to have been ruled over by a king called Harishchandra, but because Morang's history lack such name he assumes Harishchandra to have been a vassal chief (*samanta*) (B.S. 2068, p. 85). The major archeological features that he mentions are three major mounds along with two other mounds (B.S. 2068, p. 85) and ancient remains of buildings (p.86). He has also mentioned about a worshipping *thaan* of Rajbanshis who they call Maharaj (p.86).

Actually in the course of different site visits by this researcher around the heritage and archaeological sites around Eastern Terai of Nepal, it is remarkable that raised worshipping platform in and around mounds exist in places where there are certain tribes like Tharus, Rajbanshis or Dhimals. It makes sense to some extent that this Morang region had some influential chieftains or vassals in any past period which the elderly generations of these indigenous tribes knew about but today's generation they just worship on these remains and has forgotten the history which was insufficiently passed down to them by their ancestors.

In absence of the mainstream and regional history, it is vital that the excavations reveal artifacts which can be dated to get clear idea of at least the time period of distant rulers and inhabitants of this region. This researcher strongly advises that after conducting an extensive scientific exploration, a small scale excavation on a promising site could retrieve objects that could date the region.

## **5.7 Sites in Sunsari**

Sunsari district has many religious pilgrimage sites that have been described in the *puranas* and ancient Hindu texts. The sites are Pindeswari, Danteswari, BudhaSubba, Ramdhuni and Varakhshetra to mention some. There are some medieval ruins of palaces and forts of Vijaypur and Bhatabhunge.

During the research, a quick field study based on site observation were made in all the aforementioned spots although all were not related to the sites of study, however this was also done to take a quick glance of the religious heritages in the region.

### **5.7.1 Varakhshetra**

As per the bases chosen for the research objectives, only one region Varakhshetra from the Sunsari district has been selected for heritage management

study because of its archaeological contents, comparative dating of the religious idols chronology to be of ancient period and its tentative reference to the epic Mahabharata. The location of the Varahkshetra by the eastern banks of the beautiful Koshi, while at one hand gives it an undue advantage of serene and touristic setting, on the other hand seems vulnerable to flooding and erosion of the embankments of small plateau like topography on which it is situated. The temple premises are sufficiently well maintained and cleanliness seemed to be quite of compromising level in such religiously famed spot. Human induced activities and risks of polluting the place for considerable longer periods during fairs and festivals can easily be imagined. Landslide during 2010 BS had revealed two ancient idols there. The site being on the banks of the big Koshi river is also vulnerable to strong storms that can be of risk to the temples or people nearby (Fig. 7.4).

An old idol in the main temple besides its religious significance is also an important archaeological source and another idol of Varah (Fig.1.2) residing in the Guruvarah temple indicates the ancient historicity of this site. The religious practices practised here indicate a human settlement and interest in the eastern Terai region during the Lichhavi periods. According to Pandit Yogesh, 'in accordance to historians, the chief idols of the region are more than 4-5 thousand years old. (B.S. 2073, p.57). The chief priest of Varaha temple told this researcher that after rescuing the earth from the demon Hiranakshya Vishnu settled in the form of *Vishnu Vighraha*. The same idol is worshipped with great reverence by the priest, the locals and the devotees. The *Vishnu Vighraha* (Fig. 1.1) is in the center of the main temple which is called "*Shyam Shila*" or "*Chandan Shila*" (Yogesh, B.S. 2073, p.26). Some texts also mention of large fairs during *Kartik Purnima* and *Maghe Purnima* in Varahkshetra.

The two idols found during BS 2010 landslides in the northern edge of the Varakhshetra, one kept in Guru-Varaha temple, measuring about 156 cm 77cm and another small kept in Laxmi temple has similar features of Gupta art are dated by Bangdel and Ramesh Jung Thapa as 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century respectively. (Khatiwada, BS 2066, p.118). This gives a glimpse that the area is vulnerable to landslides time and again. So, the monuments here need to be studied on risk levels in the rainy seasons.

In an intention to depict brief information of the eastern region, Hamilton has put Varakhshetra as one of the most remarkable places among others like Vijaypur, Samirgarhi, Kichakjhar, Sorahbag etc (2007, p. 141). One information can be particularly relevant hereby to begin with:

During the government of the former dynasty (*he means to refer to the Senas*), the priests (*mahanta*) of this temple seem to have had great weight. The successor enjoys some land and the whole duties collected at a neighbouring custom house (Chata- gola). The place is still frequented by good many pilgrims, but the number has, of late, considerably diminished. This is a place where holy persons sometimes bury themselves alive, and on such occasions are supposed to be endowed with the gift of prophecy. The buildings are considerable, and of, late, have become ruinous (2007, p.141)

The particular description by Hamilton that "holy persons sometimes burying themselves alive" is most probably the act of Ascetics (saints) taking "*samadhi*" in this religiously vibrant site. Thus, piousness and vibrant popularity of this site are reflected in Hamilton's account.

Khatiwada has also mentioned that most probably Varakhshetra is the only one pilgrimage in Nepal that has as so many other sub-pilgrimage sites (*upatirtha*)

that have been described in the *Puranas* and known by the public and mentions those pilgrimage sites that are clustered around the main temple of the Varah as Auliyamath, Mahakalasthan, MainaMaini, Suryaklunda, Chandrakunda, Kubjamra, Vishnupaduka, Siddhashram, Shivkunda to mention some (p.3).

Among many other pious sites Kokamukha is mentioned in *Mahabharata* as those who take bath here and abide by *bramhacharya* and *sanyam* [spiritual code of conducts] acquire power to recollect past lives which have been experienced by ancient people (*Mahabharata, Part II, Vanaparva and Viratparva*, 158, p.298). The grandiosity of the massive region of Varahkshetra as mentioned in *Himvatkhanda Varahapuran* with many pilgrimages are now almost unknown to the public are places like Suryakunda, Chakratirtha, Kubjam, Shivakund etc. (Khatiwada, BS 2066, p.148).

At present a pious site by the same name Kokamukha is in the Varahkshetra Koshi river region. Regarding Varahkshetra's relation to the Mahabharata epic, Khatiwada cites from Pandurangwaman Kane's *Dharmashastrako Itihas* to mention that the epic Mahabharata gives a description of its importance mentioning that Pandavas had performed the ancestral rite *shraddha* in the Vishnutirtha to pay homage to their relatives who faced death in the Kurukshetra (B.S. 2066, p. 150-151). The Vishnutirtha is assumed to have been KokamukhVarahkshetra (Khatiwada, B.S. 2066, p.151). The importance of Varahkshetra and the pilgrimages around it has been mentioned in *Himvatkhanda* (Nepal, B.S. 2040, p. 310). Nepal (B.S. 2040) also relates the story in this religious and sacred text where a Brahmin degraded in the society of the Kiratas (during Kirata period) spread the fame of the lord Varaha (p.310).

The stories of Kirata related to this site also is relevant mentioning here. The *Himvatkhanda's* version (as cited in Nepal, B.S. 2040) of a Brahmin obliged to marry a Kirata lady Subadana and his discovery of the spot on one occasion where the nymphs and gods danced around Vishnu, who having defeated a demon called Hiranaksha and rescued the *prithvi* had settled here on the banks of the Koshi gives an indication that Kiratas used to vanish if they reached that place but the Brahmin, was blessed by the lord and addressed by the lord as being with knowledge.

This somewhat gives birth for a vague interpretation on hierarchy of castes and knowledge versus ignorant. Nepal writes from the *Himvatkhanda* the lord said to the Brahmin ' I, am pleased with your devotion but these *agyani* would dissolve within me because of their ignorance'(Nepal , BS 2040 , p.312) Kiratas should have been referred to as *agyani* because of their carefree and hunting nature. The *Himvatkhanda* mentions of a majestic hill glimmering like a Himalaya full of waterfalls where the lord Vishnu took the Varah avatar to rescue the earth thus retaining the name of a Varhaparvat (p. 340).

A Brahmin, named Vishnu Sharma on the state of being killed after having been captured by the hunter Kiratas, was out of blues offered his daughter by one Villu Kirata, (Nepal, BS 2040, p.311) although sheds light on the sheer luck of the very fortunate Brahmin (but also his bad luck to have himself immersed within Kirata society) gives one very valuable information on the tribes of the Kiratas as hunters, with their livelihood around the Koshi region , especially around the Varahkshetra.

The clear historicity of the region has been analyzed by historians and researchers on the light of the information of an inscription of Budh Gupta's from north Bengal (477 A.D. -494 AD). In this time a trader called Ribhupal had arrived at the confluence of Koka-Koshi and in his return to his country had established the

idols of Kokamukh Swami and Swet Varaha Swami. He the established a *guthi* in the Damodar region (as narrated in Khatiwada, B.S. 2066, p. 117-118; also in Nepal, B.S. 2040, p. 173). Yogesh also mentions about a stone inscription at Dinajpur Damodargram in north Bengal that mentions of Ribhupal keeping a *guthi* for Varahkshetra, renovating the *paatis* and temples even after some years in his mother's name the inscription having mentioned the renovation of the broken idol of Varah (B.S. 2073, p. 56-57).

Khatiwada (B.S.2070) mentions that Ribhupal had established the two gods in Damodarpur because it was difficult to bring the *guthi* property to the Kokamukh Varahkshetra (p.118). Nepal (B.S. 2040) has also mentioned about a copper inscription (*tamrapatra*) of B.S. 600 Amritdeva of Ayodhya having offered a land in the memory of his mother to renovate temple of SwetVaraha if the lord Varahkshetra (B.S. 2040, p.173). Khatiwada is of the opinion that Amrit Deva most probably have meant the renovation of the Swami established by Ribhupal in Damodarpur, but there is lack of evidence (B.S. 2068, p. 19).

Various sources of history also mentions the temple premises of Varahkshetra being renovated during Lohang Sena's rule, Rana period and also in Shah period. Khatiwada (B.S. 2066, p. 123) mentions that even after the unification of Nepal, this site remained far off from the eyes of the rulers with only meager interests (by some Ranas) to construct road from the Chatara to Varahkshetra and the renovations of the temple.

Chatara now is a beautiful town near the Koshi banks the relation of Chatara to that of Varahkshetra has been described by Khatiwada (B.S. 2066, p. 276-282). In the same text, at one context he writes " although there is no clear ancient history on Chatara, but because it lies on the way to the pilgrimage of Varhakshetra it is

assumed there were villages here (p. 277) but there are no ruins of old buildings (p.278) where was tax collected in Chatara is not clear. However Hamilton describes the whole duties of Varhakshetra's priests lands collected at a neighboring custom house (Chatagola) (2007, p.141). This gives evidence that during Sena period there was a custom house here. Khatiwada assumes this to be in Bayarvan area, the ruins not available because they were constructed out of woods (B.S. 2066, p.278).

The heritage management perspective in the Varahkshetra in the future has thus to be studied extensively in terms of the following parameters.

(a) Road condition and accessibility (b) Identification and promotion of nearby numerous pilgrimage sites (c) Sanitation around the temple premises (d) Visitor Management during annual fairs of Kartik Purnima and Maghe Sankranti (e) Risk assessment of natural agents and Human induced activities. (f) Pollution and garbage management around the area in the aftermath of the festival.



## **Chapter Six**

### **Evaluation of the Archaeological Conservation and Management in the Eastern Terai of Nepal**

Archaeological conservation, management and their practices in Nepal are in infant stages. The archaeological expeditions that are carried out in the sites and regions of national priority are at satisfactory level whereas there are innumerable sites scattered throughout that are left at the hands of weak and ignorant local committees or bodies. International assistance and donors are sought after in the areas of national priority but still there is a need for more healing approaches. Many ruins across the country are at possible risks to be lost forever. The eastern Terai and sites of study of this research are needless to say seem neglected. Thus, the present conditions of archaeological sites and their conservation and management in Eastern Terai of Nepal have been evaluated on the following parameters.

#### **6.1. Clear History of the Sites Still in Limbo**

The popular and well known archaeological sites of Eastern Terai of Nepal like Kichakbadh and Bhediari and Kichkagadhi are strongly believed by locals to be the sites of the Mahabharata period. Locals, most of them who do not know about the time-line of the Mahabharata, take it as a historical account. The places and sites related with different characters and episodes of the Mahabharata are more rampant in Jhapa district than in Morang and Sunsari. Towns, ponds, villages, temples, mounds, ruins and hills of Jhapa are rampantly promoted, publicized and developed for cultural tourism implications.

Except for few, most of them do not have/show indications of archaeological features or riches. The communities benefit with the belief interwoven with religious values on the sites, but for archaeological places, in the long run, such beliefs can be

unfortunate if in reality, for example the ruins of Kichakbadh belonged to any other king and not necessarily to Kichak. Or just for example, if Bhediari ruins belonged to a historical dynasty of ancient state of Indian subcontinent and not necessarily to king Virata.

In such sites of Eastern Terai of Nepal, there is always a grave danger of actual and real history of a civilization that well flourished in the region to the submerged by such local beliefs upon which hierarchies of oral narratives are constructed and reconstructed over generations.

Archaeological evidences and always important for history. Literary or mythical interpretations may in some context be true, but on which there is no concrete baseline for reliability of historical contexts. Writing briefly on 'Archaeology and the Mahabharata', Singh writes:

Archaeological explorations and excavations at places mentioned in the Mahabharata e.g. Hastinapura, Kurukshetra, Panipat, Tilpat, Baghpat, Mathura and Bairat have given evidence of a pottery called Painted Gray Ware (PGW) which goes back to C. 1000 BCE. This shows that these sites were inhabited around this time, and the nature of the remains suggests that the people who lived here shared a pastoral-cum-agricultural life-style. (2008, p. 20)

She concludes on this with much precision that although local tradition strongly relates PuranaQila in New Delhi to Indraprastha and excavation carried out between 1954 and 1971 had revealed several archaeological levels ranging from the 4<sup>th</sup> C BCE to the 19<sup>th</sup> C. A.D., but there's no way of knowing for sure whether this settlement has any connection with the Mahabharata period (Singh, 2008, p. 20).

Because many learned people, historians regard Mahabharata as mere myth, a work of fiction, and unfortunately when we do not have a clue to the occurrence of

the Mahabharata, the sites linked to the episodes of the epic, especially dozens of sites that have been transformed into pilgrimage sites in Eastern Terai of Nepal fall victims of unclear history. With archaeologically dated chronological value, these sites do not have historical value in scientific terms. Hence, their history is in limbo.

However, although not regarded as a history, the epic has been signified to having historical value. As Dutt puts in "The Mahabharata has a great historical value, not as a true account of the incidents of the war which forms its subject, but a picture of the manners and civilization of the period (1909, p. 7). Even if the epic is to be taken into consideration for authenticity of having depiction of the civilization, during when it was written, the period can be ranged from 5<sup>th</sup> C. BCE -5<sup>th</sup> C. A.D. "The Mahabharata is first mentioned by Aswalayana in his *GrihyaSutra* and by Panini in his *Asthadhyayi*. It was admittedly at first only about a quarter of its present size. The complete Mahabharata of 100,000 verses is mentioned for the first time in an inscription of the Gupta period" (Majumdar, Raychaudhuri&Datta, 1974, p. 86)

Similar to the presumptions of the writers, many take the Mahabharata to have evolved in multi-versions over-time. Hence, its credibility as a historical account is often questioned, as they again claim "both the poems (the Ramayana and the Mahabharata) contain a good deal of pseudo-epic or didactic material which came to be included at a comparatively late date (Majumdar, Raychaudhuri&Datta, 1974, 86). However, it would be very relevant to write hereby that a very popular spiritual personality Pilot Baba whose descriptions of his life and strange events leave the readers and devotees dumbfounded opens up with a prologue in his book *Himalaya kaha raha hai* as having spent time with war- participants ( most probably indicated to those personality who are considered immortal) and those devouts who were peace –messengers of the time (Purnima Samvat 2039, p. XXIII-XXIV)

Still there is a point of departure that any place which are said to be related to the Mahabharata by the locals may not be the same place even if the Mahabharata incidents were true. So the mythological interpretations of the places do not give a clear clue of its history and it is important that scientific evidences brought forth by dating artifacts found here can at least provide chronology and comparative analysis of the sites in this region.

## **6.2 Devalued Chronological Evidences**

The sites of Kichakbadh and Bhediyari are comparatively dated to 2<sup>nd</sup> C. BC, relating it to Sunga-Kushan dynasty, but this chronological value make no sense of the local community and wider public of the eastern Terai. At present, in most sites archaeological findings make no sense of public in eastern Terai.

## **6.3 Virgin and Unexplored Sites**

As stated earlier in various contexts and stances, eastern Terai of Nepal has not much been given significance for archaeological ventures. A little bit of systematic archaeological ventures and deep analysis would possibly reveal the gaps in the historicity of eastern Nepal.

During the field observation session undertaken by the researcher, the site of Dhanusa (Jhapa) with archaeological ruins are heaped over in a state of collapse, over which a modern worshipping platform has been built for the Rais. The locals have seen the ruins since they have cleared the land and settled there. Interestingly, the locals do not know about the ruins and its history is shrouded in mystery. Likewise Dhanpalgadhi, Dhanpalsthan and Harischandragadh have been studied by Khatiwada Som in the last decades but scientific explorations and excavations, though suggested by the writer have left over. The sites of remains as suggested by this researcher in

Kamal Village Municipality needs careful exploration. It can be with confidence said that many sites are archaeological virgin.

#### 6.4 Meagre Conservation Fund for the Sites

Ancient monument preservation Act, 2013 (1956) in its article 17 D has a decent provision of ancient monument conservation fund as prescribed in order to conserve the ancient monuments which are important from the historic and artistic point of view (1956, p. 20). However, it was learnt during the research that this fund and its use are not enough for the archaeological sites of eastern Terai.

