

I. Teej and Liberation of Women

The people of Nepal comprise a great variety of races, religions, castes, cultures and languages. Such a diversity of the Nepali society predates the formation of the present state of Nepal. Geography, along with historical processes, seems to have greatly conditioned ethno- regional and cultural formation of the country. Diversities of land - high mountains, plains, deep rivers and dense forests have already fostered several isolated cultural pockets within its territorial span. As a result, several independent and semi-independent but scattered principalities with relative ethno- religious and cultural identity of their own have been existing. Over the period, they have gone through various socio- cultural process and historical intervention.

Every country is dominant with certain language, custom, religion and caste. CBS report has stated that in Nepal the chief religions are the Hindu, Buddhist and the Muslim though Christianity is being practised for several decades which are the global influence of religion and culture.

The most dominant religion 'Hindu' is one of the chief religions in the world. In this regard, Axel Michaels comments, "Hinduism is counted as one of the world religions. With more than 663 million followers, it even forms the third largest religious domination-after Christianity (1.67 billion) and Islam (881 million). The 'Hinduism' is based on the scriptures like the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Upanisads*, the epics like the *Mahabharat*, and the *Ramayana* and also on the philosophies of saints and Hindu priests as well as *Brahminical* way of life.

Teej is the festival and ritual especially for the Hindu women, celebrated on the third day after the new moon in Nepali month of *Bhadra Sukla Trayodasi* (August). As described in *Barsik Brata Ratnawali* the word *Haritalika Teej* comes from the Sanskrit word that consists of double meaning- *Harita* and *Alivi* (82). It

means Parwati's friend hid her into a jungle to avoid her marriage with Lord Bishnu. In the Sanskrit *Harnu* means kidnap. *Alivi* means friends of Parvati who belong to *Alivi* race. Thus *Haritalika* is the derivation of the word *Harita Alivi*.

Teej festival is celebrated on the month of *Bhadra* (August) because it is the month in which folks get free time after their terrible hard work of plantation of their main foods like rice, millet. On the one hand, nature is full of green vegetation; on the other hand, they put themselves in the clothes of multiple colors. It seems that folks and nature have agreed to celebrate on the occasion of *Teej*.

This festival is celebrated in different regions differently. However, the mythical aspect of this festival is the same. The performance varies due to diverse geographical location and the way of life of people, as well as economic status.

Generally, *Teej* is celebrated spending four days. It starts from *Bhadra Dwadashi* (second day after the new moon), in this particular day married daughters and sisters are invited to *Maitighar* (parent's home) to celebrate *Teej*. The first day of *Teej* is called *Darkhane Din* (finest foods are cooked, it is a kind of preparation for next day). On this particular day, traditionally, hygienic foods like *Dhakane*, *Khir*, Ghee, *Chhali*, fried potato, pickle, curd and so on. In Nepali context these foods are finest and good for health. Even in the midnight of this day women usually take hygienic food for better health for the *Brata* of next day.

There is no specific difference in celebrating *Teej* among unmarried girls, married women and widows. However, unmarried girls worship Shiva with the hope of getting a good husband. Likewise, married women worship for their husband's good health and long life. The widow women worship for the consolation of late husband's spirit.

According to the Hindu myth, women are not allowed to take even a drop of water. If a woman takes a drop of water it is equivalent to drinking her husband's blood, and eating food is equivalent to her husband's flesh as well as she will be sonless, sinful, chatterbox, and will not be redeemed from sin even after her death. Hindu mythology also states that women should not take any food items, water, even during her normal state but critical period like menstruation, childbirth, and illness. These matters are stated in the *Barsik Brata Ratnawali*. It says:

If the worshipper women processly listen to the *Teej* story feed the best food items to the priest and the virgin girls with their husband donate the best costume to them then they will be the lucky women for their seventh birth and be the queen of heaven. If the women disobey the rules of myth, they will be poor, chatterbox, sonless and sorrowful women. The women who eat food items, she will be delivered to hell after their death. (My Translation 71)

The above statements support the fact that if women take water or any kind of food items in the *Teej* day, they are supposed to be disobeying their husband and their activities support to destroy their husband's clan. It is believed that the door of the heaven will not be opened for them up to *Saath Janma* (seven life times).

Barsik Brata Ratnawali relates the *Teej* as festival of women where Parwati is believed to have undergone hard penance to get Shiva as her husband. In the same way, married Hindu women regard their husbands as Lord Shiva and worship them for their long life and better health. Unmarried girls worship to get their future husband who will be as much charismatic as Lord Shiva. It also carries a story that the

women who make Shiva *Linga* out of sand and worship it, they will never become widow.

According to Hindu myth, Parwati's father, Himalya Parwat, wanted to get her daughter's marriage with Lord Bishnu but Parwati wanted to have Shiva as her husband from her early childhood. To achieve her goal, she underwent hard penance for sixteen years having only smoke, and dry leaves for sixty-four years. Parwati makes a statue of Shiva *Linga* with sand and worship it without taking any food and water in the *Bhadra Shukla Tritiya*. After this worship she gets Shiva as her husband. (My Translation 74-75)

In the line of myth, Hindu women try to follow Parwati's ways of worshipping their husband by not taking any drop of water and food. Women are shown in such a way that they are ready to die for their husband and family. This mythology culturally indoctrinates Hindu women that husbands are the supreme one.

On the *Teej* day, the actual *Brata* initiates from bathing by going nearby rivers, taps, and after bathing, they erect a stone as symbol of *Shiva Linga*, and worship it by offering cucumber bud, and *Akchhetapati*. They come at home and adore themselves in red dresses and complete make-up along with finest jewellery. Married women use their special clothes belonging to their marriage ceremony such as wedding Sari, Vermillion, *Pote*, bangles, *Sirful*, etc. Unmarried girls use typical red dresses along with bangles and other jewellery in full make-up. Red dresses, finest jewellery and full make-up are related to their *Sauvagya* (good luck). Thereby Hindu women's *Sauvagya* is associated with their husband.

Only *Sauvagyawati* women are permitted to wear such types of clothes, jewellery and make-up because it is symbol of their husband as is in tradition. Adoring themselves in finest make-up, women, in public area like *Deurali*, Shiva temple, gather together to sing and dance in *Teej* songs and *Sangini* dance. Again they culminating in *Puja* for their husband, late husband or would be husband in Shiva Temple.

Throughout the day they sing *Teej Geet* and *Sangini*. Through their *Teej* songs they express their pain, suffering, trauma and the story of hardships that they endured in their husbands' home. They sing the song like:

All women go to Parent's home, but I am deprived of going there as that is far away. All ten sons of my father are living in the same house, but I have no space there. I did not get up early morning due to headache; mother-in-law woke up and smeared the house because she was angry with me. My husband asked water but I gave him unripened Jackfruit. (My Translation)

These songs express the painful sorrow of women who do not have chance to go her parental home even in *Teej*. She is unsatisfied with the social norms that her brothers live in the same home having parental property but she is compelled to go to her husband's home. In the next song, she expresses her mother-in-law's inhuman behaviour during a time when she was unwell. In addition, the ultimate lines say that how she is facing problems because of her illiteracy while living with her literate husband.

In *Dhuppi* dance women manifest their angst through the movements of their body and gestures. Particularly they try to coax their husband and mother-in-law

through *Dhuppi* dance. Body movement appeals to the mass who can easily understand what they actually mean. This dance is played with the division of women in two groups, "Mother-in-law! My brother's marriage has arrived *Deurali*. Please let me to go there. I will return in the evening" (My Translation).

This dance seems as if they are really weeping. They try to melt the callous heart of their mother-in-law and husband through *Dhuppi* dance. At last they achieve their goal which has performed in the last part of *Dhuppi* dance. Especially this dance is usually performed in the hillside of eastern part of Nepal.