The ratio of development budget allocated to the Department of Archaeology to the national development budget in fiscal years seem sympathetic, owing to the importance of monument conservation, and need of archaeological ventures across nation. It would hereby relevant to consider it in table format given by Suresh Surash Shrestha) in his article featuring activities of DOA in the fiscal year B.S. 2069/2070.

#### 6.1 .Budget Ratio of National Development Budget to DoA Development Budget

| Fiscal year | National development budget in thousands | Development budget allocated to DOA in thousands | Budget ratio |
|-------------|--|--|--------------|
| 2065/066    | 124190947                                | 51541  | 0.004155     |
| 2066/067    | 106284793                                | 51599  | 0.00055      |
| 2067/068    | 347105974                                | 87100  | 0.2355       |
| 2068/069    | 72607090                                 | 83297  | 0.0015       |
| 2069/70     | 461621044                                | 359061   | 0.07         |

(Source: Shrestha, S.S., B.S.2071, Pracheen Nepal, p. 39)

Shrestha (B.S 2071) admits that the annual budget allocated to the department of archaeology for the conservation and management of national heritage is extremely low, that has constrained for fulfilling the responsibilities and task accomplishment

(2014, p. 39). In the fiscal year 2069/70, Rs. 500,000 was allocated for conservation of archaeological site of Kichakbadh (Shrestha, 2014, p. 39) whereas in the fiscal year 2067/68, a sum of Rs. 200,000 was allocated for the conservation of Kichakbadh and Rs. 300,000 for continuing excavation over there (Nyaupane, B.S 2069, p. 57).

Likewise, a sum of Rs. 250,000 has been allocated for stone paving in the Varakhshetra (Shrestha, 2014, p. 43). There are many headings on the table list, which obviously point to the woeful fact that, DOA has a heap of works to do, with budget so small and really insufficient.

Likewise in the First –Periodic Plan (B.S. 2076/77-2080/81) published by Province-1 (Koshi province) there is a bold mentioning of target budget (*budget prakchhepan*) in the fields of language, art, Literature, culture and heritage sections. The table 5.12 (pp.162-163) mentions 10 programs mostly related to heritage conservation more than 100 years old, archaeology, language, establishment of museums, study of endangered languages, empowerment of language and art in province universities etc.

## 6.2. Budget Allocation of the Koshi Province

The budget allocation in province- 1 has been estimated upto BS2080-81 as:

| 2076/77      | 2077/78       | 2078/79     | 2079/80      | 2080/81      |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Rs.51,692000 | Rs. 64,781000 | Rs.69077000 | Rs.79,235000 | Rs.85,486000 |

(Source: Pradesh Sarkar Pradesh Yojana Ayog, *Pratham Awadhik Yojana*, B.S.

2076/77-2080/8, pp.162-163).

Conversations with some few elected representatives of the Koshi province, yielded information that at present there is a satisfactory (if not equitably enough) budget in the heritage and cultural sectors but there is a need of evaluation whether the budget were rightfully attributed and utilized. Whether the sum spent for DPR of

heritage sectors are implemented continually by the next elected local officials or not. Also there is no mechanism to study budget leakage which is almost unimaginable at present Nepal's contexts.

### **6.5 Absence of Heritage Practitioners in Local Conservation Committees**

Heritage practitioners refer to skilled and knowledgeable manpower, enthusiasts and heritage lovers with expertise on professional management of different aspects of heritage and also who are sensitive to heritage ethics.

It was learnt during the research and field observation period that local conservation committees of the archaeological sites and other religious heritage sites normally comprise of 9, 11, 13 or 17 members, most of whom live around the sites. They come from all spheres of social and professional area and in some sites there has been same person as chairman for more than ten years. The committee is often chaired by economically sound and influential person around the communities. Some local committees were found to have site advisors who have had high education background, (for instance in Dhanuskutidhaam, Jhapa) however, there is a dire need to conduct capacity building programs to turn interested members into heritage practitioners.

### **6.6 Lack of Identification of Stakeholders**

Identifying stakeholders is really a difficult task in heritage management plan and action. Samardzic (2015) in her thesis has written "Cultural heritage is complicated subject when it comes to mapping its stakeholders as they range from international organizations to small local organizations and local communities and enthusiastic individuals (2015, p. 61). She has provided a table of stakeholders, categorizing them as political, protective, scientific, educational, economical, social, environmental, infrastructural and she also cites from Hajjalikhani (2008, p. 7), that

these stakeholders also differentiate on their level of education to economical capability, influences and responses and also their interests overlap (p. 61).

Michele (2014) has stated "The organizational needs and decision making that is necessary for managing cultural heritage has often led to complex situations where many stakeholders are involved (2014, p. 22)". He has stated this in cases of Banteay Chhmar, where there are many stakeholders ranging from Heritage Watch International to, national and many levels of local stakeholders. However, in the sites of Nepal's eastern Terai, the challenge is just opposite, a sheer can of binary opposition. There are shortage of stakeholders. The only visible stakeholders are team of local conservation committees, who are not that active.

The communities around archaeological sites of Kichakbadh, Bhediari, Biratpokhar, Kichkagadh, Varahkshetna, Dhanpalgadhi take interests in the sites chiefly because of their religious and cultural affiliations to annual fairs and festivals that have been continued from generations some sites like Betana, Chillagadh and also Kichakbadh and Kichkagadhi are recreational places of picnic and educational tours or sites for day off for occasional visitors. There are few individual researchers, individual enthusiasts and handful of willing conservationists to all there sites.

As said earlier and time to time in this research, archaeology is almost not understood by the wider public. In almost all sites of study, no youth clubs or active heritage watch groups were known. Even within the communities, lack of ownership of the heritage sites. In the sites around the Eastern Terai of Nepal, few people would be interested to take out time of think about the sites and allocate themselves in the list of stakeholders.



## 6.7 State & Local level Indifference to Site Management

Archaeological sites of eastern Nepal have been in a state of neglect from both state level and local level. Locally in the Republic Nepal, provinces, village Municipalities and local municipalities have been formed. The local government is new and in a transition phase, and is just crawling to manage multi-furious political loopholes. The Department of Archaeology, Tourism Board Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation all have to be seen as per now of being indifferent to the miserable states of archaeological sites in the Eastern Terai of Nepal. Budget allocation is one big problem, however, at present DOA, Nepal too have shortage of archaeological expertise and is preoccupied with many expeditions in shorter time slots.

The most regretful aspect is that in a site like that of Bhediari, no archaeological expeditions have been conducted since B.S. 2025, after the first and 1st excavation session led by T.N. Mishra. Conservation approach, monitoring, planning for tourism marketing have been ill-treated in the sites of eastern Nepal. State and local level indifference to the site management has been elaborately discussed in the latter part of this research.

The First –Periodic Plan (B.S. 2076/77-2080/81) published by Province-1 in its Strategies and Policies Section in Language, Art, Literature, Culture and heritage Management mentions of nine working policies ranging from policy making and implementation on conservation and promotion of language, fonts, culture, art and religious heritages to research on archaeological heritages, conservation and promotion of different museums (p. 79).

Most importantly in its targeted goals (*apekchit upalabdhi*) it mentions about having conserved 13 endangered languages and culture, having conserved of 15

archaeological heritages that are 100 + years old, having established 5 museums, having established one multi ethnic cultural village, and studies made on tangible and intangible cultural heritage (First –Periodic Plan B.S. 2076/77-2080/81 published by Province-1,p.79).

### **6.8 Risks of Natural Agents**

Many archaeological sites of eastern Terai are in chief danger of inundation as rivers are close by. Kichakbadh has a history of being flooded by the river Deunia. Kichkagadhi of Morang has been flooded for many years by the river Lohandrariver, Varahkshetra has been affected by landslides. General observations in the Bhediyari site show that there are risks of vegetation and tree roots. The sites of Dhanpalgadhi are in risks of rain and flooding by the river. The pre-historic site of Betana is in great risk of inundation. Almost all sites are in some level risks to these four natural agents-

river flood, vegetation outgrowth,landslides, rain damage

Forest fire are not so much of risk in the sites because most of the archaeological ruins and features are underground. However picknicking in some sites like Kichakbadh, Kichkagadhi, Dhanpalgadhi and Viratpokhar can harm the conserved areas.

### **6.9 Risk of Human Agents**

Human beings are the most dangerous agents of destruction and partial damage or permanent damage to the archaeological sites and this is no exception to the cases of Eastern Terai of Nepal. The human induced risks for the sites were observed to be mainly

- (a) Looting (b) Irresponsible acts and behaviours during festivals (c) Fire causing (d) Rampant commuting (e) Picknicking, merry making (f) Vandalising conserved walls (g) Tethering cattles inside conserved areas for grazing purposes

Looting is always related to illegal trade and trafficking of the artifacts and in some cases for personal collections that are meant for reputation and show off. Sharer and Ashmore write as long as collectors consider certain kinds of archaeological remains to be "art", the economics of supply and demand will lead to plundering of sites to find artifacts that have commercial value (1993, p. 581).

At present, the sites Kichakbadh where it was found to be dug for precious and semi-precious stones have reached to that stage where there are almost no new spaces for treasure hunting. Towards the south east mound of the main Kichakbadh mound, a very small island like topography called locally as Aadradigi is surrounded on all sides of artificial narrow water bodies. Today it has been privately owned by Nim Bahadur Thapa and a small tea garden planted in around 2 bighas of land. In the past, peasants working in the field had found dead bodies, many of them which had stone ornaments valued in the area. After B.S. 2046 in the fall of the Panchayat system, the local diggers increased and the whole area was exploited. This information was provided to this researcher by the priest of the main Satidevi temple (K.Dhungana, personal communication, 2019). The locals had retrieved those precious and semi-precious beads and traded them into borderlands of India. It was learnt but not confirmed that old folks still and some of their homes. The treasure-hunting that lasted for decades in Bhedyari, Morang can be sensed and felt by any naive visitor who visit the private collection of Kamal Keshari Yadav, the chairperson of the Bhedyari-Ancient town of King Virata Conservation Committee. His collections on heaps of artifacts that have been retrieved from Bhedyari can leave anybody dumbfounded. He claims to have retrieved them during several occasions of ploughing and crop plantation and at one level seems to have filled the gap of site museum in the region, however in absence of context and archaeological 3D record

the semblance of artifacts all seem to be commodities. It is quite amazing that by accidental findings such hoards and considerable quantity of artifacts can be retrieved.

If anybody by chance finds anything, that will be reported to Yadav, who is also working like a conservationist however, it is quite difficult to assume that all artifacts will be delivered to his private collections. There are chances that such availability sparked off excitement to the locals so private collectors had increased and it would be unjust to remain confident and not doubt while dealing with heritage management that there had not been organized and ill-cooperated collections and trading of the archaeological riches in and around the region. It just calls to urgent rescue of the potential areas but it was also learnt that it is almost impossible without the consent of the communities. For the time being at least the personal endeavors of the committee chairman and locals there seem to be only reliable option and trust them. But it was also felt that trainings and capacity building programs will do well for the time being. But in the longer run, province and state led mechanism need to softly intervene for proper museum display and conservation approaches. Similarly looting of artifacts from the less known virgin archaeological site of Morang's Kichkabadh was also conveyed to this researcher by the locals but the members of the local conservation committee refuted this.

Tethered domestic cattles in the walled conserved site of Bhediari during this researcher's visit point to many aspects of local ownership in conservation level.

Many archaeological sites of the Eastern Terai of Nepal are also religious sites, so fairs and festivals are held in such sites. In Kichkabadh around 4-5 lakh (Four hundred to five hundred thousand) people attend the annual fair. Circus, local trading, buying and selling, children park, all add challenges to the local conservation committee for crowd management. During 2019 February, people were seen walking

on the conserved walls of the ruins, many bricks were laid of hither and even helicopter ride were organized from the conserved archaeological mound. Similarly Morang's Kichkagadh too sees around five thousand fair attenders in the annual fair of Baisakh. Similarly Dhanpalgadhi sees around ten thousand plus fair attenders and religious devotees in the annual fair of Baisakh.

### **6.10 Risk of Urbanization**

With tie villages grow into towns and cities. It is obvious that the population grows with certain rate and speed and some places may even have to withstand influx of migrants. These all mean at one context, threats to heritage sites, their spaces and increased challenges to manage festivals, crowds human activities, sewages, construction works and so on.

The south-east and south-west lands of Kichakbadh has a small village, and it is slowly growing into a town. Likewise, rapid urbanization has been noticed around south west and north-west areas of Bhediari, with road networks constructed here and there. Dhanpalgadhi, Kichkagadhi, Varahkshetra will take time to urbanize, however, the risks of unorganized home settlements cannot be ignored. The village of Kamal village municipality is sure to grew into a mediocre town in a decade. Likewise other religious heritage sites of Arjundhara and Biratpokhar are also in chief risks of urbanization.

### **6.11 Lack of Risk Assessment and Risk Mapping**

Archaeological sites and potential archaeological sites studied herein the research bluntly show their vulnerability to natural disasters, vegetation outgrowth and harms caused by human activities. Because the sites in eastern Terai are all ruins and features, most of them yet to be scraped off or exposed, there are great dangers of invasive constructions like roads, houses etc. on them that could permanently subdue

their identity. Hence all the sources of risk, the risks they regenerate and all levels of risks should be assessed properly. Writing on the principle of Risk Assessment Map, Michele, an archaeologist who drafted action plan for Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia, 2014 has written 'A risk assessment map with a priority list should be the first step during the preparation of a conservation programme....in fact the risk map should highlight not only damage that has already occurred, but also damage that may occur in the future' (2014, p. 32). Michele also has stated about three risks level which are recognized (i) zero risk (ii) medium risk and (iii) high risk for which he suggests practice of cost-benefit measures categorized as (i) Emergency measures (ii) urgent measures and (iii) preventive measures. These types of assessment and cures are new to our nation.

It is very important that we follow such meticulous conservation approaches not in sites of eastern Terai but countrywide, that have been adopted by different countries at international standards.

## **6.12 Sites of Archaeological/ Prehistoric Importance Underneath Occupied**

### **Villages**

Many sites of eastern Nepal have been recognized as pre-historic sites including Jhapa Vaijanthpur (Pandey and Regmi, B.S. 2062, p. 65) and Betana excavation of 2015 have given evidences that the region had witnessed pre-historic activities of Neolithic people. The local residentces and fields of Kamal Village Municipality to the South of Dharampur, Jhapa which this researcher suggests for further explorations are occupied by new village settlements. The Bhediari region is also are occupied by villages of ancient ruins. Villages are nearby the mounds of Kichakbadh and Kichkagadhi. Therefore a surface observation of the eastern Terai region gives a dim picture of complex situation where many spaces and considerable

area of living communities have to be legally cordoned for future archaeological survey, and that which is very difficult.

### **6.13 Risk of Well-intentioned Constructions in the Sites**

The risks of well intentioned activity in archaeological sites have been briefly dealt by Sharer and Ashmore (1993, p. 586). Archaeologists and conservationist's have most often written about how developmental constructions and modern ambiences invade, intervene and destroy archaeological evidences.

Sharer and Ashmore has written Vandalism and looting are serious problems, but well intentioned activity can also be harmful. Although done in the name of progress, activities such as opening new lands to agriculture, constructing new roads and buildings and creating flood control projects inevitably destroy countless remains of past human activity(1993, p. 586).

During the research observations, risk of well intentioned activity was chiefly noticed in Bhediari, Morang. The construction of railway track (dry port) ear the historical ponds and conserved sites of Bhediari will aggravate human activities and the findings of old wooden beams in a construction site by workers indicate that it has intervened the archaeologically important areas. Unorganized house settlements around Arjundhara, unscientific constructions of buildings in Kichakbadh, children park near the Kichakbadh are definitely risks of well intentioned constructions. Other sites like satashidham, Viratpokhar are also vulnerable to constructions of buildings, public spaces and amenities of progress.

### **6.14 Lack of Periodical Monitoring and Maintenance of the sites**

Sites once conserved are rarely monitored. It is even seen as to be done by some legal body and not understood that any community person can take ownership of the heritage site and monitor illegal or unethical acts in the sites. However, whether

allocated fund has been wisely used or not, did the maintenance fund meet the targeted objectives? What threats are there to the sites even after conservation process has been initiated? These questions have not struck at least to many people who live around the communities. Sites once conserved like in Bhediari are seemingly orphaned in absence of timely and proper monitoring by the state mechanism. There have been periodical investment in heritage management, picnic management, establishment of drinking water tank in Kichakbadh as per conversation with Jeewan Kumar Shrestha, the Mayor of Bhadrapur Municipality. There have been DPR of Vijayapur palace in Dharan and conservation approaches at historical sites like Sulikot in Sunsari according to Manju Bhandari, Deputy Mayor of Dharan. But all these approaches need proper mechanisms, proper persons, ethical and honest personnel and time to time monitoring of the sites. Minister for Social Development, Jeewan Ghimire, said to this researcher that for heritage management videography of cultural and heritage sites were made, documentaries of places like Bhediari were made and teams were deployed for language, archaeological and cultural studies. However the result or impact of these kind of teams, these types of investment should be monitored effectively through a proper and ethical government mechanism.

### **6.15 Lack of Touristic Ambiences and Visitors Statistics**

The dozens of heritage sites [Religious and archaeological] studied by this researcher in the Eastern Terai of Nepal, at present have not yet reached that stages of popularity and marketing capacity in terms of archaeological, or aesthetic charms so as to attract international tourists. As said earlier in this research in many contexts archaeology is just in infant stage so domestic visitors who visit the sites either go for religious or recreational purposes. Only the most minimal visitors go to such sites for



inspection of history or there are few schools or colleges which organize educational tours to such sites.

Unfortunately we do not have statistics of number of visitors in any single site of study. The numbers mentioned in this research during annual religious festivals at the sites are just approximate data observed by this researcher and his team in such events plus known with the help of locals and committee members. Not a single site has a visitor parlour or visitor information desk. Some sites have display-boards with very brief information of the site. There are simple and humble sitting benches are view-spots in places like Biratpokharsarovar, Kichakbad, Chillagadh, Dhanpalgadhi, Varahkshetra and Satashidham. However, the region and neighbouring or adjoint areas lack good accommodation facilities. To make the matter worse, KichkagadhDhanpalgadhi and Bhediyari are in such rural and isolated areas that, roads are not well paved and in many sites regular commuting vehicles are not readily available substantive research about members of visitors, study of visitors profile, feedback or any touristic charms are far-fetched talks to date.

#### **6.16 Lack of Community Linking Programs**

Today at any heritage site, community participation/ integration is very important. Many archaeological sites in Eastern Terai of Nepal are even more important, looked through the benefits of community integration because around all sites indigenous and age old settlers of the land Rajbanshi, Tharu, Dhimal, Meche live along with astounding belief and worship patterns. They see the sites through sacred beliefs. These religious aura are intangible cultural assets around the sites. Considering the importance of the ich for cultural diversity and sustainable development and recognizing that communities (in particular indigenous communities groups and in some cases, individuals), play an important role in the production, safe

guarding, maintenance and recreation of the ich, that is in its own words, the convention for the safe guarding of the intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003 adopted by UNESCO in 17 October, 2003 in Paris, has dedicated its Article 14 for education, awareness raising and capacity-building of general public, young people and specific educational and training programmes within the communities and group concerned (2003, UNESCO convention for ich). Although a party state of the convention, there have been shortage of such capacity buildings programs to the communities around archaeological sites.

### **6.17 Lack of Published Reports**

There have been few excavations and archaeological expeditions in Eastern Terai of Nepal but the archaeological information have been published in the form of report.

Nyaupane in biannual journal *Ancient Nepal* states that there is a sum of Rs. 350,000 allocated in Kichakbadh site for purchase of goods, daily travel allowance and report publishing,( according to the table heading on budget allocation by DOA, B.S.2069, p. 60) but the report of excavation of Kichakbadh has never been published. Unpublished preliminary reports are too not handy in the DOA for researchers. Likewise, the Bhediyari excavation report was too never published. Likewise excavation in Betana has not been published yet. However, short articles have been published by archaeologists UddhavAcharya and Tarananda Mishra on Kichkbadh and Bhediyari findings but it is quite obvious that they just represent very little of the bulk of information.

Archaeological information in the eastern Nepal so far have been in the hands of archaeologists and DOA, and final reports are yet to be born. Short publications are too not handy.

### **6.18 Loopholes in Site Management Planning Process**

Planning is essential in all sects of jobs and sectors, only recently site management planning process has been globally understood as a complex process with chains of stages that need technical knowledge, community identification and cooperation, fund management, working with stakeholders, planning for sudden disasters and so on.

The history of scientific site management planning process has been written by Samardzic who writes that Henry Cleere in 2009 summarized the objectives presented at Ma'agan and in a short article provided a template for the preparation of an effective management plan for the world archaeological sites. The framework consists of following elements that should be integrated in an Archaeological Management Plan (AMP) (Cleere, H., 2009, as cited in Samardzic, 2015, pp. 71-72).

According to what Samardzic has derived from Cleere's article based on Ma'agan meeting in 2002, the Management planning process comprise of multiple tasks.

(a) Identification of key players on national regional or local level (b) Statement of significance of the site based on the assessed values and their explanation of historical, archaeological, artistic, natural aesthetic symbolical, authenticity, outstanding universal value, economical, tourism, educational potential and any other values. (c) Management Assessment (SWOT analysis) (d) Management Objectives (Aim, Vision and Policies) (Cleere, H., 2009, as cited in Samardzic, 2015, p. 71)

In the present context, where Nepal has been practising decentralization through provinces and local governing bodies of village municipalities and municipalities, it is obvious that for proper facilitation of budget and other monitoring instruments/systems, there should be some timely/periodical representation from the

local governing bodies in the local committees but sadly, most of the time the sites are just managed by handful of people that forms the local committee. It was also learnt that these local committees are only nominal stakeholders and tend to get active only during the festive seasons.

Most of the archaeological sites in eastern Terai are just ruins of unknown period and sites of local worships, just connected with legendary personalities, whose names do not appear anywhere in history, so these sites lack historical value and on surface they all sadly lack aesthetic values. Temples built on archaeological sites of Kichakbadh, Bhediyari, Dhanpalgadhi are just humble erections of temples with no vigil or unique carvings and impressive architectures, hence they also lack aesthetic, artistic and architectural values.

Symbolic and Aesthetic values are transient only during festivals. Tourism ambiances are being built in sites of Kichakbadh, Varahkshetra and Betana but they will not be able to attract international tourists for sure. The sites presentation on as simple as hoarding board and directional boards are regretful to write upon.

### **6.19 Absence of International Partners**

The archaeological sites of eastern Terai Nepal are unlike other heritage sites of the country like Lumbini, Bhaktapur, Durbar square, Kapilvastu, Mustang of which some have Outstanding Universal Value [OUV], that have been declared world heritage sites or some are tentative world heritage sites or popular pre-historic sites. The ruins of many sites are underneath and very small portions have been excavated. The history is not clear and the places until date have been more of indigenously religious and mythically important with their local oral folklores. Hence, there are no international partners, sponsorships or international stakeholders. Regretfully, almost all places lack active involvement of local youths clubs or volunteer groups.

Kichakbadh's local clubs Sayapatri Yuwa Club, Sirijanga sporting club Purnima Yuwa Pariwar have been reported (Kadel, B.S. 2066, p. 53) to have co-ordinated with local conservation committee in some events and he also mentions about initiation to raise fund with Netherland's Prince Claws Fund (p. 53) for conservation purposes but active participation of local youth clubs and fruitful partnership with international partners have not been concretely felt in the sites.

### **6.20 Absence of Site Museums in the whole region**

Around 50 years ago, one site of Bhediyari had been excavated. 18 years ago, excavations in Kichakbadh had been initiated. Around 5 years ago the pre-historic site of Betana had been excavated. There are many incidents of chance-findings reported from time to time in this region. Many findings are at the hands of locals or temple trusts. Some of them have been at good hands, some have been consecrated in temple premises and well-secured and displayed for instance, the findings of Dhanuskutidham area, Jhapa. Many artifacts are sold and lost. Their loss means a huge loss to one of the milestones of tracing Eastern Nepal's history. Hence, conceding to the fact, the Eastern Terai of Nepal should have at least one regional site museum if not at all sites, but regretfully there is none.

Apart from these challenges the eastern Terai also has positive strengths in the Archaeological and other heritage sites which are discussed below:

### **6.21 Growing interests of Local People for Touristic Implications**

There are indeed some good approaches that need to be discussed while analyzing the present condition of the archaeological sites of the eastern Terai of Nepal. One powerful aspect of the site management are the enthusiastic local committees in some sites although not everywhere. The local committee of Kichakbadh Jhapa, as this researchers talked to some members, and as seem and

observed have yielded growing interests in the archaeological and religious importance of the site and are keen to promote it as a destination image of Jhapa. Although, the parks and amenities do not really meet the conservation ethics in archaeological sites, their endeavor for heritage and cultural tourism implications are praiseworthy. Likewise, local committees have built gravelled roads, temples and are organizing/managing festivals in other sites like Kichkagadh, Varahkshetra, Satashidham, Biratpokhar and Bhediari. This is a positive sign for initiation of good practice taking ownership and responsibility of the sites.

### **6.22 Strengths of *ich* in the Archaeological Sites**

The intangible cultural assets like fairs festivals and worship patterns have linked the indigenous and migrant communities around archaeological sites for many centuries in the Eastern Terai of Nepal. The strengths of *ich* to these sites have actually preserved them, otherwise either many such sites would have been lost under vegetation or been completely vandalized and destroyed. Actually, the epic characters of the Mahabharat are taken to be god like and the worships patterns in sites of Kichakbadh, Kichkagadh, Bhediari, Satashidhaam, Chillagadh are powerful religious performances in the whole eastern region. The importance of Pauranic interpretation in the region of Varahkshetra has given birth to many intensive and multi-farious religions worships, fairs and festivals as far off as to India. These all amazing strengths and facades of the intangible cultural heritages have at one level heightened and glorified the archaeological sites of the Eastern Terai of Nepal.

### **6.23 Solutions to the Problems**

The problems and challenges mentioned above in the context of the eastern Terai cannot be ruled out in short span. They will take time but with effective implementations of the concentric jurisdictions of heritage management from the Central government to the local municipal levels the scenario will certainly go

better. Each of the twenty loopholes should be addressed. The main task to be set up is to identify and categorise stakeholders and empower the community for heritage safeguarding. The aggressive touristic implications set up by the local people to touristify their sites are hampering the authenticity and management of archaeological heritage sites. Their Master Plans need to be evaluated. This can only be addressed through proper government channels and initiatives. It is also wise to follow proper heritage safeguarding immersions or educative campaigns for the local conservation committees. Growing interests of the local people to promote their places and their captivating intangible cultural heritages need to be utilized. Other than these there are some globally accepted good practices of conservation and management of archaeological and other heritage sites that need to be followed as per local standards which are discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Seven

### **Models of Conservation and Management of Archaeological Heritage Sites in the Eastern Terai of Nepal**

Heritages with ruins, debris, features and remnant of the past are concrete evidences for interpreting, comparing or analyzing history of any region. The most important issue to contemplate on is that they are always vulnerable to natural and human agents. Conservation is always a heart of such archaeological heritage sites and this is eventually followed by well-planned management of the sites for benefits of communities or tourism implications. International charters and conventions define and explain the conservation and management modules and countries adopt them as per their need, time and place.

The meaning of conservation as earlier said has been time and again defined and explained by international charters and contested and interpreted by researchers in different times. It would again be relevant to state hereby about the General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS, meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka. In its tenth session from July 30 to August 7, 1993 it adopted a set of guidelines that at one point states “ the object of conservation is to prolong the life of cultural heritage and if possible, to clarify the artistic and historical messages therein without the loss of authenticity and meaning”. Bauer, Sinha and others write “conservation can be defined simply as any action taken to safeguard the material integrity of the cultural heritage in order to respect the significance in all aspects (cultural, artistic, historical, religious etc ) (2017, p. 99). *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013* defines it as “umbrella term to mean all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain what is important about it or its cultural significance. These



actions include repair, restoration, maintenance and in some instances, reconstruction”

Linde and Williams (2006, p. 111) appreciate the Burra Charter for giving importance to local community in managing archaeological sites but mention that they fail to address the ethical management of the archaeological sources. They also point to the linkage of suggested archaeological models to other international frameworks. They ask:

Are issues of poverty relief (for example the Agenda 21: United Nations 1992) and sustainable communities given sufficient attention? How do we balance the contemporary needs of the local community and wider society with the management and presentation of the archaeological resource? Most managements are future generations- as the core activity, but we need to accommodate the vital role the resource can play in meeting the needs of current generation. (p.111)

In today’s conservation procedures conservation is also linked intricately to site management especially when dealing with archaeological heritages.

Heritage sites can be studied on different perspectives and hereby archaeological sites of the Eastern Terai of Nepal were studied broadly on three levels of concerns. They are: 1) Public Archaeology 2) Ethical perspectives in archaeology 3) Challenges of Archaeo-tourism in Eastern Terai of Nepal

### **7.1 Public Archaeology**

Looting, site destruction and vandalism are common at sites where there are archaeological riches. People are allured by economic benefits they can derive through trading such objects. It is of our utmost duty to make people aware of the values of archaeological riches that can benefit the community and nation as a whole

other than to solely to individuals for personal gains. So public immersion in safeguarding such heritages are invaluable need in times today. Public archaeology is to be understood as a new concept which attempts to link stakeholders ranging from community people, visitors to conservation practitioners to archaeological sites. It attempts to promote public sentiments towards the sites that eventually promote site management and makes people ranging from children to adults about the importance of sites in their cities. In simple terms, public archaeology is to be understood as that which educates the public on archaeological significance.

Moshenska has written of public archaeology as that “which straddles the great divides within the archaeology between professionals, academicians, amateur, between the local and the global, between science and humanities” (2017, p. 3).

Fagan and Durrani in one context on managing the past have mentioned about public archaeology as “a response to archaeologists and others being concerned whether the public is benefitting in practical ways from the enormous sums spent on CRM when many people perceive it as luxury” (2016, P. 353). This clearly indicates how many people find the works and ventures meaningless just as a luxury while actually archaeologists and the concerned take the ventures seriously. Thus while a large sum of money is being spent, there are issues whether the communities benefit from the archaeological ventures in and around their community. This surely calls for an appendage work from the archeologists to bring something of a benefit to the communities living by.

Fagan and Durrani have exemplified about public outreach programs run by some cities. They write “how historic Alexandriaia, Virginiaia, Annapolis, Maryland and archaeologists have closely worked with historians and the local communities to

provide walking tours, lectures and other educational programs that share archaeological discoveries and management concern with the visitors” (p.353).

In eastern Terai, most archaeological sites are treated as religious sites. In this concern, the local committees along with the communities often hold week long Puranas on auspicious occasions. Quite a good number of people congregate on such events and often considerable fund is raised through such religious programs. The funds are used for the site improvements in many sites. While people assemble to such programs, people get to learn about the mythological importance of such sites and at one level, even religious scriptures such as puranas have unintentionally uplifted the concept of public knowledge of archaeological sites. However there are no vigilant archaeological societies that attempt to link people to the sites and outreach programs run by cities have not been concretely heard of.

The role of community in religious fairs like these is obviously important but their understanding of threats for the site needs further illumination, exposure and trainings. Today’s era in heritage management is always inside the impact zone of international conventions to most of which, Nepal is also a party-state. 2003 Convention for the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage mentions “each state party’s shall endeavor to ensure the widest possible participation of the communities, groups and where appropriate individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management”(Article 15). Risk- mapping, intertwining community's role to public archaeology, topographical mapping in and around sites, assessing touristic/visitors' ambiances are some heritage management issues to be addressed in both sites –Kichakbadh and Bhediaryi.

Both at local and state level the eastern parts of Nepal have been underprivileged. Small scale endeavors are on the way but not sufficient. Numerous

ponds, sites, mounds, pilgrimages, sites of local-performances carry interesting and popular myths of the *Mahabharata* age to that of the *Pauranic* period. Taking Kichakbadh as a vantage point to other four directions until Bhediari in the west and even beyond the Koshi river, a fast-developing civilization could have existed for long time. Some forms of war, epidemic, natural disaster etc. could have been the reason of the collapse of this historical region. When nomadic indigenous groups like Koch, Dhimal came here, they should have brought some hear-says and myths of this place.

A Satar man singing a song to the idols of Bhima and Kichaka in Kichakbadh and a Rajbanshi relating Bhediari to Pandavas' incognito years can be more sensitive and important anthropologically than archaeologically. Similarly, the fortifications, monuments and brick layouts in the sites reflect more history of the site through archaeological lens. Heretofore, the inter-related facets of myths and archaeology or anthropology and archaeology in construction of history, at least a regional history should be respected as legacy for future-researches but their risks that could distort history should be studied unbiased. While discussing on “ The Integrative Imperatives of Human Culture”, Malinowsky writes “ any discussion of symbolism without its sociological context is futile, like any assumption that culture could originate without the simultaneous appearance of artifacts, techniques, organization, and symbolism (1961, p. 136). The importance of individual habits and achievements for the benefit of community and tradition has been well dealt in the text. Therefore, it is high time that archeologists, researchers and stakeholders focused their interdisciplinary conscience to take vigilant notices on indigenous people how they see the archaeological monuments- to relate here people like Satar who sing songs on

the site of Kichakbadh to help heritage workers devise proper heritage plan in the area.

New researchers in the future and professional archaeologists should also explore places that have oral stories ( oral narratives) in the region to acquaint themselves with the local importance of the site because exploration and excavation is not just surveying and digging, it is also building rapport with the community, promoting ownership and transmitting responsibility for promoting citizen-archaeology. Integrating communities and stakeholders to responsibilities of archaeological places like Kichakbadh is a series of processes which when accomplished will rule out epistemological violence in and around the sites- for examples helicopter ride in the annual fair, treasure hunting, vandalizing or even remaining indifferent to disasters and risks.

## **7.2 Archaeology and Ethics**

It would quite be relevant to state hereby the same famous adage in Archaeology- "There is no right way of digging, but there are many wrong ways" (Wheeler, 1966, p.15). Wheeler stated that in terms of excavation procedures but it would be relevant to extend this adage to haphazard digging by treasure hunters too. Preservation, protection and conservation are other aspects related to ethics in archaeology.

In 1996, Society for American Archaeology (SAA) adopted the *Principles of Archaeological Ethics*- comprising of nine principles. They address the principles for Stewardship, accountability, commercialization, public education and outreach, intellectual property, public reporting and publication, records and preservation,

training and resources, safe educational and working environments<sup>1</sup>. Archaeological ethics have always been an issue of concern to conserve and manage the sites. Thus, through the study of Eastern Terai region, this researcher would suggest that ethical perspectives on archaeology certainly can be studied through many dimensions, from the point of view of the following: 1) Professional team of archaeologists 2) Community people 3) Visitors and 4) tourists 5) Government level and 6) researchers/ academicians.