Likewise, *Sanginee* dance is also performed on *Teej* day. It pours the angst, suffering and pain of married daughter during her living in her husband's home atmosphere. In *Sanginee* dance, matured women dance in this circle singing the *Sanginee* like, "The wind of *Sirsire Danda* has torn the hem of my saree: father has wedded me far away, any birds and clouds are alien to me" (My Translation). In this *Sanginee* dance women express their pain of being far away from her parent's home where everything is alien, strange to her. She is isolated from her past life with which she was attached to. She is not even attached to the wind, birds and all natural things and sings the sound of her isolation. She feels as if even the wind tears the hem of her *Sari* and separates her.

In the whole night of the *Teej*, the *Bratalu* women perform the various dances and songs of *Teej* without taking a single nap. If she sleeps for a single movement, her strict *Brata* will go in vain. Like this, *Bratalus* who do not take part in different activities will be regarded as *Kerako Thamba* (Devoid of creativity) and her *Brata* is not fulfilled properly.

The next day of the *Teej* is called *Paarnako Din*. On this particular day, early in the morning, devoted women take bath in holy places and worship *Agasti Risi*.

Then they take some meal which are helpful to their health and then prepare *Puja Samagri* for the next day- *Risi Panchami*. For next day, they prepare 360 types of flowers, peeled rice with Nails, Mud-that belonged to the footprint of the elephant, *Dattium*, *Til*, *Jau*, *Kus* etc. Early morning in the dusk, they go to the holy river for bath, apply mud 360 times over each parts of their outer body, and wash it 360 times. Such bath should be taken from the tiptoe to the head applying and washing each body parts 360 times separately. It is supposed to be a very tough type of bathing. After that they have to wash their teeth with *Dattium* (a kind of herb) having knots and brush with it 360 times by each 360 separate *Dattiums* (apamarga in Sanskrit), prickly chaff flower in English. Then one should pour water mixed with *Til*, *Jau*, *Kus*, and *flower* 360 times through the *Jaldhara* (which consists 360 holes and is made up of copper). They, after that, erect a *Shiva Linga* in the bathing place. Along with the bathing processes, *Risi Panchami* is over. The significance of bathing is believed to have made the menstruated body a holy one.

Hindu myth takes woman's menstruation period is a type of cursed period. In this period if a woman knowingly or unknowingly touches the kitchen materials or any thing that will be greatest sin in her life. It is necessary for a woman to celebrate *Risi Panchami* to redeem herself from that sin. If a woman does not worship *Panchami* in that particular day of *Risi Pachami*, she can never be redeemed from her sin. The following extract proves in the *Barsik Brata Ratnawali* the above statements:

Brahma ji says to Partha that menstruated women should be kept separately for four days because she is supposed as Chandalni (reptile) in the first day of her menstruation, second day as a killer of Brahmin, third day as Dhobini(washer women), and fourth day she will be pure. If she touches or

keeps relation with husband that will be the greatest sin. *Rishi Panchami Brata* redeems from all kinds of sins caused by menstruation. Therefore, only the best way to get redeemed from all kinds of sins associated with menstruation is to take *Brata of Rishi Panchami*. (My Translation 88)

These aforementioned extracts clarify that the woman, during her menstruation period, should be kept separately. If she touches kitchen materials, green flowers, fruits, vegetables, and the things which are associated with water or keeps relation with her husband, both partners will be drowned in the pond of the curse. Moreover, these couples will have inferior lives like that of dogs, oxen after their death.

The *Rishi Panchami* is important for women to make their bodies purified by worshipping *Panchami*. Hindu myth says women are impure because their *Raj* (menstrual discharge) is associated with *Brittasur* *Daitya*, who was killed by *Indra* and he was charged that he had killed *Brahman*. The *Raj* is another form of the *Brittasur* and it is the charge of *Brahmahatya* (murder of *Brahman*). Therefore, women should be separated during their menstruation period.

Another myth of *Rishi Panchami* proves that how couples are drowned in the pond of sin who ignore the rules that should have to be followed during the menstruation period of couples. The *Barsik Brata Ratnawali* states:

There is a *Brahmini* called *Jayshree*- who has sons, grand sons, slaves and she is obedient to her husband. She is always busy in her farm. One day she found herself to be menstruated but keeps on doing household works as usual and keeps relation with her husband. After sometime, she and her husband, *Sumitra Brahman* died. In their second birth, they got rebirth in

their previous home, Jayshree Brahmini as a doggy, and Sumitra Brahmin as an ox because of their relation during menstruation of their first birth. (My Translation 89-90)

If they ignore the rules, they will be penalized- wife as *Kukurni* (doggy) and husband as *Goru* (ox). These statements vehemently persuade Hindu couple to follow the rules and regulations. It creates fear in human that if they disobey their religion; they have to suffer like Rajashree Brahmani and Sumitra Brahman.

Different critics have analyzed this ritualistic performance in different ways. Krishna Prasad Paudyal, in the Journal *Ritambhara* under the title “Constitution of Gender Identity through women’s own performance in *Teej* festival and its Songs” criticizing on *Teej* festival says:

The *Teej* festival despite its cultural dynamics provides opportunities to constitute their own identity through the repetition of certain roles like singing, dancing, fasting and worshipping in songs. In this regard, the paper explores the reformative dynamics of Hindu festival *Teej*. (60)

He says that women constitute their identity through certain roles in this festival. He has highlighted only the performance of this festival and has seen only the bright side of this festival. He forgets the hidden aspect of male domination, which they are exploring through their songs.

Similarly, in the same book *Ritambhara*, Critic Harihar Jnawali writes under the topic “*Teej* songs: A Constitutive Performance of Women” says:

They remain in fasting despite the torture undergone in husbands’ home for the betterment of their husband. During their fasting they are glad, all in red sari and blouse along with

the expensive jewels. And they sing the songs which are quite different in tune rhythm and composition. (82)

The writer seems to be expressing the idea that despite the afflict given by their husband the Hindu women undergo hard worship for her husband's betterment. She wears jewellery and red clothes in the name of her husband's long life.

Though the ritual *Teej* has its own ritual, cultural and performative aspects but the critics have various contradictory visions to look at the same ritual *Teej*. Some critics favor traditional way of celebrating the *Teej* so as to preserve the traditionally followed culture claiming that our existence lies only in culture thereby we will be like disable child without the culture that we have carried within.

Some people want female to be acted as defined by some Hindu religious text where manners and attitudes that the female should perform have clearly been described. The text *Badhu Shiksha* by Bhanu Bhakta Acharya also projects some fundamental duties of female to be fulfilled towards the husband,

They should pray for the god as soon as they wake up in the morning. Believing husband as god, they should transform their pray towards the husband. They should pray their husbands' feet regarding them feet of god and proceed the household duty taking it for the pray for the husband. (My Translation 238)

One of the renowned Hindu priest Bhulahari Pandit from okhaldhunga often supports this views that females are the soil under the husbands' feet. He comments, "The women who do not take fasting for their husbands are like a bitch who believed to have destroyed their husbands' clan and known as husband killer (*Poi Tokuwa*)" (Interview with Seema Avas). Some people are still of the view that female should

perform their responsibilities as is in tradition. So, these responsibilities should also be followed in relation to *Teej*.

Different people have different perspectives regarding the celebration of *Teej*. Some favor traditional way to be celebrated but some recent critics do also favor of the celebration of *Teej* by modifying it in new version. Either male or female, equally keep their arguments in favor of traditional way of celebration and modified version of celebration. Contradiction lies here that women themselves are supporting the way of celebration as is in tradition but some of them obviously opposing it. Modern thinkers think that any of the culture or ritual should be able to transform itself through the passage of time so as to exist in the time of immemorial.

Likewise such modern thinker keeps their views in different way than the traditional thinker as they focus their view about *Teej* that it should be performed and celebrated in reformatory way which should be empowered women to come out of their household atmosphere. Journalist Babita Basnet with Annapurna Post in her interview says, "Music is the strong bridges which bring changes in society and make people conscious. So, the songs of *Teej* should be empower women as well as need to be focused to the creative activities, and make them conscious to be hard worker." (*Annapurna Post*, Parisistanka, 29 Shrawan 2066)

The modern thinker thinks that the traditional way of celebration has to be changed and the performance of *Teej* ritual should be improvised according to the consciousness of people and it should be matched in the frame of the changes era. Ritual has to be supposed as the matter of life-bridge which should be helped to lead the life in easy and better path for people rather regarding the subject of hell and heaven. They do not say that the tradition has to be eradicated from society despite that it has to be continued in the improvised form according to the time changes.

Here lies the contradiction between modern thinkers who argue that the rituals have to be continued in improvised form where the traditional thinkers are not ready to agree with modern thinker. The traditional thinker keeps their views that the ritual is associated with the sin and virtue. Therefore, it can not be changed according to the time wishes. Traditional thinker wants to impose the rules and regulations of rituals what it says. Still they are remained as the followers of the Bhanubhakta's *Badhushiksha* which preaches that a faithful wife should be kept herself in the legs of her husband supposing as god. Not only that, they says that only the fortunate women get chances to pray for their husband in the greatest day of *Teej* Anyway either the modern thinker or the traditional thinker both has stated their common opinion that the ritual has to be continued which is entirely associated with human life.

For the present researcher, *Teej* is not only a religious festival but at the same time it is the politics of patriarchal society done upon women in the name of rituals which blackmails the women by creating convincing myths, which seems truth at the surface but are fake or fabulous in reality. Myth says that if women take a drop of water or any food items during her *Brata*, she will be greatest sinner. Myth teaches women that husband is all in all for them. They forget their real ground and self-identity. Their existence is associated with their husband. If women follow the myth they are considered as good women. Therefore, they always try to be good howsoever the suffering they have to face.

On the one hand, she adores herself with red dresses, bangles, *Pote*, *Sindur*, as the sign of Sauvagya. She seems that she is in chain but on the other hand, she sings song of emancipation. Here lies the politics of patriarchy. The Sauvagya and the songs of freedom seem very paradoxical. It is like the song of the caged bird. Here, *Pote*, *Sindur*, bangles, etc. work as a cage of patriarchy and the songs are the effort to

come out of that boundary. It seems that women are trying to come out of certain boundary like the caged bird tries to fly in the sky. But both of their effort turns in vain.

Myth and religion are discourse. Even the follower never questions and blindly follows the culture, myth, religion. Discourse, as constructed by politics, always is formulated by the power. Power creates some truths (myths) and such truths are designed to be followed. As Foucault states, "Effects of truth are produced within the discourse which is themselves are neither true nor false" (1134). Therefore, myth is created to overpower the women by patriarchy. In other words, myths are constructed to play politics upon women. This process is continued from the ancient time till now but the form of politics is changing with change in time. Although women talk about emancipation, they have not come out of the web of patriarchy, because the form of discourse but the theme of it has remained the same.

Politics is embedded in outwardly seemed religious performance. Here in *Teej* too we can find the politics of patriarchal society upon women. Most of the religion are directly associated with myth and invisible power which are unquestionable and blindly followed from ancient time. Moreover, myths are associated with god, society worship and believe it blindly. Superficially *Teej* seems to be the greatest festival of Hindu women; however the hidden reality of it is different. Women are indulged in the activities like decoration, worshipping god, dancing singing in the patriarchal society due to which they never come out of the bond of the same society. They are made puppets in the hands of male.

Even though, People keep their incongruity about the tradition and ritual at the same time they can not be escaped from it and they follow it knowingly or unknowingly. The modern thinker looks the rituals performance in critical

perspectives and they try to reform it according to their life style but the traditional thinker follows it blindly. In this way, either the modern thinker or the traditional thinker both are followed the ritual and tradition in their own way of understanding.

Though the style of performance is changing but culture, tradition, myths are continuing in the improvising form from time immemorial. This aspect of ritualistic performance will be stated as thesis by applying performance theory.

II. Ritualistic Performance

Culture and Performance are interdependent phenomena and are the most important ways of human expressions. Culture is conceived as mental construction, which is set by the beliefs and attitudes and by the values of particular society. Therefore, culture species people, who they are and from where they are. In this regard, Clifford Greetz in his book, *The Interpretation of Culture* writes: "Culture the accumulated totality of such pattern is not just an ornament of human existence but the principle basis of its specificity and essential condition for it" (46). In this sense, every culture is unique and self-reflexive.

The expressive nature of culture is broadly speaking a performance. Performance is an account of reformative action of human action. In the Aristotelian sense it is mimetic, an imitation of human action. Levi-Strauss's idea about performativity can also be taken into consideration who says that performativity is cooked meaning that it is acted and transformed through culture into a conventionally understandable symbolic product. Similarly, Richard Schechner, in his book *Performance Theory* says, ". . . making arts in the procession of transforming raw experience into palatable forms. His transformation is mimetic, a representation" (30).

Thus performance is the theoretical study of human behaviour or the cultural products. However in reality performance is larger than the Theatre itself. By theatre we mean what performers actually do during the performance, whereby performer includes all the activities that takes place among the audience and the performer. In other words, performance not only represents a particular culture, rather it helps understand, interpret and analyze the whole way of life. Man, as believed in the base of traditional notion, as a bearer of culture but nowadays such notion has been shifting to the performance of constitutor of culture. That is why, a person is not defined of himself rather his performance tells us that in which culture he belongs to. In this sense performance theory has been both a subject and method of studying

culture which creates identity, reshapes the body and allows the people to play with their behaviors.

Culture performance is an only way through which emotion, feeling, pain and experience of people become visible. It is an act of doing something or displaying internal emotion in front of the spectators with their effective and attractive physical movements or by the vocally produced musical notes. The performing arts—singing, dancing and acting are the cultural media through culture moves. In this regard, Elizabeth Bell, in *Theory of Performance*, writes, "Cultural media are the modes and forms of communication the performance utilized: singing, dancing and acting" (130). Sometimes all these phenomenon merge and contribute to create an event for public expression and display.

The performing arts—singing, dancing, drama and different forms as well as other cultural performance have been used from the dawn of human civilization. Such arts and illiterate society are some of the deepest sanctioned ways of living. Singing the oldest but young genre of performing arts is oral emotional expression of common people. The legacy of tradition of traditional songs goes back to our ancestor. And the performance of songs equate to the performance of drama. It is because songs contain all the dramatic elements: music, dance, plots, dialogue, characters, and interactions within it.

Songs are almost all public and their artistic presentation is shown through gestures. The songs are composed of musical notes, and their harmonic representations form a quasi-linguistic vocabularies and grammar of musical composition. Their use of literary devices like symbol, metaphor, simile, alliteration, repetition and image make it artistic, interesting and vivid. The oral expressions of dumb words are given life of the rules of practices, repetition of memory that almost exists in performance. Further, songs like language follow the basic structural form, and then, become a medium of freeing their enormous feelings—joys, sorrow, fear and jubilation—whatever touches them in their daily life and whatever changes occurring in their territory are reflected in their songs.

Among the performing arts, dance has been considered the most primitive and sophisticated form; it is self-conscious form and spontaneous with the embodiment of culturally constructed norms and values. Since the dance events are choreographed from the beginning to the end, it fascinates audiences' attention and makes them prepare for the heavenly flight. During the dance performance both dancer and singer play the role of different characters. Dance performance can also be taken as cultural expression. In this sense, dance performance reflects and helps to sustain the norms and expression of the culture in which they belong to. Similarly, in the dance practice—costumes, appearance and movement make it as if they are rooted from the time immemorial. But if we analyze the same dance practice comparing with tradition from which it came and if we look at its inherent performative quality as is in tradition, we can easily find the present performances are far contradicted with tradition without ditto following. It is because of the change of time, changing consciousness of time, modern education system and acculturation. People began to be conscious and they began to think any of the cultural traits in terms of its effects into the some aspects of human development thereby filtration of the bad or say inhuman aspects of culture are began to be ignored and so the changes in cultural performance seemed to have practiced. Such changes are not principally done rather it came in floor through performances and the changed version of culture being practiced in the society.