Each of the above unit/person/professional should carry some stances of responsibility towards archaeological sites of the region they are associated with. The government policy makers or authorized units have more burdens towards numerous sites therefore they should model their role through decentralized systems that can run through in partial autonomy acting proactively in the specified region. The ethical dimensions of others can be explained as:

a. Archaeologist (RAS)- this can be simplified as :

Responsibility- towards archaeological remains, ruins and site as a whole-

Sensitivity--- to community, their intangible belief and fairs/traditions etc.

Accountability--- to the government, to the region's historic data, publishing report/articles etc, supporting new researchers.

b. Community people (RK)---- this can be simplified as :

Responsibility----over ownership of the site, objects, intangible rites,

Keenness- to development of the archaeological site.

c. Visitors (SAR)---Sensitivity---over local people's ownership, rites, beliefs and archaeological riches .

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from- <https://www.saa.org/career-practice/ethics-in-professional-archaeology>

Accountability--- to their own behaviour in and within the site.---

Responsibility--- to productive feedback for the improvement of the site.

d. Researcher (SAS)--- This can be simplified as :

Sensitivity--- to community people/stakeholder's concerns and intangible rites---

Accountability--- to research reports and articles that impact the sites----

Sincerity--- to dig out authentic issues and gaps of the sites.

There are some ethical interpretations over archaeological sites that need to be rethought over:

(a) Is it actually ethical to cordon/evacuate/ or rehabilitate a village to other place for the purpose of examining archaeological wealth in a certain site? Sometimes the villages might be living around the sites for generations and generations. However this situation has not yet arrived in the eastern Terai. (b) Is it ethical and justifiable to the state to leave the site ruined by villagers without taking necessary steps to cordon the archaeological wealth that lay buried there? The data could be helpful to build a history of the region. (c) If the state wishes to continue archaeological researches by displacing/rehabilitating indigenous people to another place who is responsible if their invaluable culture/traditions get lost in their new habitat? (d) Is it ethical to shift an important site of faith for example a temple for the purpose of excavating the earlier layers? What are the strategies before taking such actions?

There are certain examples in the Eastern Terai of Nepal that aroused to rethink on ethical concerns regarding archaeological ventures. In Kichakbadh the temple of Satidevi was shifted to another place near the same original place for continuing excavation ventures. This had displeased many local residents.

From community's perspectives, it is easily imaginable that if a farmer finds an ancient pot full of valuable coins, he/she will not hand them over to the DoA or the

government. There are many unrecorded hearsays that villagers rather collaborate to use the ancient riches they found for their own benefits. There are indications and evidences that they are even eager to dig deeper in the sites if the objects arouse their interest. Illicit trading of archaeological objects thus found have been reported in the sites of the study.

Professionals in archaeology should also see that when objects retrieved at one place are taken to other places and not handed over to the site management authorities from where they were retrieved, then this is also another form of violation of archaeological norms. *The Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Heritage 1990* has clearly stated that “any transfer of elements of the heritage to new locations represents a violation of the principle of preserving the heritage in its original context” (Article 6).

Sometimes the sites which are locally important can mean a little to the state or to the international visitors. The research schemes or investment made to certain regions can dangerously bias the other regions. Researchers and archaeologists have shown their dissatisfaction on how sites are defined or categorized in today's heritage management sectors. Categorization of sites also create demarcations for ethical thinking. For example Conningham, Cooper and Pollard (2006) have expressed their dissatisfaction towards the values put forward for the sites at international level through established conventions. They have emphasized on how each site can be valuable and unique for different people. They analysed the concepts of "uniqueness" and "value" to show that "sites will only ever be unique in certain respects" (p.261).

There have been ethical concerns over the Conservation process and marketing the sites that can also harm the sites. This has been depicted by Giraurdo and Porter (2010) about the Tsodillo hills that lie in the north west corner of the



Botswana designated as World Heritage Sites in 200, write about the consequences of the site when transformed to world heritage and how archaeologists too can be partly responsible for the plight of community. They write:

During the 1990's archaeologists conducting research there participated in the nominating process of Tsodilo to be designated as UNESCO World Heirtag , an honour to the site received in 2001. However, the archaeologists are also partly responsible for the displacement of the community members living at Tsodilo in preparation for its new conservation status. Tsodilo, a sacred site to local communities was fenced off and zoned for tourism and community members were relocated to the hills. (p.7)

Archaeology thus should also plan a benefitting heritage management in certain rare conditions when they need to relocate community and indigeneous people for conservation or any other tourism implications. It is acceptable that locals while digging their lands if find ancient remains pour curious eyes on the probable treasures of the past. People know that when there were no banks, people dug deep and buried their gold, diamonds or coins for the future or for their generations. How can people be encouraged to report the precious findings is a mere dilemma! There are ethical perspectives too because many times people find ancient ruins in their private land. In Nepal so far there is no such law that tells anything about such findings. While writing about field archaeology traditions of Britain Darvil (2015) mentions that “uniquely in England treasure hunting in private property is legal and a voluntary scheme called the Portable Antiquities Scheme has produced an immense harvest of finds (p.204).

When there is an issue of site destruction, concerned archaeologists and heritage management experts have time and again reiterated that any excavation

should be properly planned and be result-yielding. Site destruction not only relates to looting or vandalism but also to any kind of excavation that is undertaken without proper planning. This is sometimes related to the ethics of archaeology. As Petrie(2012) puts that conservation should be the first duty of an archaeologist (p. 35). He adds:

To uncover a monument and leave it to perish by exposure or by plundering, to destroy thus, what has lasted for thousands of years and might last for thousands of years to come is a crime. ... far better let things lie a few centuries longer under the ground. (pp. 35-36)

Petrie writes that excavations which are not properly planned or undertaken is a plundering. Excavation is a different thing. It is mostly related to ethics.

### **7.3 Challenges of Archaeo- Tourism in Eastern Terai of Nepal**

In context of Archaeo- tourism Girauo and Porter write -"tourists who are nostalgic for the past desire the thrill of exploration or just want to understand more about the different societies seek authentic encounters with the past through visits to archaeological sites, interpretive centers and museums" (2010, p. 7). Archaeo tourism is specific whereas heritage tourism is believed to be a broader term, implying with culture, nature, religion and so on. However archaeo tourism can benefit by heritage tourism and one or another form of heritage tourism can benefit by archaeo tourism.

Archeo -tourism has now been realized as one of the fundamental areas of cultural heritage tourism, however, this has just come along new in Nepal. Especially the western Terai Lumbini and Kapilavastu attracted lot of religious tourists to the land of Gautama Buddha promoting archeo tourism as well. The state through the DoA has invested a considerable amount her through international donors and international collaboration. Still the number of visitors in th country wanting to look

for ancient features and monuments are considerably low. The factors are many like lack of aesthetic building or ancient structures, museums, promotion and more importantly the lack of proper management of archaeological sites./ identification of such sites are far ignored away as tedious , time- consuming and research oriented jobs.

The eastern Terai of Nepal can be linked through Biratnagar airport and made accessible to archaeo-tourism and heritage tourism. The Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve provides a wonderful opportunity to attract the tourists for further explorations of the region. The Mahendra Highway provides a unique rural settings and blend of the Terai villages, rapidly developing towns ( providing a glimpse of urban development of the third world countries that could awe-struck the western foreigners), For this museums are of utmost necessary. Many hotels are not upto the standard where international tourists can be comfortably accommodated. Most of them do not meet the standards of the cities. Dozen of homestays in Ilam villages near Jhapa can provide opportunities for the hill culture as well. However there are a lot of preparations to go on.

Site management is in raw form. Most sites are only limited to religious fairs among the communities. Even when there are then of thousands of visitors in Kichakbadh area once a year during the *Mahghe Sangranti* festival, except for the Indians there are hardly any tourists of the other country. Bhadrapur Municipal Profile lists of tourist spots include many temples, churches, mosques and wetland scatters throughout its 10 wards. The spots are well known in their respective areas and among them Kichakbadh is listed as a historic public place with estimated 100000 visitors and this data is said to have been acquired through collective discussions and

with the information provided by local experts (B.S. 2076, p. 40). The visitors are mostly local people except some few from India during the annual fair.

Regarding archaeo-tourism Fagan and Durrani (2016) write how “once an adventure enjoyed by a few has become mass-market tourism” (p. 353). They give example of Angkor Thom and Angkor Watt of Cambodia. They mention that “one forecast projects that 4.3 million tourists will visit Angkor watt by 2020 and how the nearby Seam Reap has had a huge economic impact” (p. 353).

Fagan and Durrani have also pointed to the dangers of huge traffic of visitors. They have written how Stonehenge now can be visited only through special permit and the 15000 year old paintings of Lascaux are inaccessible to the visitors and they can only visit its accurate replica “ (2016, p. 353). They have raised questions-“What will the future hold? Will the world’s most spectacular archaeological sites be off limits to everyone except the professionals? What will the world be like if our descendants never have the chance to walk through Olympia’s temples or Tikal’s soaring pyramids?” (p.353). These are questions actually not only related to archaeological tourism but also to heritage ethics.

The deterioration factors induced by visitors have been categorized by Pedregal and Diekmann (2012) into three broad families- mechanical, physico-chemical, biological and he also addresses fourth factor as intentional deterioration (p.744). They advocate of reconciling archaeological sites with the public but with many preparations one important being customized visitor flow among other parameters like constant monitoring, evaluating load capacity, making preliminary studies, improving qualification of personnel and sensitizing and integrating visitors in the protecting process (pp.744-748).

In the present context of the eastern Terai, the visitor numbers in the sites is low except at festive occasions. We have almost no visitors who arrive at the sites to view archaeological features or ruins because the site's archaic history is still not revealed. Local visitors from in and around the neighbouring flock to the sites on religious occasions. Religious tourists from the borderlands of India also arrive at certain sites like Kichakbadh or Varahkshetra, but there is no system of recording such data. On other normal days the archaeological mounds are just visited for tethering cattle nearby or local commuting. In some sites priests visits the temple in the sites for worshipping rituals. However in the context of Western Terai that of Lumbini there are satisfying number of international viistors and there is a system for recording such data and recent researches on tourism prospects of the region. This is because the region has evidence of being the birth place of lord Buddha. In eastern Terai, the history is still unclear and the ancient ruins, features and artifacts have not been properly conserved at many sites. Few sites which heave been excavated have not yet been in full-fledged excavated and the sites still need better scientific management.

The sites archaeological value for the time being is only centered around professional archaeologists, sensitive researchers or historians. The best way to promote arcaheo-tourism in the eastern Terai is to establish site museums at different places. This will slowly cultivate intersts in the domestic visitors to visit places of whose objects they had seen in the museums. This will promote student tours or educational tours in the sites. The indigenous people should be given access to show case their distinct cultural attributes from which visitors' attraction to such sites will soar. This will in turn benefit the indigenous people. However, this may not be

applicable to all sites because there may not be considerable indigenous settlements around all sites. This should start with the sites where there are indigenous settlements.

All sites do not have artistic architecture and there is no any provision of displaying the retrieved objects. Most of the ancient objects especially precious and semi precious objects have been locally traded by people in the past. Right now there is no concrete attraction that we can provide to the visitors (foreigners and domestic). The chances of the sites for international tourism is slim for now conceding to the poor heritage management and promotion in the entire region.

However, if through further excavation the sites prove to be of the period generally accepted as that of the Mahabharata period (generally related to around 1000 BC) then international tourism that of archaeo-tourism will boom like anything in the region. Sites like Kichakbadh where more than half million people visit for attending annual fair, there is lack of good hotels and lodgings. Homestays have not been introduced yet as of 2020. Such a large number of visitors gather in the mound and build temporary tents here. We are not able to hold the tourists after the religious fair even for a single day.

Conservation and management of heritage sites should go simultaneously. Many sites need conservation approaches prior to management. Overall management of archeological sites needless to say is a tough job that involves series of plans, coordination with different stakeholders, monitoring, provoking researches, incorporating capacity building and constantly building rapport with the local people. It is generally understood that there is no universal "one model fits all" policy/model for managing archaeological sites because of following reasons:

(a) Nature of sites (b) Conditions on which they exist (c) Climatic conditions in the region (d) Popularity range of visitors and foreigners (e) State policy (f) Local initiatives (g) State's political, economical conditions

How a particular heritage or archaeological sites can be managed well depend upon the aforementioned parameters and selecting best practices that have been globally approved of or used. No single charter, convention or model can work equally for all sites. However it is high time that we followed scientific methods adopted and accepted globally and understand archaeological heritage management models followed by many countries.

#### **7.4 Global Practices and Ways of Managing Archaeological Sites: Relating in the Context of Eastern Terai of Nepal**

The ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Heritage (1990) in its introduction clearly writes:

The charter has to reflect very basic principles and guidelines with global validity. For this reason it cannot take into account the specific problems and possibilities of regions or countries. The charter should therefore be supplemented at regional and national levels by further principles and guidelines for these needs. (p. 1)

The individual country's own policy need and resources to safeguard historic monuments had been earlier clearly mentioned in the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter 1964) too- "It is essential that the principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis, with each country being responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions (p.1)". The SAA 1996 through its *Principles of Archaeological*

*Ethics* also strongly advocates on the role of archaeologists and responsible archaeological research.

While analyzing and rethinking appropriate measures and ways of managing archaeological sites in the Eastern Terai of Nepal, various site management projects, action plans and field archaeology in South Asia, South East Asia, Europe and other different parts of the globe were studied. Although the purpose of the research is only academic, careful attention has been made to include international practices to sort them out for relevancy suitable to the present conditions and status of the sites of Eastern Terai of Nepal. This was to sincerely suggest appropriate models and management idea for the benefit of the Department of Archaeology, community, region and as a whole to the nation. Studying global ways of site management, the value such devout practitioners and theorists have put into archaeology are really praiseworthy while at the same time gives us (Nepalese) ample of spaces to initiate best practices that are suitable to our standards and by our standards.

Conservation Principles framed by the Burra Charter 2013 mentions that “Conservation is an integral part of good management of places of cultural significance”( Article 2.3) and places of cultural significance should be safeguarded and not put at risk or left in a vulnerable state. Conservation Principles (Article 2.4,p.5).

In many contexts of the archaeological sites of the eastern Terai, modern construction works like railway track, road networks, unplanned building and monuments have posed great threats. While planning for the site management there is also a dire need for salvage archaeology as " the initial task of documenting archaeological sites before they are lost forever is the domain of salvage or rescue archaeology (Moloney, 1996, p. 118); response to excavate whatever can be



recovered before a site is destroyed (Sharer & Ashmore, 1993, p. 587; Renfrew & Bahn, 2003, p. 73) by construction works.

Salvage archaeology, however could be very new for the sites of eastern Terai because even state led excavations that are planned and scheduled have not been conducted in full-fledged manner or say sufficiently. Therefore, salvage or rescue archaeology still remain to be because there are dozens of mini- sized sites within a site or a single heritage complexes which are yet unknown to many public. It is also difficult in the context as to build proper liaison with contractors (of roads, dams, buildings) because knowledge or importance of archaeology is almost nil in the eastern Terai region.

It would be relevant to cite hereby by Vines (2005), who has somehow tried to depict on the recent trends on heritage management issue in the Asia Pacific region. At one context the author writes:

When a site is identified as significant, it is necessary for government authorities to develop strategies for the effective protection and management of heritage areas and buildings. These strategies should allow appropriate development consistent with heritage conservation objectives which are generally manifested in the form of legislation, policies and guideline procedure (p.16)

Building rapport with the communities is a complex job, however once the relationship is built the overall management of the site becomes easier. There are numerous examples on how educating, training and capacity building change communities' perspectives over their roles in their sites. An example of archaeologist Anabel Ford would be quite relevant to put on here. He was interested in cultural ecology while conducting a settlement survey in the Maya forest during 1972 and

fortunately discovered El Pilar, a huge Maya town center with temples and other complexes that covered more than 50 hectares. An interdisciplinary team of local villagers, government administrators and scientists established the El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya flora and fauna. Since 1993 they applied novel strategies for community participation to conserve the site. He writes:

Astride the contemporary border separating Belize from Guatemala, El Pilar has been the focus of a bold conservation design for an international friendship park on a troubled border ... The success of local outreach at El Pilar can be best seen in the growth of the community organization Amigos de El Pilar ( Friends of el Pilar). With groups based in both Belize and Guatemala, the Amigos de El Pilar worked together with the El Pilar program to build an inclusive relationship between the community and the reserve that is mutually beneficial. The development of this dynamic relationship lies at the heart of the El Pilar philosophy-resilient and with the potential to educate communities, reform local level resource management, and inform conservation designs for the Maya forest. (Ford Anabel as cited in Haviland, Prins & others, 2007,p 228).

Several partners, local and international have worked together in guidelines set in several sites around the world, for scientific conservation of the heritages.

International partners like APSARA<sup>2</sup>, FOKCI<sup>3</sup>, Global Heritage Fund, Heritage Watch International have been cited by Michele (2014) as having demonstrated significant levels of commitment in the Angkor regions of Cambodia (pp.24-25). It is also seen that most international partners are centered around WHS, popular sites or unique heritage sites with heavy numbers of tourists. Therefore for remote sites with

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<sup>2</sup> Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Seam Reap.

<sup>3</sup> Friends of Khemr Culture

only ruins, and no clear history and no any form of visible aesthetic arts like in the archaeological sites of Eastern Terai, local level initiation is a must, at least in its early phase. Collaboration with International partners are far-fetched whims at the moment so while modeling on conservation and management of such sites emphasis should be laid upon local communities.