Performance theory assumes that the presentation of some ingredients of cultural traits which help us to analyze any human behaviour or action as performance. An ideal performance fulfills all the aesthetic and social properties of human desire. Properties like thematic action, harmonious progress, rhythmical structure are not only the subject of study in performance, rather elements like audience, performance, time sequence, performing stage, value of the used object, frame, rule and text events should also be considered.

Audiences are integral part of performance. They observe and evaluate the events, skill and the usefulness of performance. Audience's responses play a vital role in every

performance. Lack of receptivity, on the part of audience, spoils the whole performance. By this nature, audiences are the indicators that respond approval and disapproval of the performance by clapping, hooting and throwing clothes. Their response varies as the variation occurs in the performance, for instance, people jeer in whistling, where in the rock concert people throw their clothes. Such practice of responding to the performance occurs during the cultural performance based on their cultural tradition. Schechner has clearly stated that ". . . performance is the domain of audience" (10).

When we come to consider performance, we must remember that no performance takes place out of spatio-temporal framework. The place where performance takes place is called a stage. Such stage varies depending upon the nature of performance. If it is a religious performance, the stage generally is a riverbank or temple ground. Often cultural performance happens in public hall, community centre, in home or in open place.

Performance is the means-perhaps the principal means-through which people come to understand their world, they enforce their view on it and transform both small scale and large scale. It can be applied for conservative and for revolutionary uses. As a conservative force, it reinforces truth of the world and enacts and verifies the social order. As a transformational force, performance behaviour has the power to restructure, social order, through the persuasive power of rhetoric and through the power of redefinition both audience and context.

Performance is not just mirror reflection of life, but their active agent of change and progress. Performance educates people and, to a great extent, it is responsible for the transmission of societies, cultural heritage from generation to generation. Performance has power to make the emotion, visible and audible to the audience. Performance can work as a historical document among the various kinds of historical sources; cultural performance occupies the specific place. Since culture saves the people, it directly or indirectly reflects a historical background of a performing culture. In some traditional songs, we find serial events of past time being reported. Hence, performance inherently acts a history. In the same way,

the appearance of performer, their costume, jewellery, language, performance style and manner also signal the history. So, cultural performance carries history and its change in different time.

Theory is an eye to view what is there in nature of the world. It invites people to imagine, explore and to create new knowledge and practice over the world. What is there is speculated through guess, supposition, proposition, hypothesis, premise, conception, model and explanation. One comes with the replacement of its new experiment to generalize the earlier existing ideas, beliefs, principles to specific cases. They create association between phenomena and predict about what will happen next so that theories can serve to describe, predict and explain the world. Elizabeth Bell in *Theories of Performance* remarks:

“Theory” can be an intimidating word, especially when associated with complex scientific and mathematical concepts. Most of us can link Albert Einstein, the theory of relativity, and the question $E= mc^2$. That simple and elegant formula, however, stands for very complex relationships among space, time, mass, and energy that radically revised Newtonian physics and the accepted “laws” of gravity. One hundred years later, physics still grapple with the implications of Einstein’s work for everything from the universe’s “big bang” beginning and black holes to the smallest ingredients in the universe- muons, photons, and gluons. (2)

Theory brings the concept of scientific and mathematical formula, thus, associating with complex relationship among space, time, mass, and energy. It is the study of world nature theorizing in principle in course of time. In the life related passages, theories of drama and ritual are to be discussed. The word ‘performance’ has been derived from the verb ‘perform’ which means to do or show an action. ‘Performance’ having two components “perfour-nir-par” and “fournis” from old French means “thoroughly” and “to furnish” or “bringing to completion”. So, performance is an act of completion or an involved process rather than to do

a single deed or act. In this regard, the theorist Barbara Krishenblatt- Gimblett in her essay “Performance Studies” comments:

The field of Performance Studies takes performance as an organizing concept for the study of a wide range of behavior. A post discipline of inclusions, Performance Studies sets no limit on what can be studied in terms of medium and culture. Nor does it limit the range of approaches that can be taken. A provisional coalescence on the move, Performance Studies is more than the sum of its inclusion. (43/44)

From this comment, a performance study is broader in its application than its definition. It is a post disciplinary approach to look at the world so that there is no limitation of inclusion.

Theorists have been contemplating performance for centuries on the stage, in religion, rites and rituals, in social and political arenas on the page and in the bodies of people who make these performances happen again and again. They raise the basic questions of theory to ask, what is performance? Why do people perform? And how does performance organize, maintain, and transform lives, communizes and cultures? But, they can not be answered “yes” or “no” or “right” or “wrong” rather it ought to provoke observation of and reflection on performances around us. Gimblett further remarks:

Performance Studies starts from the premise that its objects of study are not to be divided up and parceled out, medium by medium, to various other discipline-music, dance, dramatic literature, art history. The prevailing division of the arts by medium is arbitrary, as is the creation of fields and departments devoted to each. . . . Moreover, the historical avant-garde and contemporary art have long questioned these boundaries and gone about blurring them. (43/44)

The historical division of the objects to study performance is not seen clear though they are in various disciplines such as music dance, dramatic literature, and art history. This is the age of multidisciplinary areas in which the boundaries are getting blurred and perspectives are being plural. Tower Hollis in her *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*, says, “Theory is intended to pose interesting questions, not to give final, for-all time answers” (qtd. In Neupane 12).

In Hollis’ view, theories raise questions rather than giving an ultimate answer which is true for ever. Thing once proved to be true gets improved in the days of its coming. As everything changes new spectacles of study come in practice.

Performance is inherently human activity which refers any act of performing a ceremony, play or piece of music. So, it is doing something such as musical, dramatic, ritualistic ceremony and other entertainments. Theorists try to account for performance as something that happens, emerges, and grows in through a process with a set of activities. These acts of performance make believe, in play, for fun in the indicative mood which is “as if”. Richard Schechner says, “In the disjunctive mood, the famous “as if” or, as Sanskrit aesthetic would have it; performances are Lilas-sports play and Maya, illusory. But the Sanskrit tradition emphasizes, so is all life, Lila and Maya” (xix).

Though the Hindu Sanskrit tradition defines all performances as Lila and Maya which are illusory and only dramas, they surely have meaning and carry out the reality of life and world too. Schechner further comments, “As Lilas, performances not only play out modes, they play with modes leaving actions hanging and unfinished, so, theatrical events are fundamentally experimental” (xix). This definition seems narrow for it limits only the acts of modes in Lilas and Maya. More than that, performance studies includes various human activities in the society. In this regard, Elizabeth Bell comments:

While physicists are theorizing the drama of the universe, most of us are caught up in operationalizing and testing the human theories that organize our daily lives. Based on experiences, we generalize from principles to specific cases: Red is a good color for me and this shirt is great! We create associations between phenomena: I studied what will happen next: the traffic light will change in thirty seconds. In answering “what”, “why”, and “how” questions, theories serve to describe, predict, and explain the world. (3)

So, raising the questions what, why, and how theories search the answer of these questions. Performance theory, likewise, asks the questions what? How? Why? In the act of performance and seeks answer through the actions of human daily lives. Turner writes:

I regard the social drama as empirical unit of social process from which has been derived and is constantly derive the various genres of cultural performance [. . .]. My condition is that the major genres of cultural performance, from ritual to theatre and film and narration from myth to the novel not only originate in the social drama but also continue to draw meaning and force from the social drama. (93)

As a social drama, performance is an open-ended study which includes various genres of cultural performance. It not only involves the films and plays but also the rituals, myths and things outside of itself. This performativity has many purposes that are often language as functions, uses, or intentions. This purposeful performativity is utilized to do a number of things-for individuals, groups, and cultures.

But culture is not a static phenomena rather it is a changing phenomena. It is ever changing; its influences the economic, ecological, socio- political aspects of any human society. But it is very difficult to define about cultural change. Malinowski says:

Cultural change is a process by which the existing order of a society is transformed from one type to another. Cultural change thus covers the more or less rapid process of modification in the political construction of a society in its domestic institution and its mode of territorial settlement, in its belief and system of knowledge, education and law, as well as in its material tools and use and consumption of goods on which its social economy is based is altering. Change is a permanent factor of human civilization; it goes on everywhere and at all times. It may be influenced by factors and forces spontaneously arising within the community; or it may take place through the contact of different cultures. (qtd. In Khatiwada 11)

Now the individual or collective identity exists due to the cultural practices that they carry within. Such cultural practices create the identity for individual, group, society, and nation and so on. But nowadays due to the various reasons the traditionally followed cultural practices are under the impacts of factors and forces. Now, no culture is pure and untouched by the factors and forces like modernization and globalization of culture caused mainly by information and technology. Due to the scientific modernization and globalization every culture is practicing some newness. Along with the impacts of modernization and globalization each culture, in no matter, is buttressing the other advanced neighboring cultures, out of which the notion about diffusion and acculturation are in practice. So, crisis in cultural identity is being seen. About the cultural identity, Prasain writes, "This itself is a formidable problem for all the societies attempting to preserve their identity through the preservation of their culture and rural societies which for centuries have been following it questionably, face a great cultural dilemma" (qtd. In Khatiwada 12).

In course of time, some ritual performativity transforms from generation to generation exactly whereas most of them get changed though they remain in improved form. It is due to the various factors like influences of other advanced cultures and community and

modernity through mass media and technological development that paved the way for flexibility in different sectors like the political, economic, and historical and so do the cultural and ritual performances. Monier Williams comments:

Ritual in the strict sense of the term lost its importance after the Vedic period; the old ceremonies fell in to disuse, their modern relations being purely archeological demonstrations. . . . There was also a notable breaking down of the relation between myth and ritual, which during the ancient period had been closely associated. (qtd. In Neupane 21)

Rituals are always associated with rites of passage that mark a transition from one status to another. In contemporary time, ritualistic performances are taken as important cultural organs in both religious and secular practices. Mathieu Deflem in a discussion views, "Turner defined ritual as "prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to a technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mythical beings and powers" (4). For Turner, there is in ritual an essential element of religious belief. Religion thus refers to both belief and practice.

Ritual not only celebrates its inherent aspects through performances but also carries the controversial relation alternating with the traditional or mythical way of definition. It is due to the splitting away of the religion from rest of the components of the life structure like political, social, economic, domestic and recreational of life. In the same regard having discussion on Turner's notion of anti-structure in the topic, *Religion and Ritual in Tribal and Modern Societies*, Deflem sees that:

In his discussions on ritual in modern societies he employed the same definition of ritual as in his work on the Ndembu: For Turner, all rituals involved symbolic manipulation and a reference to religion. In the case of rituals among the Ndembu this may be clear. From Turner's analyses, we indeed learn that in Ndembu rituals of affliction, for instance, reference is

made to a religious belief in the powers of the supernatural "shades" of the ancestors. (14)

Modernism has influenced not only in scientific discoveries, art and literature, but it has also affected on politics, economy, language, culture and religion as well. It is the consciousness of time when people knowingly or unknowingly prepare their life cycle according to the dynamism of time. Due to the modernity and the modern education system systematizes the growing consciousness of people. Scientific and practical education is now dominating in academic sectors due to which the intellectuals slowly started to argue for the scientific existence of myths and religion thereby rites and rituals of any religion and myth get affected.

Besides modern education system, various political and social movements are also the factors to make the people conscious. Political movements basically 1950 onwards, other various movements paved the way for the social awareness making the people conscious that among they were the movement of 1989, 2005/06 and other treaties that guaranteed the rights of people especially from marginalized class. 33% of participation of women in each sector has been assured in the present context which paved the way for the women empowerment.

Due to the impacts of scientific development through information technology, the daily livelihood of the people has been changing and improving day by day and the rites and the rituals are not left untouched by such impacts that the people have been facing up; rites and rituals thereby directly related to the human beings.

In such present scenario certain rites and rituals are being improved and need to be improved. Some vague and seemingly uneasy components of cultural practices are at the threshold of extinction. It is because of the conscious of the people that caused by the political, social, economic and scientific development. So, people are now aware about what is right and wrong.

Now, various NGOs and INGOs are propagating their programs in various sectors including women development thereby adding conscious in the women mind. So, gradually women are becoming conscious practically in the mental level though they are less educated. Such awareness is often related to the religious life of the people and as related to the daily household and domestic reality mainly women directly bear the pros and cons of any aspects of the culture. Industrial involvement of female also is the cause of becoming conscious. In this regard, Turner explicates:

In modern societies, on the other hand, religion is "regarded as something apart from our economic, political, domestic and recreational life. Religion is part of the division of social labor". Modern religion, since the industrial revolution and because of the processes of institutionalization and secularization, has split from the rest of culture. The rituals of modern, industrial religion were denoted by Turner as liminal (as are tribal rituals where religion and other cultural sectors are interwoven). (2)

Like Darwin's phrase "Survival of the Fittest", the ones which adapt the style of change in course of time exist whereas those which can't support, copy or improve themselves in the flow have been swept away from their existence. The religious rites and rituals also face the same problems. The easier and dynamic they are, the longer they survive and are practised. The more difficult and traditional they are, the faster they are being extinct. Defflem further says:

Turner argued, religion, economy, law, politics, and other cultural domains are essentially interwoven. Tribal rituals, therefore, must have some religious component, since tribal religion in both mythology and ritual practices has not (yet) split off from other sectors of tribal culture. In industrial societies, on the other hand, the several institutions have become independent of each

other, each of them dealing with certain needs and questions which these societies face (law, politics, economy, religion, etc.). (2/3)

Turner also went beyond classical British social anthropology by describing rituals as detailed case studies of ritual performances involving active symbolic manipulation. Deflem quotes:

Turner wanted to bring in the "human coefficient," as he called it (Turner 1974a:33), and show how the social is not something over and above the individual, but how principles of social organization both affect and are manipulated by concrete individuals, i.e., how society and the individual come together. This is especially apparent in Turner's identification of the bipolarity of symbols. In identifying the sensory and the ideological poles of symbols, Turner contributed to reconciling sociological and psychological interpretations of ritual symbols. (16)

In this way, the ritual performances have been flexible and their performativity is getting broad in the meaning. Due to the scheduled life of people, these principles of performances have been changed as desired by individuals or the society. The global impact of secularism and the awareness of cultural identity in the modern context have been getting its steps everywhere. As the researchers researched in the western cultures and rituals with various theories, it is essential to have a look in the non-western cultures like *Hindu* rituals. Nepal has recently got the great political change. With the flow of its change in politics, every cultural aspect is seeking to have newness and so does the ritual *Teej*.

With the context of political change in Nepal, the notion of Hindu kingdom has changed its name in secular state, the King earlier believed as incarnation of lord Vishnu has been recognized as simple citizen after the establishment of people's democracy. After secularism, Nepalese females also seem to have less associated with the religious, traditional

and social belief that their husbands should be regarded as the form of God like Shiva, Bishnu and others. Such changed notion about the social belief of the husband is now taking as a normal person rather than the incarnation of any god. They started to take their husband as equivalent as they are.

Likewise, the ritual *Teej* has faced many challenges to remain in its form as a religious rite in the modern dynamic context. This work of thesis aims to view how *Teej* is remaining in its new improved form with the gradual shift of globalization.

The theory of improvisation aims to study any component of the performance aspects being a spectator lying between the tradition and the modern. It analyzes the traditionally followed qualities of any cultures of the society and at the same time it hinders the same components of the culture to be improved. The theory of improvisation basically studies any aspects of performance quality of culture under spatio-temporal dimension. So, it covers the traditional as well as improvised (modern) aspects of any cultural performances.

In this regard, the present researcher has aimed to study the performativity of the Hindu women's ritual *Teej* and its tradition-based ritual practices and at the same time the improvised state of the same ritual *Teej*.