Much of international initiatives to protect, conserve and manage heritages around the globe seems to have taken acceleration only after 1950s. ICOMOS Venice Charter 1964<sup>4</sup> has clear provisions on excavation methodology and cautions. It states through Article 15 "every means must be taken to facilitate the understanding of the monument and to reveal it without ever distorting its meaning". It emphasizes on scientific standards and recommendation defining international principles adopted by UNESCO in 1956 through the same article. Article 16 emphasizes on publication and record keeping to be made available to the research workers. The same article mentions "it is recommended that that the report should be published"(ICOMOS Venice Charter 1964).

There have been many seminars, conferences, meetings and documents signed at global level on managing of heritage sites to universally accepted norms and regulations. After the successful formation of the UN countries have stated to adhere to international law and taken initiatives to be party state to many international conventions. Samardzic in her thesis work has outlined two tables (p.32-34) listing most important documents "which constructed heritage policies and used terminology of European countries with emphasis on archaeology and built heritages". To list the names from this table, they are:

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<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from [www.icomos.org](http://www.icomos.org)

(a) Athens Charter 1933 (b) European Cultural Convention (Council of Europe-1954)  
 (c) RIPPAAE<sup>5</sup> (UNESCO-1956) (d) Venice Charter (ICOMOS-1964) (e) ECPAAE<sup>6</sup>  
 (Council of Europe-1969) (f) World Heritage Convention (UNESCO-1972) (g)  
 CPMAH<sup>7</sup> (ICOMOS-1990) (h) Valleta<sup>8</sup> Convention (Council of Europe-1992) (i)  
 NARA Document of Authenticity (ICOMOS-1994) (j) Burra Charter<sup>9</sup> (ICOMOS-  
 1999) (k) Intangible Heritage Convention (UNESCO-2003) (l) Faro  
 Convention<sup>10</sup>(Council of Europe-2005)

The tables collected and provided by Samardzic briefly inform about Athens Charter, RIPPAAE, Venice Charter, ESPAAE, CPMAH and Valleta Convention as the documents that gave strategies for managing archaeological sites through different measures, for adequate protection. One Valleta Convention has been cited by Samardzic as having "integrated approach to conservation" as "archeological heritage should be placed in local or regional, planning policies and development schemes" Samardzic, 33-34)

Writing succinctly on the recent trends on heritage management issue in the Asia – Pacific region at one point, Vines reiterates-

When a site is identified as significant, it is necessary for government authorities to develop strategies for the effective protection and management of heritage areas and buildings. These strategies should allow appropriate development consistent with heritage conservation objectives which are generally manifested in the form of legislation, policies and guideline procedures (2005, p.16)

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<sup>5</sup> Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations

<sup>6</sup> European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage

<sup>7</sup> Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage

<sup>8</sup> European Convention on the protection of the Archaeological Heritage

<sup>9</sup> Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance

<sup>10</sup> Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society

This is high time that the government along with the help of stakeholders, academicians and local level government develop strategies to gradually incorporate good practices of managing religious and archaeological sites in the region.

Michele Michele, an archaeologist who prepared action plan for Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia, 2014 has even stated of strict building regulation that even the height of the new construction is regulated (2014, p. 49) and no construction allowed in the core zone as the sites have been categorized in 3 zones (p.21). This suggests how archaeological sites are being managed at global level. Although the sites which are so sensitively managed surely does have value especially that of touristic one, this type of approach can be gradually introduced in heritage and archaeological sites of Nepal.

At such sites even plan of managing plastic wastes have been exemplary. In this regard Michele mentions about the Bottle House project in Banteay Chammar as “a fundamental innovation in search of a simple and feasible solution for disposing plastic ... the idea emerged in Guatemala in 2003 has now experienced great success and is spreading worldwide” (2014, p. 78). Simple houses are constructed of bottles that are environment friendly cost effective. He also puts the project “as developing economic activities for the most disadvantaged while cleaning tourism sites“(p. 77). This is indeed an innovation that can be applied not only in archaeological but in all heritage sites. In their article "Archaeological Site management: Theory, Strategies and Implementation for the Archaeological Landscapes of Jericho" Linde and Williams (2006) write about how popular archaeological models fail to address ethical management of archaeological resources. In particular reference to the Burra Charter they write as:

Among several possible types of management, the model that emerged through the Australian Burra Charter has acquired wide currency, mainly for its approach to the issue of local community involvement and ethical and ideological concepts of valuing the resource. But the intellectual framework for the ethical management of archaeological resources is less clear. (Linde & Williams, 2006, p.111)

Linde and Williams also point to the linkage of suggested archaeological models to other international frameworks. They ask:

Are issues of poverty relief (for example the Agenda 21: United nations 1992) and sustainable communities given sufficient attention? How do we balance the contemporary needs of the local community and wider society with the management and presentation of the archaeological resource? Most managements models still advocate either explicitly or implicitly the primacy of conservation- sustaining the resource for future generations- as the core activity, but we need to accommodate the vital role the resource can play in meeting the needs of current generation. (2006, p.111)

This is one of the important suggestion to incorporate into any archaeological model and applies to the eastern Nepal's archaeological sites too because the living present communities can only be interested in conservation of the sites for the the future if they are satisfied by the outcomes of the conservation in the present. It would be relevant to cite from Samardzic who cites from Willems that "the management of archeological heritage replaced the traditional 'care and protection of monuments 'and that management must be undertaken by considering archaeological heritage within its natural and manmade landscape, political developments, the land use process" (Williamsms, 1998, as cited in Samrdzic,p.24,). This provides a clear picture that

while managing the site the monuments cannot be separated from the historic contexts and communities around them, or without taking knowledge of how they have been associated to the land of the sites.

### **7.5 Heritage Management in Nepal's Present Context :Provisions and Practices**

The present *Constitution of Nepal*<sup>11</sup> drafted by Constituent Assembly in 2015 has stated boldly on culture, heritage and managing tangible and intangible through multiple provisions. Part III, Article 32 (2) under the right to culture mentions "Every person and community shall have the right to participate in the cultural life of their communities" (p.23). The continuing sub article states "Every Nepalese Community residing in Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civilization and heritage" ( p. 23).

The article has clearly used the term "community" laying emphasis on the roles and participation of their cultural life. Similarly the constitution in Part IV in its "Directive Principles, Policies and Obligations of the State" through article 50 (2) has mentioned about the state's social and cultural objective as to developing cultural values among others founded on national pride (p.30). Article 51 mentions about the Policies of the State. Article 51 (6) states " To protect and develop languages, scripts, culture, literature, arts, motion pictures and heritages of various castes, tribes and communities" (p 33).

The Department of Archaeology (DoA), established in 1953 under the Government of Nepal, among its eleven missions states" preservation and protection of monuments and archaeological sites" in its first declaration"<sup>12</sup>.

In 1956 Nepal brought out Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 2013 that was published in Nepal Gazette on 12 Nov, 1956 (B.S. 2013, Kartik 27) that has total

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from [www.mohp.gov.np/downloads/co](http://www.mohp.gov.np/downloads/co)

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from [www.doa.gov.np](http://www.doa.gov.np)

of 21 articles. The Act seems full- fledged from defining ancient monuments, archaeological object (Article 2 (a) and 2 (b), classifying monuments (Article 3 A) to explaining of the provisions for archaeological excavation (Article 16) and most importantly gives on provisions of preserving of Archaeological object (Article 17 A). However, the Act seems to clearly undervalue the research works and encourage community and academicians into the identification, revelation and documentation of sites as there are no significant provisions to any. International conventions and charters clearly focus on such provisions as in the aforementioned section it has already been dealt that ICOMOS Venice Charter 1964 clearly through article 16 mentions of clear recording of every stage of the excavation work and publishing to be made available to research workers.

On the other hand, it cannot also be underestimated that there are positive signs of management and conservation in the last decade in Nepal. Collaboration with foreign experts, UNESCO and active participation of DOA, Nepal in some sites have set a milestones in the archaeological understanding in heritage sectors however due to national priority, budget availability and other factors such approaches are limited to the sites of Lumbini, Kathmandu and Kapilvastu mainly apart from some high altitude excavation in Mustang.

In Lumbini site management and conservation approaches have reached to that stage where even Cultural and Environmental monitoring (collecting visitors' profile, surveying water-level in the sitemeasuring external as well as temple temperature, humidity fluctuations in the Mayadevi Temple, data of time spent by visitors in the sacred site, perceptions of importance of foci for monuments) have been surveyed (Coningham, Schmidt & Strickland, 2011, pp. 1-8)



These researchers had carried out intensive survey for 8 months, using scientific technology like Cambridge KE model 3000 tests for recording rainfall and wind speed on daily basis (2011,p.1) and they have stated their objectives as "to assist the national authorities in collecting baseline visitor movement and practice data, environmental conditions and to assist with the planning, development , management and conservation of the sacred garden" ( Conningham, Schmidt & Strickland, 2011, p.1)

This quite gives a clear overview of how researches have to be conducted to appropriately suggest for management and conservation of archaeological sites. While we are talking about best practices, this type of methodology can be appropriated as model for management of our archaeological sites. However, this is also true that such researches are expensive, time oriented and they need high level expertise and teamwork which a state like Nepal at present cannot afford to conduct in all sites except for those which have national priority. It is also but sadly ture that not ll sites can call for UNESCO's aid or any type of international support. On the positiv e side, it is also true that small scale researches can be conducted in many sites including that of Eastern Terai of Nepal.

It is also true that the government, its legislation, policies and guidelines alone can do little or nothing if the local people and communities do not want to take ownership of the sites do not find the policies congruent to their needs of profit. Sometimes it is worse when the communities do not have any far-fetched ideal on the value and worth of a site, they re living by. Sometimes locals just tend to see on the economic profitability or they give more priority on adding unnecessary monuments or simply go on beautifying the sites that in the long run could submerge the best

practices that could have had better effect on the site. In Nepal such problems have been recurring in World Heritage sites too.

Writing on heritage management and disaster risk mitigation in Swayambhunath, Amatya (2015), puts how government came under the pressure of Buddhist communities and politicians and gave permission to establish a non-government organization called Syambhu Management and Conservation committee instead of establishing the Swaymbhunath Conservation Authority recommended through the Master Plan drafted by experts (p.29). Amatya adds on how their works had been unsatisfactory most of which were centered around beautifying sites for touristic attractions (p.31).

Kunwar (2005) whose paper presentation during international training in Japan was published by ACCU Nara titled “Archaeological activities research and recording problems in Nepal” includes a list of main problems on the same. Among 12 main problems that he cites it becomes quite relevant to cite three of them hereby- they are:

(a) Lack of knowledge of archaeology at the policy-making level (b) Indifference of the public towards the discipline (c) Lack of laboratories for analyzing archaeological remains.

To date, According UNESCO database of national Cultural Heritage Laws<sup>13</sup>, Nepal is a party state (Acceptance and ratified) to the following international conventions.

(a) Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Paris, 16 NOV, 1972. (Acceptance 20 June, 1978). (b) Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural property. Paris, 14 Nov, 1970- ratification 23 June, 1976. (c) Convention for

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<sup>13</sup> Retrieved from Whc.unesco.org, database UNESCO/clt/natlaws.

the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Paris, 17 Oct, 2003. Ratification 15 June, 2010 (d) Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas', and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok. (ratification 2 Nov, 1989)

The database also mentions about 15 sites on tentative list for World Heirtge Sites , that does not at all include any site from the Eastern Terai of Nepal.Our neighbor India also has shared jurisdiction of heritage sites as India's constitution mentions about the union and states having concurrent jurisdiction over heritage sites ( Niti Ayog, 2006, p. 5). In the federated states of Nepal we too have local and central level of responsibility over heritage sites.So the ownership and management over heritage sites though can be suggested to model on from local and regional level, the jurisdiction should be on concurrent systems. This will justify incase of grave debates, funding or even occasions of international collaboration.

To set or suggest a functioning model on archaeological sites is itself a tough job because the model needs to go congruent with all the international, national and regional provisions, policies and demand of the sites. While at the same time bringing into the models active participation of the communities is another challenge. Throughout this research it has been at times cleared out that the archaeological sites in Eastern Terai of Nepal suffer evident problems.

The region's potential sites have not been scientifically explored through the state- level. There is no clear ancient history of this region that is believed in unison or evidentially proven. Most of the sites are protected by local themselves. The significant tool (mechanism) that protected most of the sites are religiously linked oral naratives and myths. There is a huge probability that there are considerable number of unidentified and unknown mounds, ruins and collapses. Some of them

have been for the first time brought into academic and public notice by this researcher.

These sites are known just as ancient sites to some locals who reside near them. Tourism is almost null in all the archaeological sites leaving aside some sites like Kichakbadh that are annually visited by domestic tourists and handful of religious visitors from India. Archaeo-tourism is evidentially null. Some sites have developed themselves for domestic tourism through fun parks which are themselves threats to archaeological wealth therein.

Natural disasters and human imposed dangers to the sites have been discussed in the previous chapters. An example of a storm in Varahkshetra (Fig. 7.4) along with landslides, floods, rain are several factors. Human induced risks like picknicking, building children-parks (Fig. 7.1 and 7.2) or entertainment parks, misutilising conserved areas like helicopter riding in conserved areas (Fig. 7.3) or risking ancient ponds to dry up (Fig. 7.6) can lead to loss of exact land area covered by the ponds. This is one of major issues to rethink as what to do when a pond dries up or is drying up. This natural phenomenon cannot be looked after always but it is a matter of grave seriousness when a researcher / visitor sees such ancient ponds in the state of drying up and has no idea what the authorities may be doing or to think whether they know about this. On the other hand it is time we rethought about using ancient ponds for fish farming or thinking about equitable benefits raised from such acts. Heritage management in the archaeological sites are evidentially in the poor state and can be said as “neglected” to some extent.

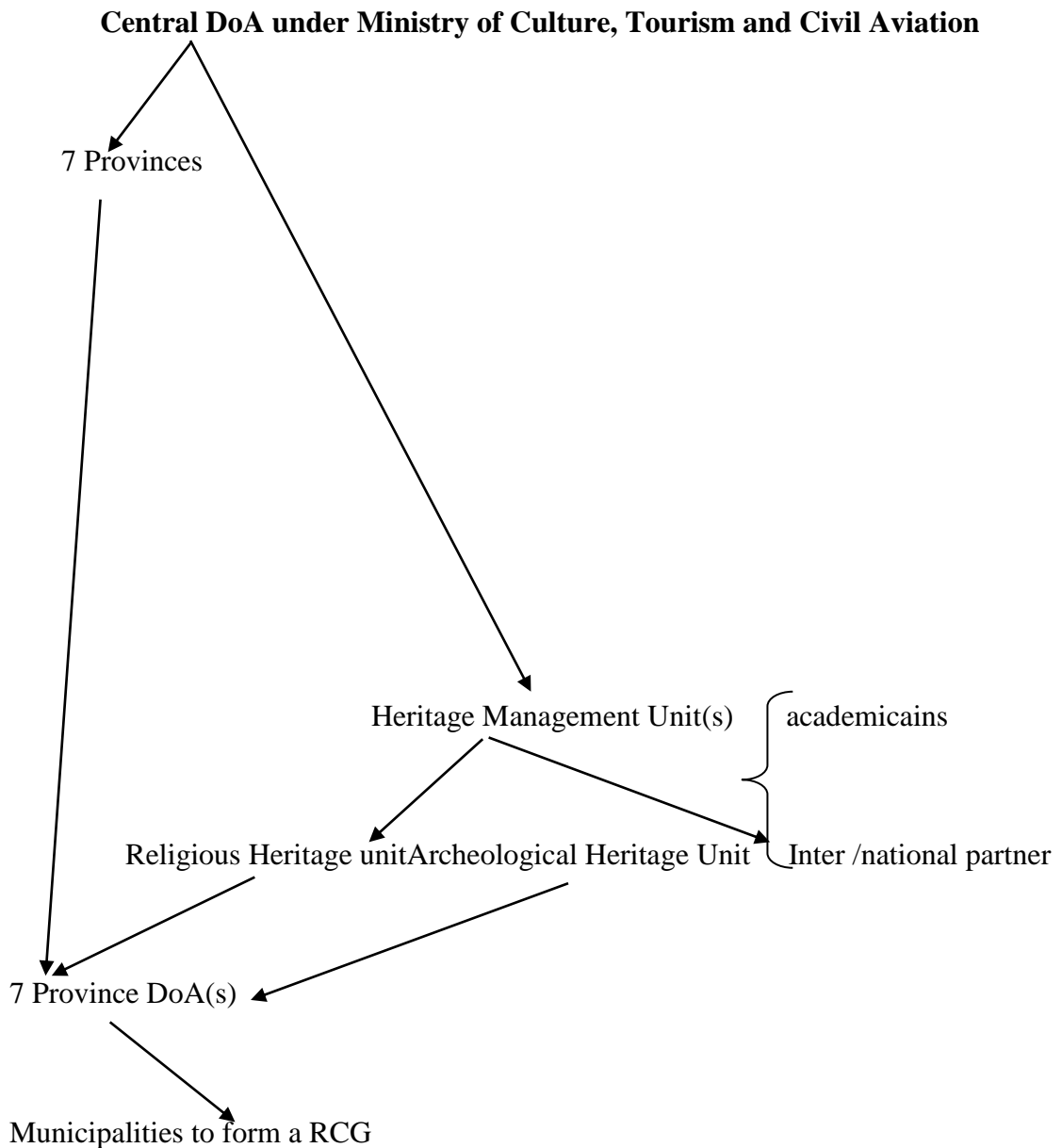
## **7.6 Failing Centralized Model of the DoA: Resolution and Way Forward**

The DoA with its present skilled resources and budget seems crippled to manage sites all over the country. Through multiple visits, observations and study of

the sites, this researcher has sensed that archaeological heritage management should now take onto a simple norm of decentralized working units through out the country. The measures that can be taken within short period of time and those that take time can be grouped as long term plans. There are also steps for effective heritage management:

- (a) Select people from all the core communities nearby archaeological or other heritage sites and team them up (Short term plan).
- (b) Learn through them their belief and rituals over the sites and train them through CapacityBuilding Programs (Short term plan).
- (c) Plan for the refreshing course and training programs from time to time. (Long term plan)
- (d) Give them autonomy to train the interested students and participants from the local periphery. (Short term plan)
- (e) Include selected people /trainers in the state led conservation projects and monitor their endeavors timely. (Long term plan)
- (f) Develop heritage units (religious, archaeological) within the framework of the DoA. (Long term plan)
- (g) Look for national/ internal partners. (Long term plan)
- (h) Tie up the DoA with researchers and academicians. (Short and Long term Plan)
- (i) Take the DoA to province and municipality level through working units (Long Term Plan).