III. Performativity and Improvisation of *Teej*

Teej is a colorful festival of the Hindu woman. Traditionally in this festival women are not supposed to take single drop of water for the whole day. For married women *Teej Brata* is a compulsion but for unmarried it is an optional. According to Hindu mythology, *Hindu Nari* (Hindu Ritual women) should be *Patibrata* (obedient for their husband at any cost), otherwise, they are supposed to *Kulangharni* (destroyer of husband's generation).

Mainly *Teej* festival is a worship of Lord Shiva, on this occasion women wish their husband as powerful as Lord Shiva and live a long life and almighty. Unmarried girls pray to Shiva, so that they get husbands as the characteristics as Lord Shiva. The story of *Teej* festival is associated with the story of romance of Shiva Parwati. Parwati takes hard fasting for sixteen thousand years to get Shiva as her partner. Likewise, women are supposed to compare themselves Parwati.

Teej songs and their performance seem very much paradoxical. They take fasting for their husbands and adore themselves as a symbol of *Sauvagya*, the sign of their husband. At the same time, they criticize their husband's activities through their songs. Not only that, women praise their own beauty assent a fact that women should be beautiful. The given song is an example of how they have to be beautiful in the days of *Teej*. One of the famous singers of Nepal, Sindu Malla sings, "I have become beautiful with *Sindur* and *Pote*. I am tip-top, happy and proud with friends' response."
(My Translation)

This song says that a woman needs to proud of her beauty along with *Sindur* and *Pote*. Her existence seems to be a subject of praise by somebody else. She has not

been able to think beyond her periphery. Here she forgets her identity and remains happy with her physical appearance. This song reflects the ground reality of present status of women who are always busy to beautify themselves. Whatever she has done, it symbolizes that she is doing it for her husband.



(A worshiper woman dancing in Pashupatinath Premises during *Teej*)

(Figure No. 1)

Besides that, they mock at political scenario; sing the social issues, advocate for empowerment of women, end of social discrimination and social violence. This voice can be heard in the following song:

A historical constitution is going to be formed; all people are aroused for their rights. Rebel and come forward to ensure the women rights and to construct women's constitution. (My Translation)

This song shows that at present women are not only singing their private pains, sufferings but also live with their strongest voice for political correctness, construction of new constitution, space for women in constitution. This reveals that

their domestic space and moving ahead for their own progress as well as the development of the society. They are also concerned about public issues. They have created their own bands to raise their voices through *Teej* songs and dance.



(Women are dancing on the auspicious occasion of *Teej* in Kathmandu)

(Figure No.2)

Teej is taken to be the festival of women; however, now a day even male members have started celebrating this festival. They take *Brata*, worship Shiva and Parvati the way women do. The former President of Free Student Union, Mahendra Morang Adarsha Multiple Campus, Biratnagar, Bhim Parajuli has been taking fasting during *Teej* from his early childhood. He says:

The greatest fasting for the worship of Shiva is *Shivaratri*, *Teej*, and *Shrawanko Sombar*. I am the spiritual man; the materialistic society has turned the youth of today in a wrong way. Therefore only the right path is the spiritual one. I also encourage other colleague to worship Shiva to catch the right way of life. I never go to temple in *Teej* day like the women; however, I celebrate it in a quite reformed way.

(Interview with Bhim Parajuli)

This is an example of how man also has started celebrating *Teej* along with the change of time. According to him, to lead an honest and good life, spiritual life should

be followed. The worship of Shiva or any God is not merely the responsibility of women but man can also be the devotee of gods and goddesses. Along with the change in time, the way of worshipping is changing and the spiritual way of life is equally necessary for both, men and women.

In the context of Nepal, in different region, different climate, geographical location, cultural diversities, economic status determine the way of celebration of the same festival in different way. Superficially it seems different but the main theme of *Teej* is same- worship of husband. Along with the changes of time, the way of celebration is changing. Tradition-follower women take fasting without having anything on the *Teej* day. But the present women take fast having fruits or some food items. It is because of the consciousness of the time and the changing political scenario of the country. Political leaders are also involved in the *Teej* festival. Jhalanath Khanal, chairman of CPN UML dancing in *Teej* festival with *Didi Bahini* (Sisters) in Kathmandu, last year.



(Figure No. 3)

Traditionally it was taken the festival of women; later on it has become the festival of men and women. Not only that, it has become a medium of expressing and

advertising of different political parties and social organizations. Using the *Teej* songs they express their own ideologies, protest, and mockery and so on. Even male members express their family sufferings through *Teej* songs. In the past *Teej* songs were the medium to express females' pain and sufferings, now a days, it is used to express personal pains, matter of dissatisfaction with the public issues. Men are sung the *Teej* song. Ram Prasad Khanal, Nepali Folk singer sung the *Teej* songs last year in the picture (see Figure No. 4.) Different organizations, colleges, political parties arrange the *Dar* party. Not only that, *Teej* is supposed as the inclusive festival for women and men. (See Figure No. 5, males too are celebrating it.)



(Figure No. 4)



(Figure No. 5)

In the past, they took fasting without drinking a single drop of water for their husband, but now they are taking fruits, milk, juice etc and adore themselves to make their husband happy.

(A worshipper women drinking juice nearby Pashupati Temple in *Teej* day)

(Figure No. 6)

As the way of celebration of *Teej* is going through some changes, women seem to be coming out of their patriarchal boundary, on the other hand, they become free from one chain but at the same time, unfortunately, they happen to fall in another noose of patriarchy.

Where is emancipation? Their mind is blocked by their adoration. Here lies the paradox- lips sing for emancipation but the activities are still binding them within the boundary of patriarchy. Howsoever, they have been singing the songs from the beginning of this tradition up to now, women have not been able to free themselves. Every year they sing the songs of freedom, the same activities are recurring in different form. Most of the high-class women spend their precious time and money on their beauty and decoration.



(Women in Hongkong taking a group photo in *Teej*)

(Figure No. 7)

Sangita Raymaghi, in *Can Women Rebel*, writes: "I saw in the *Teej* songs the struggle of a woman trying to find the space for herself-space which she could call her own. I wanted to see how through the *Teej* songs a woman raises her head out of her little nest and begins to sing her little songs which for once she can call her own" (14). Rayamajhi tries to show the women struggle to come out of her littleness through the little songs. Nevertheless, the sorry things are that a woman try to come out and wants

to be free but they are not much successful. The patriarchy is covered in society like the cub web, which one dead the next will bear. Patriarchy is the huge net to tie women. So that women are trying to come out from that net but they are not completely being success. Their exercises, to get freedom may little bit success, although they are not completely successful to get their rights through the *Teej* songs and other activities. In the context of Nepal, ritually and constitutionally women are tightly bounded in the little space.

Through songs, women express their suffering of their life. Especially they sing the songs of pains they have endured in their husbands' home: the matter of dissatisfaction with their husbands and in-laws family. They also satire the public issues while they sing and dance in a particular place. The interesting aspect of this performance is that the women mock their husbands through their songs but the audiences are their husband themselves. They remain silent and listen to their wives' sarcastic expressions.

In the present context, *Teej* performance is not entirely limited to the expression of women sufferings. Through their songs, they try to rectify the political disorder, violence, mistakes of the political leaders and advocate for the peace and development of the country, emancipation of women and national unity. "Everything should not be taken negatively, to talk about own husband is a part of women empowerment"(Annapurna Post, page 3). For example, last year, Nepali women wished for peace, security and construction of new constitution in their songs.

A couple is equally important to each other. However, *Teej* shows only the importance of husband for a wife. It does not keep balance for the conjugal life. To drive the conjugal life smoothly a husband and a wife have to play the equal role. Other wise it will break. But *Teej* remains silence to play the equal role for married

life. It only focuses to wife that she should be obedient and worship for her husband but her husband's need not to be obedient and worship for his wife.