Thus, the Decentralized and Community Responsible Model is hereby suggested to go through the system as depicted in the chart:



(RCG) Responsible Community Group consisting of academicians, researchers, community locals to work with Site local committee

Fig. 7.6- Chart of Decentralized and Responsible Community Model for Managing Archaeological Heritage Sites

## 7.5 Conclusion

The Centrally active present structure of DoA should decentralize into Province and Municipality Working group. Although conversation between this researcher and the leading senior archaeologist and South Asia expert R. Connigham<sup>14</sup> yielded fact that Pakistan had a devastating result of decentralized systems in archaeological management, yet this researcher puts forth that a single DoA at central level has not been able to address the AHM issues in Nepal. There is a need of simple, workable and effective units across Nepal to address many concerns and issues. This research suggests a simple "Decentralized and Community Responsible Model for Managing Archaeological Sites". A Pilot study can be done for this and the feasibility of the decentralized DoA.

It is said and felt that the already existing local bodies have not been able to utilize budgets properly, in case of the decentralised systems there is need of proper and stringent evaluation and monitoring body or bodies. The whole system should be a closed group to work in unison and collaboration in simple way as not to be obstructed by complex chains of commands and long tiresome systems of decisions making. Academicians and Researchers in the sites should be accommodated as far as possible and if opportunity avails should collaborate with international conservationists and archaeologists as well. Responsible trained group of the community should be formed in terms and collaboration with the Province DoA. And also through province DoA a working group of Municipality DoA can be formed with few temporary members on need basis that can be collapsed after the project is accomplished. Such groups may be formed at times of risks or in similar situations. The whole system should also work in collaboration with academicians and

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<sup>14</sup> Conversation with Prof. Dr. Robin Connigham in Feb, 2023 at Tilaurakot

researchers. The trained responsible group of community should work with the local conservation committee elected or formed in the respective sites that will be responsible for teaming up with the planning and conservation unit of the Province DoA. This trained responsible group can also work on locally to raise funds for small scale conservation in and around the sites. Heritage survey Units can be formed that should be working on state and province levels, if need be with the municipality too. It may function like a monitoring and evaluating body giving constructive feedbacks and submitting reports to DoA. Responsible Trained Group of community can be formed from among stakeholders accommodating interested people from the following spheres as far as possible: (a) Academicians (b) Small business tea sellers/holders (c) High school graduate of nearest villages (d) Politically active and influential people (e) Religious (f) Representative of farmers

Hence similar system of working units can be devised.

While we are thinking and rethinking on models of managing archaeological sites, it would be quite unfair to undervalue what our nearest neighbor India has been adopting by now. The working group report of Niti Ayog mentions about ASI (Archaeological Survey of India), formed in 1861 as “perhaps one of the oldest organizations in the world with the mandate to explore and preserve monuments” (p.137). It also mentions about various acts prevalent in India such as Ancient monuments and Archaeological remains Act 1958, Antiquities and Art Treasures Act 1972. The report also mentions “ASI is the nodal agency to process all world heritage matters (p.137). It would also be relevant to cite how Niti Ayog proposes for the new nomenclature of ASI as:

Considering the

extended framework and mandate of ASI, it is feasible that the nomenclature should reflect more than Archeological Survey of India, in its name (p.15). it



mentions about many names but says that " the most preferred one may be considered as ASHMI ( Archaeological Survey and Heritage Management of India with the acronym ASHMI in Hindi indicating rock-born, hard and strong, adjective suitably applicable for India's everlasting eternal heritage primarily carved in stone. It also extends to the Hindi term "ashmibhut" meaning fossilized. (p.15)

In Nepal's context too, there is no separate heritage managing unit or body; however there are private groups, students, group of enthusiast amateurs, local clubs and volunteer groups working with meagre budget and less potent most of them which dissolve after certain time. The DoA at times seems age- old decrepit and to mention here politely needs reformation and aggressive training and periodic recruitments. For suitable managing of the heritage sites while India has begun as far as thinking or remodeling the name of ASI, we also need to rethink on our loopholes, remodel our DoA or side by side give birth to heritage managing units or centers. Working group Report of Niti Ayog advocates use of new technology like photogrammetry and 3D laser scanning for documentation, surveys, excavations and conservation works along with collaboration with foreign universities (p.10). It also mentions about national level awards for ASI circles, state governments and other heritage custodians (p.11). This is indeed a good practice in such a huge country that initiates undeclared competition among states and motivates the heritage practitioners and conservationists. The current endeavors through the state and local level are really insufficient in the region. The main reason is the deficiency of Archaeological heritage Management Units in the country.

New approaches of conservation are underway in Nepal like the cultural and environmental monitoring and even collecting visitors's profile, surveying water level and humidity fluctuations or recording rainfall and wind speed by using Cambridge

KE model 3000 tests have been carried out in the WHS of Lumbini (Connigham, Schmidt & Strickland, 2011, pp.1-8). This is a hopeful outset but conceding to the facts of such researches' expenditure, expertise and their availability, these types of scientific researches are far from near to being carried out in other less famous sites other than in WHS is a serious concern. Regarding pre-historic explorations and researches, the present scenario is not so alluring or affirmative. The most important factor as seems, is the shortage of technical academic environments for aspiring learners in the country. It is also wise to link the conservation and management with sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism as such can utilize local skills, indigenous skills, local goods, local hotels with local cuisines and focus on equitable benefit to the community. These could be a separate topic of research, however, it is important to note that the sites of study on this research can only tower up with the domestic and internal tourism at present context.

## Chapter Eight

### Summary and Conclusion

#### 8.1 Summary

Eastern Terai's archaeological sites which have been discussed here lack mega ruins in intact form which for the time being could be sufficiently used for tourism implications. Nor do they have clear historic backgrounds and artistic lithic mega ruins like that of Angkor Watt region of Cambodia or Red Fort of India. They also do not have ruins so much internationally revered like that of Kapilavastu of Western Terai Nepal. The truth is that most of the archaeological ruins survived the aggressive housing schemes and agricultural farming because of the local community's religious affiliations to the characters of the Mahabharata. It has also been discussed that in some sites communities too were the agents of destruction like looting and illicit trafficking of archaeological goods.

The archaeological heritage management of India and Cambodia have been primarily dealt in the research. European charters, American *Principle of Archaeology Ethics* and many other documents have been studied for this purpose. This research suggest an immediate response to our sites of the eastern Terai. The current global voice and trend advocates of equitable benefits of heritages in the community level. Although this is a good proposition, at present, seems only theoretical in case of the Eastern Terai of Nepal. This is because of so many prevailing factors like social hierarchy, gender roles, political influence, interest level, proximity to the site, or differing religious roles.

The chapter on suggesting good practices for archaeological management has highlighted on the decentralized community responsible archaeological site management with concurrent jurisdictions of the central, provincial and local

governments. The workings of Master Plans of many religious heritage sites too (which are locally linked to the major archaeological sites) need to be monitored through effective mechanism.

There are many loopholes in local archaeological management procedures and understandings which at all do not meet the minimum level of aesthetic display of the heritages. There are many unknown and virgin sites, some of them have been for the first time brought so publicly into the academia by this researcher. Some sites may be still lying unidentified somewhere scattered in the *Charkoshe Jhaadi*. The DoA needs to conduct scientific researches into many known places and try to examine them in relation to the major archaeological ruins nearby. This will definitely open up new courses for virgin sites which will be revealed in future too. This all will take time, resources and lot of endeavors and also a big budget. The major suggestions through the research are derived through rigorous research.

## **8.2 Findings**

The first objective was to analyze the history of the development of civilization of the region through analysis of different types of secondary resources and interpretation of archaeological finds. The research brought forth and reiterated the pre-historic importance of the region by uncovering recent state-led excavation at the site of Betana, Morang. It was found that the wetlands of the regions should not be undermined. The wetlands of Betana clarified the researcher through a local informant some very interesting pre-historic evidences of stone artifacts. To mention few are stone/ lithic arrow heads, various neo-lithic implements, stone blades, iron weapons all these all have been documented by the researcher through pictures. The photos of the findings and their analysis further supported the previous findings of occasional stone axes in the region of whose record previous researchers/ historians

had made. The research strongly opens up the eastern Terai in the pre- civilization era and makes a wise analysis that multifold of civilizations flourished here and died away but their ruins, ponds have been discovered by the first settlers here, some of whom have been interviewed by this researcher.

The second objective was chiefly related to explain the conditions of archaeological heritage sites through field observation of the sites spatially scattered around the research area in three districts- Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari. Exploration of seventeen heritage sites in the research zone revealed pitiful and pathetic conditions of many sites. Archaeologically illiterate communities, barely self-sufficed working local committees and state's ignorance towards the eastern region were seen as setbacks. Natural risks of flood, storm, landslides, deterioration are obvious but mismanagement of sites were seen as concerns. The history of archaeological expedition just began about 50 years ago in the region. For decades the sites were never visited, researched, explored and excavated. Real excavation series just began in Kichakbadh 20 years ago. In the region of this study between the Koshi and the Mechi rivers, three sites have been excavated at the government level. The sites are Bhediari (Morang), Kichakbadh (Jhapa) and Betana (Morang). Sites were visited, explored and community people were interviewed to gain archaeological conservation status in the region. Sites are prone to pick nicking, merry making, the so said ponds are used for fisheries, and children parks have been made in conserved areas etc. The findings reveal immediate response and missions related to rescue archaeology in the sites.

The third objective was to analyze the models of archaeological heritage conservation and management of the Eastern Terai of Nepal in the context of the global good practices of managing archaeological sites. Heritage management

examples, policies and recent trends were studied across many countries like India, Cambodia, Guatemala- Belize border, UK and others. International charters and conventions helped to understand many conservation and management approaches and recent trends at the global level. Eventually this research has proposed a decentralized Department of Archaeology, separate Heritage Management Units for religious and archeological sites and a full- fledged Province Departments of Archaeology across the country. The working mode should be a strong concentric form through Central, Province to the Municipality level at the end core of which lies a TRC (Trained Responsible Community) for conserving and managing sites. It was found that Community integration has to be prioritized and areas within a site should be categorized according to risk levels, risk zones and space zones. All these apply to the archeological heritage sites of the eastern Terai.

This researcher was informed in the Viratpokhar main pond about the chain-marks around a huge tree and when observed bore such marks. In one village called Jogichaun (ward-04), a local named Indra Kumar Shrestha also informed this researcher about a space where elephants were tethered. This was near an archaic plate- shaped pond near his house. He informed that there is some sort of private ritual in his family to worship in the space. This place is near to a village called Smayagadh. Shrestha also informed this researcher that he had discovered a lion-like clay toy. Sadly, this has been lost. Locals in the Dhanuskuti region have found decorative stone plates, stone artifacts and stone sandals that have been discussed earlier. Precious and semi- precious stones and findings of Bhediaryi have been suggesting of a rich cultural inhabitations in the region. Pre-historic occupations or at least pre-historic activities in the Betana region suggests of pre- historic occupation

in the region. This at least suggests that wetlands and nearby area to them should not be underestimated in historic or archaeological researches or ventures.

Sites that are explored may need to be excavated if need be. When explorations cannot alone stand to reveal a history, excavations may be necessary. Pandey and Regmi have very wisely written about the need of excavations in Nepal. They write:

Actually exploration is never complete in itself. It introduces sites that are worth excavating. The results of explorations are examined by the ruins exposed through excavations. It is a different story in Nepal that there haven't been excavation tasks according to the indications laid by explorations. (B.S. 2062, p. 83)

To the region of this research, only three sites- region have been excavated until now. They are on Bhediyari, Kichakbadh and Betana. It is not recommended that we excavate everywhere, but in case of eastern Terai archaeological investments are almost pitiful. The excavations are not complete yet and the reports are not yet published. Exploration and archaeological studies in the fields are only half done work if excavations are not carried out where deemed necessary.

Field observation, multifold surveys, questionnaires, interviews and field study in the eastern Terai within the vast stretch of land in three districts of Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari give a very pessimistic picture of the conditions of the archaeological sites here.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

This research has identified very less known sites like Kichkagadhi of Morang and brought forth virgin and unknown site of Dhanushapokahari of Jhapa. As far as the knowledge of this researcher is concerned, these are new and virgin sites,

very unknown in the academia. Moreover, one Kichakagadhi of Morang has been just cited by previous writers (in Shakya, B.S 2054, p. 43 & Editorial board of *Morang Ek Parichaya*, p. 24) as potential site. Only the names have been given among other lists of archaeological potential sites in Morang. These sites have been brought to the academia of archaeological mainstream for the first time through this research. Very less known archaeologically potential sites of Kamal Village municipality of Jhapa have been observed, analyzed and documented in the research. This research also analyzed the historical development of civilization, prehistoric and historic condition of the Eastern Terai of Nepal.

New findings of valuable artifacts have provoked an urgency of genuine researches through the state level. It was found that multiple cultural occupancies or unknown civilizations flourished in the region, died away at different places at different times before the early settlers like the Koch, Rajbanshis, Dhimals and Satars including the first settlers after the Resettlement Campaign (during the late BS 2020s) found the archaeological remains of today, some of which still remain in the hands of local people's vernacular interpretation and management. The chapter on suggesting good practices for archaeological management has strongly brought forth the reformation of the Department of Archaeology, Nepal. It has suggested the decentralized and responsible community management for archaeological site and also laid emphasis on strengthening concurrent jurisdictions of the central, provincial and local governments.

The historicity of the region has been analyzed by studying ancient history, medieval history and modern history of the region along with analysis of archaeological finds and sites. The historicity of the region was previously dated as contemporaneous to the Sunga and Kushan reign of India suggesting back to 2000



years by past researchers and archaeologists. This is only a comparative dating and scientific dating is another dire need for the region. The lithic implements found by a local in Betana and shown to the researcher add to the evidences of pre-civilization era in the eastern Terai. There were very few pre-historic evidences below. The state had led excavation at the Betana site during 2015 but the reports have not been published yet. In such phase, the findings of the local person that have been brought for the first time to the academia through this research is very important for Nepal.

This research has reiterated this previously agreed upon historic timelines but has brought forth further thought-provoking interpretations, findings and has significantly signaled the distant occupation of this region. The evidences of multiple civilizations that flourished here intermittently and vanished at past timelines have been documented through archaic findings in the region all collected and brought through the help of local natives. The research brought forth and reiterated the pre-historic importance of the region by uncovering recent state-led excavation at the site of Betana, Morang. It was found that the wetlands of the regions should not be undermined.

In addition, the wetlands of Betana clarified the researcher through a local informant some very interesting pre-historic evidences of stone –artifacts that have been described here with pictures. Stone/ lithic arrow heads, various neo- lithic implements these all have been documented by the researcher through pictures. The historicity of the multiple civilizations that flourished here intermittently has been much assumedly traced back to more than 2000 years, pre –history apart that had been said to go way ahead to neo- lithic ages just with few findings.

Exploration of seventeen heritage sites in the research zone revealed pitiful and pathetic conditions of many sites. Archaeologically illiterate communities, barely

self-sufficed working local committees and state's ignorance towards the eastern region were seen as setbacks. Natural and human induced risks in the sites discussed in earlier chapters need to be curbed through effective conservation and management mechanisms. The history of archaeological expedition just began about 50 years ago in the region. For decades the sites were never visited, researched, explored and excavated. Sites are prone to pick nicking, merry making, the so said ponds are used for fisheries, and children parks have been made in conserved areas etc. the findings reveal immediate response and missions related to rescue archaeology in the sites.

The recent global good practices of heritage management incorporate and integrate communities to the sites for site-management. At times there have been advocacy that more or less mean like driving experts away and bringing in community people full of local knowledge and promote stewardship and ownership of heritage sites. However there is a need to balance the experts and the public community to archaeological heritage sites. More importantly the emerging concepts and debates of "value", "equitable benefits" and "public archaeology" are prominent to heal heritages that have been soiled since long time back in order to curb such risks and model a benefitting heritage management approach. Identification of stakeholders around heritage sites are main concerns. Public archaeology has been given importance in recent trends. Thus, it is taken care during the research that the belief patterns of respective communities around the sites and their relation to the sites are understood well.

Moreover, the challenges to tackle the multifold of natural and human induced risks at the sites will definitely probe ways for practitioners. Hereby, it proposes remodeling of good practices adopted at global levels to the local level. Eventually this research has proposed a decentralized Department of Archaeology, separate

Heritage Management Units for religious and archeological sites and a full- fledged Province DoA across the country. The working mode should be concentric from Central, Province to the Municipality level at the end core of which lies a TRC (Trained Responsible Community) for conserving and managing sites. It was found that Community integration has to be prioritized and areas within a site should be categorized according to risk levels. All these apply to the archeological heritage sites of the eastern Terai.

Earlier Hamilton had mentioned about Kichakjhar which the then locals related to him as having ruins (2014, p. 141) but whether it was to mean Kichakbadh or Kichakgadhi we cannot surmise now. This site has not been scientifically explored until now although the name bears close resemblance to Kichakbadh of Jhapa. This researcher documented the site and interviewed some of the locals there. Very less known archaeologically potential sites of Kamal Village municipality of Jhapa have been observed, analysed and documented here. Virtually unknown potential archaeological site of Dhanusapokhari Jhapa has been brought forth to the academia. As far as the knowledge of this researcher is concerned, this is a new and virgin site in the premises of the religious Dhanushapokhari of Jhapa.

Owing to the vulnerability of human induced risks during fairs and festivals in archaeological sites, all heritage sites of the country should be categorized as 1) Religious sites of performance, 2) Archaeological sites, 3) Historical sites and 4) Arcaheo-religious sites.

Within the religious sites, areas and spaces for annual fairs and festivals should be separated wherever possible, along with recreational spaces. Communities should be requested for joining in the training programs. Many a times trainings are just not enough. State and local government in partnership with international and

national organizations should provide capacity building programs to the selected community members. Management loopholes during fairs, annual festivals should be studied and analyzed in assistance or leadership of expert (team of experts) and continually should be addressed in the coming days. Treasure hunting and looting or vandalizing should be discouraged, punished and should be taken as archaeological crime. This is a tough job. Decentralized DoA should form a separate wing to examine such crimes across the country. Local government, province government and central government should coordinate on devising, implementing and monitoring of the conservation and management of archaeological sites.

Natural agents like landslides, floods, rain and forest fire pose risks to the sites. Quick response systems/teams should be formed. Unintentional human activities like commuting through sites, picnicking in the sensitive conserved sites, smoking pose risk of unseen damages like fire in the sites. Conserved areas should be cordoned, fenced properly or guarded and maintained.

Committees for local heritage conservation have been founded most of the time by influential persons or under chairmanship of influential, rich or economically able person. The conservation committee should encompass members who are literate, heritage sensitive, dedicated and honest members. As far as practicable, the local there should be representation of local indigeneous people. Their yearly progress and plans should be handy for the public or information seekers. They should be accountable to the communities living nearby through periodical programs, memoir journal or research papers.

In the archaeological sites of eastern Terai, in many places cows, cattle graze ruthlessly; they are tethered in the conserved sectors which actually defile the conservation norms of an archaeological site. Proper risk mapping/assessing of

archaeological sites are necessary to categorizes which spots/monument/ruins need renovation, where conservation is more important, urgent, emergency or normal.

Around the globe there have been practices of categorizing conservation approaches as very urgent, emergency, normal by the heritage practitioners. Risk levels are also categorized for best practices and we can follow these best practices.

It is high time that the respective districts and municipalities took responsibility on the archaeological resources of the eastern Terai. This responsibility should cater to- own the sites, manage the sites, build rapport with the communities, identify ich related to the indigeneous or local community, monitor the sites, evaluate the overall perspectives of AHM and promote responsible domestic tourism in and around the sites.

At the present context, we cannot imagine international tourism and archaeo-tourism in the sites of study. Building children parks or fish farming may be utilization of the sites for local community benefits but are we doing them in the right way or are we making equitable benefits to the community? These are some serious questions that future researchers can ponder upon. The remains discussed and analysed in the region of study have not been linked to the ancient rulers and dynasites. This is a difficult task, however, a gap that may or may not be filled up in future. The bitter fact underlies the fact that there is a long way and huge preparations to highlight the sites at national level.

It is evident through the archaeological remains, ponds, ruins, collapses and features that the flatlands had been occupied far back before the resettlement campaign (B.S. 2029) in the forests of the eastern Terai. The wooden boats found by locals in small third grade rivers like the Krishna and Geruwa in Jhapa reveal a plausible chance that these rivers were bigger enough to row boats in the distant past.

Observing the small size and width of the rivers at present, it is hard to think that such rivers were bigger and deeper in the past.

The river like Geruwa wherefrom a boat measuring 29 ft. at length has been retrieved may suggest many aspects of the past lives; their trade route or their fishing occupations or their settlement nearby the river. Even their intangible culture of worshipping their mother source of food and water can be surmised without doubt. The discoveries of wells nearby the rivers at Kamal Municipality suggest some sort of ancient villages which now are underneath existing modern villages that are about to be towns in the near future. If not villages, at least this may be a popular route to their pilgrimage or any other forms of destinations.

Local people in many sites of study have informed this researcher about huge trees they cut down during the resettlement campaign. There have been traditions of passing down the stories from generations to generations that huge captive and domesticated elephants were tethered to such trees. If on any day the real historicity of palaces at Kichakbadh or Bhediyari proves that these palaces were built by a past king and not by Kichaka or the King Virata, how can we so abruptly shatter the belief and worshipping rituals at such sites? At least the dating of artifacts should be scientific and reliable so that we have convincing and true- time-lines of the past inhabitants.

The challenges to tackle the risks at the sites should be prioritized by remodeling good practices adopted at global levels. Archaeological heritage is not something to be laid upon the responsibility of weak local bodies, carefree government entities and insufficient cultural policies. The emerging concepts and debates of “value”, “equitable benefits” and “public archaeology” are prominent to heal heritages that have been soiled since long time back.

## Appendix A

### List of Names –Focus Group Discussion, Vaisabadi, Kichakbadh

1. Jaya Singh Ganesh –*Tole Samitee Mukhiya*
2. Jogindra Ganesh
3. Ramlal Ganesh
4. Jatu Ganesh
5. Sajam Majhi
6. Indra Man Ganesh
7. Monoj Ganesh
8. Mahabir Rajbanshi
9. Pardeep Ganesh

**Note:** As the FGD was held in an open space, other males and a few females were on the venue too. All were invited who listened to the discussion keenly.

## Appendix B

### List of Names-DoA Staff who Attended/Participated in the FGD

Venue: DoA building, Putalisadak- Kathmandu

Date: 10 March, 2022

Time: 11:30-1:30

|  |                      |   |
|--|----------------------|---|
| 1.   | Ram Kunwar           | Senior- Archeological Officer<br>and Spokesperson |
| 2.   | Kazi Pyakurel        | Museum officer                                    |
| 3.   | Hari Prasad Bhusal   | Museum Officer                                    |
| 4.   | Devendra Bhattarai   | Museum Officer                                    |
| 5.   | Prakash Khadka       | Archaeology Officer                               |
| 6.   | Manjari Pradhan      | Archaeology Officer                               |
| 7.   | Amrita Maharjan      | Archaeology Officer                               |
| 8.   | Pratima Sapkota      | Administrative Assistant                          |
| 9.   | Srijana Upreti Aryal | Office Assistant                                  |
| <p>The FGD was held in presence of archaeology enthusiast Prof. Dr. Som Prasad Khatiwada and was recorded by Sudarshan Aryal, media personnel of Onlinkhabar.com</p> |                      |   |



**Appendix C****List of Names-Research Assistants who Assisted the Rerseacher in Kichakbadh  
festival, 2019**

1. Anuja Katuwal –Birtamode, Jhapa
2. Dipika Prasain –Birtamode, Jhapa
3. Kristina Kala Gauli- Birtamode, Jhapa
4. Ritu Dangi- Birtamode, Jhapa
5. Alisha Kumal-Birtamode, Jhapa
6. Sahin Ansari- Birtamode, Jhapa
7. Srijan Chauhan- Birtamode, Jhapa
8. Nisha Sitaula-Birtamode, Jhapa
9. Samikshya Bardewa, Birtamode, Jhapa
10. Archana Budhathoki, Birtamode, Jhapa
11. Reshma Gauli- Birtamode, Jhapa
12. Anisha Kalikote-Birtamode, Jhapa

### Appendix D

#### List of Names- Key Persons/Informants Interviewed during the Research

|    |                          |                                      |  |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1  | Jiwan Ghimire            | Minister for Social<br>Development   | Biratnagar, Province-1<br>(Koshi Province)   |
| 2. | Jeevan Kumar<br>Shrestha | Former Mayor                         | Bhadrapur Municipality,<br>Province-1        |
| 3  | Manju Bhandari           | Former Deputy Mayor                  | Dharan Submetropolitan<br>City, Province-1   |
| 4. | Uddhav Acharya           | Chief Archaeologist at<br>Kichakbadh | Kathmandu                                    |
| 5. | Ram Kunwar               | Spokesperson and<br>Archaeologist    | DoA, Nepal                                   |
| 6  | Kedarnath<br>Khatiwada   | Chairman                             | Shree Vedvedanga<br>Vidyapeeth- Sadhutar     |
| 7  | Bhaskar<br>Gyanwali      | Archaeologist                        | DoA, Nepal                                   |
| 8  | Keshav<br>Dhungana       | priest                               | Kichakbadh                                   |
| 9  | Kamal kishor<br>Yadav    | Priest/ Chairperson                  | Bhedyari- Virat Durbar<br>Sanrakchan Samitee |
| 10 | Agni Prasad<br>Sigdel    | Priest                               | Arjundhara                                   |

|    |                          |   |                                       |
|----|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 11 | Bhanubhakta<br>Dhakal    | Priest  | Dhanushkuti, Jhapa                    |
| 12 | Kiran Bhandari           | Priest  | Varahkshetra                          |
| 13 | Padam Prasad<br>Adhikari | Priest  | Viratpokhar                           |
| 14 | Tulasha Kafle            | Religious Practitioner-<br><i>Maata</i>   | Chillagadh                            |
| 15 | Dil Bahadur<br>Thebe     | Chairperson   | Kichakbadh Conservation<br>Committee  |
| 16 | Prasad Subba             | Chairperson   | Satashidham Conservation<br>Committee |
| 17 | Bhim Rai                 | Key Informant   | Betana, Morang                        |
| 18 | Bhim Shrestha            | Key Informant   | Betana, Morang                        |
| 19 | Chandra Bimali           | Member, Kichakbadh<br>Conservation and<br>Management Committee                  | Kichakbadh                            |
| 20 | Narayan<br>Pyakurel      | Former member Member,<br>Kichakbadh Conservation<br>and Management<br>Committee | Kichakbadh                            |
| 21 | Pawitra Bajgain          | Former member of the<br>Kichakbadh Conservation<br>and Managemnt Commitee       | Kichakbadh                            |
| 22 | Shyamlal                 | Local expert (Key   | Dhanpalgadhi                          |

|    |                           |   |                     |
|----|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
|    | Chaudhari                 | Informant)  |                     |
| 23 | Purna Singh<br>Rajbanshi  | Local Informant/ writer   | Garamani            |
| 24 | Uchit Narayn<br>Khawas    | Member, Kichkagadhi<br>Conservation and<br>Management Committee | Kichkagadhi, Morang |
| 25 | Sohan Lal<br>Khawas       | Member, Kichkagadhi<br>Conservation and<br>Management Committee | Kichkagadhi, Morang |
| 26 | Rambiswash<br>Khawas      | Member, Kichkagadhi<br>Conservation and<br>Management Committee | Kichkagadhi, Morang |
| 27 | Om Prakash<br>Khawas      | Member, Kichkagadhi<br>Conservation and<br>Management Committee | Kichkagadhi, Morang |
| 28 | Indra Bahadur<br>Shrestha | Local (Key Informant)   | Jogichaun           |
| 29 | Ayush Subedi              | local(key Informant)  | Devichaun           |
| 30 | Aakash Subedi             | local(key Informant)  | Devichaun           |
| 31 | Bhola Subedi              | local(key Informant)  | Devichaun           |
| 32 | Rup Narayan<br>Dhital     | local(key Informant)  | Shantipur           |
| 33 | Gyan Prasad<br>Guragain   | Local Informant   | Shantipur           |

|    |                           |                 |                            |
|----|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 34 | Krishna Prasad<br>Mishra  | Local Informant | Chillagadh                 |
| 35 | Dal Bahadur<br>Ghising    | Local Informant | Pandavpur                  |
| 36 | Man Bhadur<br>Shrestha    | Local Informant | Kamal Village Municipality |
| 37 | Gyan Bhahdur<br>Guragain  | Local Informant | Kamal Village municipality |
| 38 | Yog Raj Gurung            | Local Informant | Jogichaun                  |
| 39 | Sajan Lal Tharu           | Local Informant | Dhanpalgadhi               |
| 40 | Jognath Khawas<br>Tharu   | Local Informant | Dhanpalgadhi               |
| 41 | Til Narayan<br>Shrestha   | Local Informant | Jogichaun                  |
| 42 | Firni Chaudhari           | Local Informant | Kichkagadhi, Morang        |
| 43 | Padam Prasad<br>Shiwakoti | Local Informant | Viratpokhar                |
| 44 | Medani Silwal             | Local Informant | Viratpokhar                |
| 45 | Gyan Prasad<br>Guragain   | Local Informant | Viratpokhar                |
| 46 | Krishna Prasad<br>Mishra  | Local Informant | Viratpokhar                |

### Appendix E

#### List of Names-Community People who Provided Information on Different Issues, Problems and Prospects of Kichakbadh

|    |                         |              |
|----|-------------------------|--------------|
| 1  | Gogalal Rajbanshi       | Mahespur     |
| 2  | Tara Ganesh             | Mahespur     |
| 3  | Gauniyar Rajbanshi      | Mahespur     |
| 4  | Naina Bahadur Paudel    | Kichabadh    |
| 5  | Hom Maya Paudel         | Prithvinagar |
| 6  | Jethi Maya Tamang       | Kichakbadh   |
| 7  | Santosh Ganesh          | Kichakbadh   |
| 8  | Karan Tamang            | Bhadrapur    |
| 9  | Nisha Thapa             | Kichakbadh   |
| 10 | Selta Rajbanshji        | Maheshpur    |
| 11 | Bishal Thing Tamang     | Bhadrapur    |
| 11 | Sujan Bhujel            | Bhadrapur    |
| 12 | Khagendra Prasad Thapa  | Kechankawal  |
| 13 | Dmabar Prasad Khanal    | Bhadrapur    |
| 14 | Manlal Pyakurel         | Bhadrapur    |
| 15 | Kharka Bahadur Shrestha | Bhadrapur    |
| 16 | Purna Bahadur Bhujel    | Bhadrapur    |
| 17 | Puran Bhadur Limbu      | Bhadrapur    |
| 18 | Sanjeet Rrai            | Bhadrapur    |
| 19 | Ajit Rai                | Bhadrapur    |
| 20 | Bal Bahadur Gurung      | Bhadrapur    |
| 21 | Bhakta Prasad Bhattarai | Bhadrapur    |

|    |                             |            |
|----|-----------------------------|------------|
| 22 | Lilchan Kumar Majhi         | Bhadrapur  |
| 23 | Keshav Prasad Dhungana      | Bhadrapur  |
| 24 | Gumba Bahdur Thapa 'Srijan' | Bhadrapur  |
| 25 | Shankar Thapa Magar         | Bhadrapur  |
| 26 | Janardan Bajgain            | Bhadrapur  |
| 27 | Chandra Prakash Shrestha    | Bhadrapur  |
| 28 | Narayan Pyakurel            | Bhadrapur  |
| 29 | Uday Kumar                  | Bhadrapur  |
| 30 | Dil Bahadur Thebe           | Bhadrapur  |
| 31 | Kalapana Thapa              | Bhadrapur  |
| 32 | Sirta Devi Neupane          | Bhadrapur  |
| 33 | Lila Maya Karki             | Bhadrapur  |
| 34 | Yamaraj Rana Magar          | Bhadrapur  |
| 35 | Jagannath Timsina           | Bhadrapur  |
| 36 | Tara Gautam                 | Bhadrapur  |
| 37 | Yogendra Prasad Paudel      | Bhadrapur  |
| 38 | Kamal Kumar Shrestha        | Bhadrapur  |
| 39 | Ambika Poikhrel             | Bhadrapur  |
| 40 | Chandra Prasad Buimali      | Bhadrapur  |
| 41 | Usha Tmanag                 | Sagarmatha |
| 42 | Kumar Karki                 | Bhadrapur  |

Apart from them considerable number of visitors arriving on the grand annual fair of 2019, Kichakbadh provided information and views of site management during the fair at Kichkbadh.

## **Appendix F**

### **Questions Asked to the Local Experts/ Long Time Residents of the Region**

1. What is the history of the site?
2. What is the belief about the site?
3. What is the religious significance of the site?
4. What is the archeological significance of the site?
5. About what number of people attend the festival here?
6. What is the history of the temple?
7. What actually can be done for the upliftment of the site in region?
8. What estimated area does this site cover?
9. What are the threats this site can succumb to?
10. What are being done at local level?
11. Is here a functioning local conservation committee?
12. How well is the site being managed?
13. Was the site ever explored or excavated before?
14. Do you know how many times was it explored/ excavated?
15. Are there conservation approaches by the local or the government level?



## **Appendix G**

### **Types of Important Questions Asked during Selective Interviews for Locals and**

#### **Key Informants**

1. Since when have you been familiarized with the site?
2. Is there any history/ event of treasure hunting?
3. Do you know anyone or any persons hereby who have possessed antique objects from around the site? I just want to take photograph
4. Which neighborhood villages surround the site?
5. Where and on what condition did you retrieve these bricks/ objects?
6. What are some popular oral narratives or myths or Mahabharata linkage to the site?