Likewise, many critics and feminist raises the issues, *Teej* is the festival of absorption of women by patriarchy. In different pretence, like fasting of *Teej* patriarchy absorbed women. To prove this statement we can borrow the lines of Akhanda Bhandari, columnist and journalist of Kantipur Daily. In his article about *Teej*, he states, "Can husband stay hungry and thirsty for the long life of their wives?" (My Translation, Page 7) In Hindu culture, there are some festivals in which women take fasting for whole day for the shake of their husband, but there are no any festival for man to worship for their wife. This is why this ritualistic festival is the social discrimination created by patriarchy by using power.

The power politics of male has defined women in an utterly wrong way. Women are stronger than man because women have reproductive power but males lack it. To cover the weakness of males, they have defined women as *Paapini*, *Kulangharni*. The given extract shows that how women have been misdefined by males. Prava Kaini, in Annapurna Post says:

It is taken as sin to touch male, fruits. The saying that women should observe fasting to be redeemed from the sin is an extreme form of discrimination over women by men. It is wrong that *Rishi Panchami* is supposed as the redeemed day of menstruated women that menstruation is the sign of sin. It is not better as child birth power as sin. Therefore, this folk is not compulsion to worship. (My Translation)

According to her, by taking the natural phenomenon like menstruation, male has created the myth as it a weakness of women and sign of sin. She is not allowed to

touch her husband, fruits, or anything related to water. It shuns the identity of women and has announced them untouchable which is politics done upon women by men by showing their weakness which in itself is the strength of them.

This is the politics played by man by wearing the veil of ritual. In this sense ritual turns to be a power politics. In this power politics there is the chain of discourse, power and truth. Here politician is male (agent), female is receiver (patient). The myth maker is male who has created the notion of celebration. First, the male has created the discourse of celebration by using his power. That discourse started working from the very beginning and spread. Women became habituated on it. They never questioned it as it had already remained in their mind as a truth. Because of its link with religion, with Shiva and Parwati- the mighty Gods, it became more believable and less questionable. Therefore, women blindly follow it.

Different Aspects of Teej

Mainly *Teej* is a religious festival, but it is related with multiple aspects like economic status, geographical location, political condition, cast system, religion, etc. Cultural celebration depends on the economic status. *Teej* festival is celebrated in different ways according to people's economic status. High class women, middle class women and low class women celebrate *Teej* in their own way. Because of economic status their way of celebration of *Dar Khane*, adoration of clothes and jewelries are different.

Economic Status

The traditional way of *Dar Khane* is also changed. To celebrate *Dar*, high class women arrange the party in Hotel using the highly expensive foods as well as foreign food items. It is the impact of globalization. On the one hand, they are celebrating *Teej*, Hindu culture; on the other hand, they are using the foreign food

items like Pizza, Burger, Chinese foods and other items. High-class women use expensive jewelers, expensive and branded clothes. High-class women and their relatives arrange are seen *Dar* party in Hotel in the following figure.



(In the Day of *Dar* women are celebrating *Dar* party with their relatives in Hotel)

(Figure No.8)

Likewise, middle class women use the mixed types of food items. They neither totally follow the tradition nor totally adopt the modern way of celebration of *Dar*. They seem in hybrid position. Middle class women try to copy the way of celebration of high-class women. They use their clothes and jewelers according their economic status. They are more attached to the people, celebrate *Teej* dance in public area from different places, sing song, and gather in huge mass of people in public area like chowk, temple of God and Goddesses. With time changing, they sing songs, both public issues and personal issues. In their dance and song, they use the modern types of songs as well as traditional types of songs and dances like *Sanginee* dance. (See Figure No. 9 women are dancing in modern way) and (See Figure No. 10 women are dancing in *Sanginee*.) It is shown in this figure:



(Figure No. 9)



(Figure No. 10)

The lower class women follow the traditional way of celebration. They do not change like the high class and middle class women. They use the traditional types of food items like *Khira*, *Dhakane*. Their adoration is very simple. They want to follow the middle class way of celebration but they do not seem to reach in their rank. Especially their adoration of jewelers and clothes are very simple. It reflects their economic status. Especially, lower class women belong to the remote village of Nepal. Almost all remote places of Nepal, the condition of women seem very similar life style. In *Teej* they celebrate gathering in public area like *Deurali*, Shiva temple. In the given picture the village women are dancing in *Sanginee*. The given picture speaks of their status.

Women performing *Sanginee* dance in Sindhupalchowk

(Figure No.11)

***Teej* in Urban Sectors and Village Areas**

Nowadays, urban women have started celebrating *Teej* even before a month. Before the days of *Teej* these women go to have *Dar* in their relatives turn by turn. They also start dancing gathering in their relatives' houses and public areas. Women in red Sari, full make-ups, and expensive jewellery are seen in the market for their shopping. The shopping complexes are totally occupied by women. The women from rich family compare their clothes and jewellery to their fellow ones and always want to be superior to others. This type of unhealthy competition affects the social harmony of our country. Jivan Chisapani in Annapurna Post writes, "Now a days *Teej* is full of disparity and ill-competition of clothes and jewellery. This competition has increased the attraction towards luxurious life style" (2066 Bhadra 8).

In urban area, that unhealthy competition has increased in the name of culture. It leads society towards backward and hinders the development. The investment in clothes and jewellery are unproductive that has increased disparity among people. Economically weak women want to have things like that of rich women. For it they have to borrow things or take some loans to buy things.

If we look at another aspect of it in the villages, we find that they do not rush to market to buy any expensive things like the women in the cities. They just have to prepare grass for animals for that special day so that they do not have to work on that particular day. They preserve the foodstuffs like cucumber, and curd to be safe from dehydration.

Political Scenario

The performance of *Teej* depends upon the political situation of our country. When there is democracy in our country women are free to sing the song they like. For example, this year, women in their song emphasized the need of Constituent

Assembly in our country. But during Gynedra's Autocratic rule they could not sing any song of freedom or emancipation. Rekha Kusum Regmi writes in *Gorkhapatra Daily*:

In the beginning, this festival was a part of family affair, now a day it has become a political and social phenomenon. Different political parties fight each other for the post and power but this day all seem to be united. That is why this festival has become a means to political integration among people. (My translation 5)

In the beginning, this festival was a part of family affair, now a day it has become a political and social phenomenon. Different political parties fight each other for the post and power but this day all seem to be united. That is why this festival has become a means to political integration among people.

Caste System

Hindu women from *Brahmin* and *Chettri* community take fasting on that particular day but other Hindu women from *Mangolian*, *Newar* community celebrate *Teej* as the festival of the song and dance. They do not take strict type of fasting like that of *Brahmin* and *Chettri* women. They dance, sing and enjoy among their community members. Women except *Brahmin* and *Chettri* community do not take part in *Puja Bidhi* with those of higher class women. But they perform dance, singing songs together. Even Christian, Buddhists and Islam people come to observe the celebration of this festival but they do not participate themselves in fasting and worship, but they dance with the Hindu women. It is the impact of acculturation and globalization.

To sum up, *Teej* is the festival of Hindu women. This festival unites all family members and relatives at one place to celebrate *Teej*. They enjoy and take merriments

together. This festival is taken as a way of enjoyment that helps forgetting the pains and suffering of one's life. Music, songs and dance are integral part of our life. It helps one to live a spiritual life by worshipping God. Shiva is taken as a supreme God in Hindu religion. Shiva is also the part of human being. In other words Shiva is supposed to be the combined form of male and female. That combination is called human being. However, this festival has carried some bad tenets from the very beginning. Women are forced to take *Brata*, worship their husband and then only she will be emancipated from all the sins she has done in her life. Human being is combination of both male and female, but here the so-called Brahmins have isolated male members from their life partners and made them supreme God. That interpretation is taken as bad aspect of this festival.

Teej is a festival and its story is linked with mythology created by Hindu religion. Through the songs and dances women want to be free from their bondages for a short time, they satirize the so-called patriarchal society but ultimately they have to live in the same framework by following the set of norms and values of the very society. Women are forced to take fast, do *Puja* for the sake of their husbands' long life and good health. This is nothing but politics done upon women by men. As this festival is associated with religion, women never question about its significance but go on following what they are asked to.