## **Appendix H**

### **Questions for the DoA Staff, (FGD)**

1. Do you agree that Eastern Terai of Nepal has been laid off in archaeological ventures (exploration, survey, conservation, management)? What may be the reason?
2. How can some archaeological riches that are in the hands of local people be retrieved for national benefits? What next? After the retrieval?
3. What (had been/are being done) to coordinate with the local communities for site- management? Is there any bridging of the DoA with the local level government for site management besides the provision in policies, documents?
4. How can DoA work out to decentralize its authority to expand wings in potential regions like that of Eastern Terai of Nepal? What are the possible challenges?

## **Appendix I**

### **Questions Asked to the Elected Officials of the Koshi Province**

1. What were the chief agenda/programs to study archaeological heritage sites in the region, or about heritage sites?
2. What about the budget allocation?
3. How were local communities around the heritage sites included (in any trainings/ capacity building programs)?

## GLOSSARY

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Agyani</b>          | innocent; ignorant  |
| <b>Ailani</b>          | land type that is non-personal; land belonging to community or the government   |
| <b>Archak</b>          | priest/ devotee; a worshipper   |
| <b>Bigha</b>           | a bigger unit of land measurement popular in the Terai region. 20 kattha=1 bigha. 1 bigha=6772 sq. m  |
| <b>Devasthan</b>       | shrine dedicated to a goddess   |
| <b>Dham</b>            | religious place; a pilgrimage   |
| <b>Gramthaan</b>       | shrine for village deity  |
| <b>Guru</b>            | preacher; teacher   |
| <b>Guthi</b>           | a government body that governs land ownerships of temples and religious places or an institution that teams up for managing religious aspects |
| <b>Janapada</b>        | realm, kingdom, nation  |
| <b>Kartik Purnima</b>  | A full moon day that falls on Oct-Nov   |
| <b>Kattha</b>          | unit of land measurement popular in the Terai region. 1 kattha= 338.sq.m  |
| <b>Kuwa</b>            | water-well  |
| <b>Maata</b>           | a possessed devotee of goddess usually an influential woman sometimes a healing goddess   |
| <b>Maghe Purnima</b>   | a full moon day that falls during Jan- Feb  |
| <b>Maghe Sangranti</b> | an auspicious Hindu festival that falls between Jan-Feb   |
| <b>Mahanta</b>         | main caretaker of a Math  |
| <b>Mahayagyna</b>      | a big Yajna   |

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Math</b>             | a Hindu preaching school; a Hindu monastery   |
| <b>Maunvrata</b>        | a vow taken for certain period during which a person does not talk or utter a word.     |
| <b>Mul</b>              | main; chief   |
| <b>Panchayat system</b> | feudal system of government   |
| <b>Pauranik</b>         | related to the Hindu religious scripts of purana  |
| <b>Peeth</b>            | religious spot/ shrine of deities   |
| <b>Pokhari</b>          | pond  |
| <b>Pradesh</b>          | region; province  |
| <b>Prithvi</b>          | the mother earth goddess  |
| <b>Purnima</b>          | a full moon   |
| <b>Rishimuni</b>        | saint   |
| <b>Samadhi</b>          | an act of salvation   |
| <b>Samitee</b>          | committee   |
| <b>Samsaan</b>          | a secluded burial place or site   |
| <b>Smaarika</b>         | a locally published book with articles highlighting on the places around; a memoir book |
| <b>Tar</b>              | a raised land usually like a plateau  |
| <b>Thaan</b>            | worshipping shrine  |
| <b>Thumki</b>           | a hill  |
| <b>Upatirtha</b>        | a pilgrimage related to a much popular pilgrimage                                       |
| <b>Vedi</b>             | a mark made for yajna that also is an altar used during sacrifice of yajna.             |
| <b>Vigraha</b>          | idol  |
| <b>Yajna</b>            | a religious sacrifice with certain purposes   |

## PICTURES



Fig. 1.1 A lithic holy idol in Varakshetra area consecrated in the main Varakshetra temple, Sunsari.



Fig. 1.2 Ancient idol of Varaha dated to 5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D found in the aftermath of flood at Varahkshetra, now consecrated in the Mul-Varah temple, Varahkhettra.

**Note:** Except for the photos where source persons are credited, all the photos have been taken by the researcher himself between 2018-2021.



Fig. 1.3 Stone idols now kept outside in the premises of the Krishnathumki temple, Jhapa



Fig. 1.4 Krishnathumki's lithic idols.





Fig. 1.5 A stone that reveals certain marks that resemble a man's foot and cow's hoof, locally said to be that of Krishna's cow Nandini.



Fig. 3.1 Research Assistants filling up questionnaire in Kichakbadh festival.

Photo Credit: Research Assistants





Fig. 3.2 Researcher having group discussion with the Rajbanshis of Vaisabadi-village along with the village chairman and priest of Kichakbadh temple- just by the Mechi River. Photo Credit: Babulal Ganesh



Fig. 3.3 FGD in the Department of Archaeology, Kathmandu. Photo Credit: Sudarshan Aryal



Fig.4.1 A unique *Shivalinga* found by timber collectors in the nearby hills, now kept in the temple of Dhanuhkuti. The *linga* was found along with other stone artifacts and lithic idols.





Fig. 4.2 A stone idol found along with the *Shivalinga* nearby now consecrated as gods, and kept in the Dhanushkuti temple.



Fig. 4.3 A local *maata* nearby the Kankai river showing the so said Shiva's sandal to the researcher. The stone sandal was found in the Dhanushkuti region.



Fig. 4.4. This researcher taking measurement of wooden boat structures found in the Krishna River, now kept by a local in his cow shed and one boat piece to aid commute in the muddy walking route from house to the backyard field. Photo Credit: Ayush Subedi



Fig.4.5 . A boat structure that measures ( 15. 11 x 1.9 ) feet that was found in the Krishna river now used to feed fodder for the cattle. Photo Credit: Ayush Subedi





Fig. 4.6 This researcher exposing the well structures in Shantipur, Kamal municipality village-Jhapa. Photo Credit: Prasanna Pratap Thapa



Fig. 4.7 A local showing the retrieved ancient brick from around the well. Such Bricks measured as (13 cm -15 cm at the small tapering, 20 -23 cm at the large base, 24 cm at length and 4cm -5 cm at thickness)



Fig. 4.8, 4.9 Ancient pottery sherds retrieved by a local from the well sites, Shantipur-Kamal Municipality region, Jhapa.





Fig. 4.10. A local Bhim Kumar Rai demonstrating his finds retrieved from the Betana site.



Fig. 4.11 An iron axe, Betana -Morang



Fig. 4.12 A stone implement, Betana, Morang



Fig. 4.13 Lithic artifacts, Betana, Morang



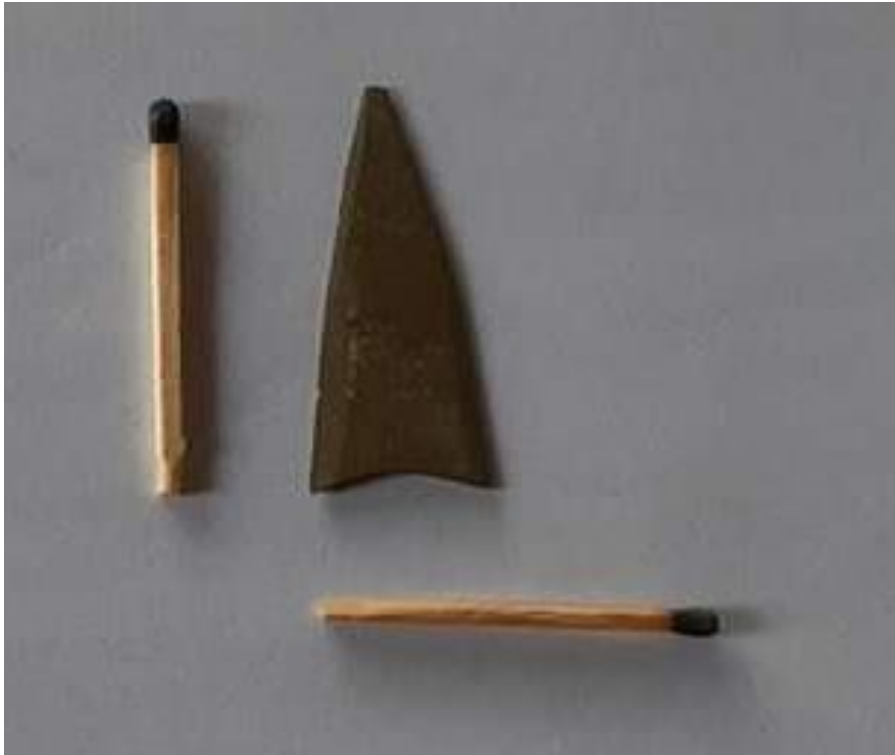


Fig.4.14 A stone arrow-head so said to be retrieved from Betana area by a local person



Fig. 4.15 .iron arrow head, Betana Morang



Fig. 4.16. lithic artifact most probably a decorative item (bangle)- Betana, Morang



Fig. 4.17 . Iron implements, Betana Morang



Fig. 4.18 . Unburnt broken ceramic pot piece, Betana, Morang



Fig. 4.19. Lithic shouldered artifact, Betana, Morang



Fig. 4.20 . During the researcher's observation at Betana (2018-2019) a local led to a small waterway rivulet where such cord-impressed pottery sherds were floating.

**Note: Betana finds from Fig. 4.10 to Fig. 4.19 are of the artifacts that have been retrieved by a local person Bhim Kumar Rai and shown to this researcher in 2019 at his residence in Betana, Morang.**





Fig 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 A clay Ganesha, Ceramic artifacts and bricks at Bhediyari



Fig.5.4 . Grains so found and kept in Bhediyari at local residence are in locals' hearsays to have been of the Mahabharata period.

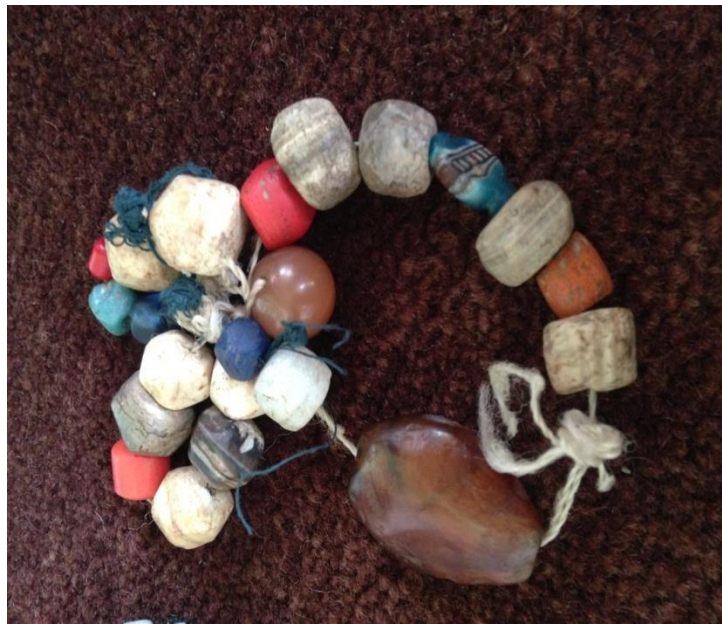


Fig. 5.5 and 5.6 Semi precious (precious ?) artifacts and bangle pieces at Bhediari are related to have been of Draupadi ! These findings reveal probable encouragement and chances of treasure hunting in the past and coming days at Bhediari. However, these

along with other numerous findings are now at a small museum at Kamal Kishore Yadav's house.



Fig. 5.7 Ceramic and lithic artifacts of Bhediari now kept in a private museum(residence) of a local.

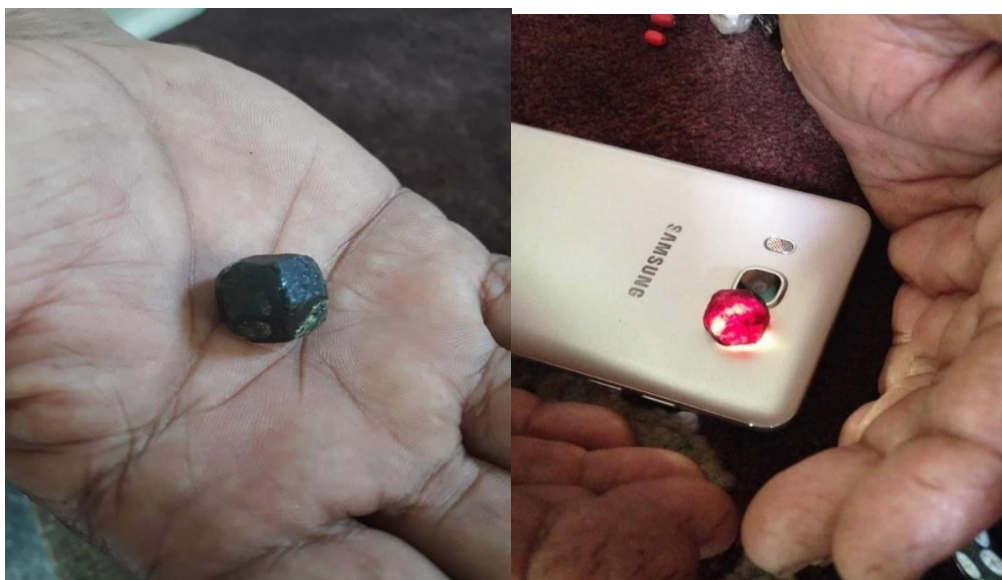


Fig 5.8 and 5.9 A semi-precious ( precious ?) stone that glows while light passes through. This was shown to this researcher by a local, Bhediari.





Fig. 5.10 Exposed ruins, in one of the mounds, Bhediyari-Morang



Fig. 5.11 Brick ruins now under a tree while photo taken during 2018-19, Bhediyari, Morang.





Fig5.12 Local rituals in the Kichabadh Pond during the Kichkbadh festival.,2019.



Fig. 5.13 Conserved ruins in Kichakbadh





Fig 5.15 Sami Tree at Sadhutar, Jhapa. The tree as locals belief retell an episode of the Mahabharata in which the Pandavas hid their war weapons before leaving for the kingdom of king Virata.



Fig. 5.16 Shiva temple of Arjundhara being reconstructed. Photo Credit - Rajendra Thapa



Fig. 5.17 Some wooden structures retrieved in the well sites and half burnt wooden structures, Shantipur , Jhapa.



Fig. 5.18. A full boat measuring (27.8 x 5.8 ) feet retrieved from the Geruwa river, now a religious object especially to the local Dhimals. Photo Credit: Jhapali Sanam





Fig. 5.19. Dhanushpokhari, Jhapa

Fig5.20 A brick retrieved by the researcher from the ruins nearby Dhanushpokhari.



Fig.5.21 . Mound of Kichkagadhi in Morang.



Fig. 5.22 A small village than in the kichkagadhi mound.



Fig. 5.23 A beautiful temple dedicated to King Dhanpal and queen at Dhanpalgadi, Morang





Fig. 5.24 .Idol of King Dhanpal and his queen inside the temple



Fig. 5.25 Idols on the Dhanpalgadhi mound and near the temple of Dhanpalgadhi.





Fig. 5.26 A small rivulet by the side of Dhanpalgadhi-possibility of inundation in rainy season.

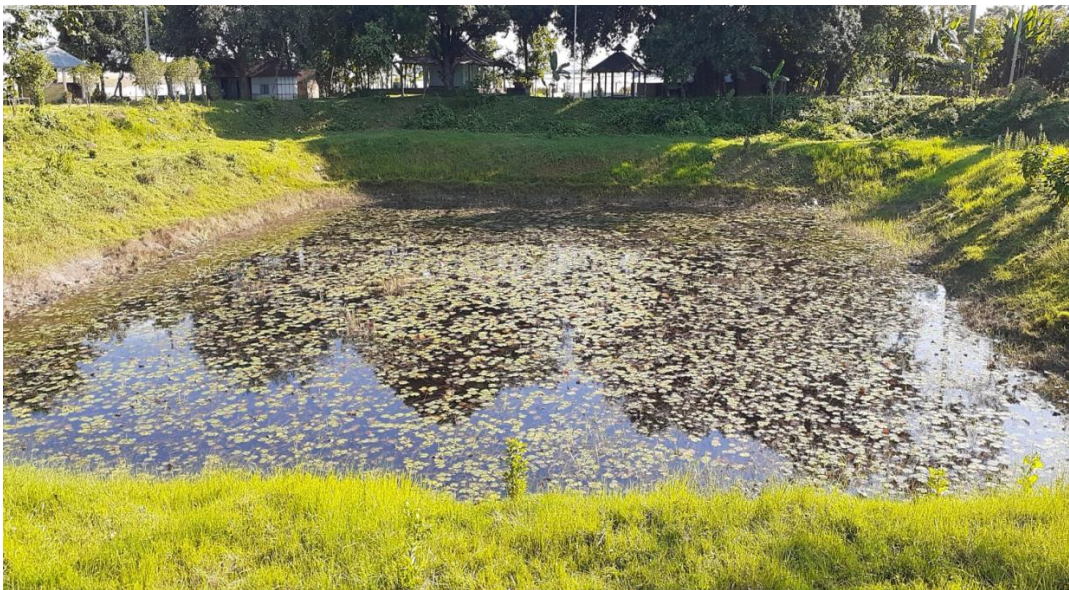


Fig. 5.26 Chillagadh, Jhapa





Fig. 7.1 and 7.2 Children park in Kichakbadh-archaeological crime? Raises question whether parks can be allowed in archaeological sites or not.





Fig. 7.3 . A helicopter landing in the conserved area of Kichabadh amongst curious onlookers; an act of unintentional archaeological crime.



Fig. 7.4 . In the aftermath of a storm at Varahkshetra (photo taken in 2019 during the researcher's visit).



Fig 7.5 . One of the five existing ponds of Virat pokhar on the state of drying up, Jhapa.

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