Therefore, emancipation seems to be ever needed but difficult to gain. For emancipation, first of all women should try to know themselves, their position in society. They should question themselves- who am I? Instead of worshipping their husband, they should start questing for their identity. To create self identity, they should come out of the sense of physical beauty, adoration for others, fasting for

others, and her superficiality. She should emphasize on her beauty of mind not of her body.

Now women should come out from male boundary and start questioning. Question like why only women are made to fast for their husband? Why do not husband fast for their wives? Why *Sauvagya* is linked with only women? Why *Lachhin* is associated with women not men? Why women's natural phenomenon like menstruation is taken as sin? Why only women are taken as impure? How men are always pure? Women's emancipation is possible only when she starts raising such types of questions and questions herself and essence of her existence.

Traditions, rituals and cultures are gradually changed with the social activities and human behavior. While it affects the entire way of human life. Cultural reformation does not occur over a night. Some of the cultural aspects are criticized and followed in the same time because we can not abandon them although we know that it is not necessary to continue. Therefore, tradition remains as an integral part of society as a blue print in human mind. *Teej* is such a ritual which people criticize and follow at the same time. Some of the characteristics of performance have changed but the essence of it is not changed. It is because rituals, which are associated with myth, are so deeply rooted in our mind that we can not shun it easily. In the context of *Teej* festival, the tone, gesture, language, music, language, performances have changed but the myth and the purpose are not changed.

Brata is fruitful for the good health either it is men or women. Yoga takes that for a healthy person fasting is necessary in a week. From scientific perspective fasting provides rest for our body mechanism which is needed for our health. In this way, fasting is not bad but the way of interpretation in our society is bad because fasting is entirely associated with women which are compulsion for them to be redeemed.

Women are supposed as sinner figure and men are pure one. But if we observe it in the eyes of nature all the existing phenomenon of this world are equal. If so, how the nature discriminates to men and women? That interpretation seems politics of the patriarchy to women. Women are defined in wrong way. For example, menstruation is supposed to the sign of sin, pregnancy as the weaknesses of women. Naturally, women are superior in their own ground, and men are in their own, but the society defines women as inferior, impure, weak, and emotional.



(Figure No. 12)

(Sangini dance is arranged
by Aama Samuha in Kathmandu.)



(Figure No. 13)

(Teej dance is arranged
by Aama Samuha in Kathmandu.)



(Figure No. 14)



(Figure No. 15)

Bratalu women are standing in line near Gaushala mid day of Teej to worship the Pashupati Nath in the above figures.



(Figure No. 16)

Bratalu women are dancing and standing in line near Gaushala.



(Figure No. 17)

Crowd of the people on the *Teej* day nearby *Pashupatinath*.



(Figure No. 18)

Rishi Panchami worshipers' group.

IV. Conclusion

Teej is the greatest festival among the Hindu women. In this ritual, women pray for the betterment of their husband as Lord Shiva. Women worship their husband even not taking a drop of water for the whole day of *Teej* as is in tradition. In the previous night of the actual *Teej*, they take *Dar* as the preparation for the next day. It is respected than *Shiva Ratri*, *Shrawanko Sombar*. Hindu married women take fasting and worship Shiva for their husbands' good health and long life. Likewise, unmarried girls take fasting and worship Shiva to get their future husband like Lord Shiva. On the third day of the *Teej*, they take *Rishi Panchami* to redeem from the sin of menstruation.

Traditionally, it was supposed to be the festival of only women. But along with the change in time, *Teej* has become an inclusive festival of men and women. Women not only sing the song of personal pains and sufferings of their domestic life, rather they have started singing the drawbacks and problems of society, public issues, peace, harmony, and political correctness. In earlier time women were not allowed to take even a drop of water in the particular day of *Teej* in the name of their husband. They were taught to be *Pati Brata* (honest for husband). At present, women are allowed to take fruits, milk, and juice in the worshipping day.

The style of celebrating of *Teej* has been changed, but if we meticulously observed this ritual, we find the hidden politics of male dominated society. Women are allowed to singing and dancing as their wish, they are allowed to have fruits, milk, juice during their fasting but they have not come out of the web of the patriarchy because whatsoever the mode they adopt, they are singing, dancing and worshipping for their husband. *Teej* has become the means of politics to dominate women by men covering the veil of religion and culture. It is not only a religion but if we observe in

deep level it is merely politics for women. Patriarchy makes the notion that women should do this and not to do that. It makes women to engage in their own limited area like worshipping god, decorating themselves, be obedient for husband. Women do not have enough time to know about the outer world and they are absent from the outer change and reality. So, they can not come out from the domestic atmosphere of male.

Teej is the ritual of Hindu women which consists both good and bad aspects. *Teej* bears the good aspects like women get chance to be united with their family members, she take part in typical types of songs and dances which is the source of refreshment and happiness. It can be taken as the colorful moment of women and greenery of nature. It seems that both are dancing side by side. During *Teej*, typical types of songs and music are played which can not be heard through out the year. They sing the songs of pains and sufferings it becomes the source of relief.

Along with the good aspects it bears a lot of bad aspects. Women are made slave of their husband. Women should worship their husband supposing as god and make them happy but men do not have any such types of festival where they worship for their wives. Husband is always taken as god although he is drunkard, gambler, beau or he beats his own wife. But wife's sincerity is never counted.

Another bad aspect of this festival is the unhealthy competition increasing among the women of different classes. Economically poor class women try to imitate the style of middle class women, middle class women try to copy the higher class women and higher class women try to be superior among their neighbors. Now a days, *Teej* has become the fashion day of women because, whether they have or not, they have to show expensive jewelries, clothes amidst friends. Some women take loans from finance companies and banks or relatives at higher interest rate to purchase

clothes and jewelries for competition with their relatives and neighbors. These types of activities result into family quarrel, economic crisis and tensions.

Culture cannot be changed drastically over a night. It can be changed slowly and gradually by avoiding the bad aspects and following the good aspects of it. If we adopt the beneficial aspects of this festival, it can be the culture of different religions of different countries because it is the time of acculturation and globalization. With the change in time, *Teej* should be made an inclusive festival. If we can decrease the unhealthy competition in terms of wealth, clothes and jewellery and make it a festival of union of family, enjoyment, and wishing for each other, means of awaking from ignorance, inclusive of both men and women, then this festival can really be a best festival of Hindu people.

Work Cited:

Acharya, Bhanubhakta *Bhanu Bhaktako Ramayan(Anyā Kriti Tatha Futkar Rachana)*.

Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan, 2052 238-243.

Barsik Brata Ratnawali. Rishi Panchami Bratakatha/ Haritalika Bratakahta. Ed. Babu Madhav

Prasad Sharma Baranasi:Sagar Publication, n. d.

Basnet, Babita Interview in Annapurna Post Parisistanka, 29 Shrawan, 2066.

Bell, Elizabeth. *Theories of Performance*. California: Sage publication, 1953.

Bhandari, Akhanda. *Brata Kina Baschheu cheli?* Kantipur Daily 23 Aug. 2009, 7.

Chisapanee, Jeevan. *Mahan Parba Teej: Kati Thik ? Kati Bethik ?* Annapurna Post 8 Bhadra,

2066 B.S. 7.

Clifford, Greetz. *The Interpretations of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Deflem, Mathieu. Ritual, Anti-Structure and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's

Processual Symbolic Analysis. "*Jor. for Scientific Study of Religion*" New York, 1991.

Foucault, Michel. "Truth and Power." *Critical Theory Since plato*. Ed: Hazard Adam

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Washington 1965, 1134 .

Kainee, Prabha. *Rishi Panchami Parba ko Aauchitya*. Annapurna Post Daily 4 Bhadra, 2066

B.S.

Khatiwada, Krishna. "Modernity, Musahar and Cultural Change." MA *thesis*. 2010.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. Performance Studies. Ed. Henry Bial: The Performance

Studies Reader. New York: Sage Publication, 2008.

Mahila Nijamati Karmachari Sang. Gorkhapatra Daily, 6 Bhadra, 2066 B.S.

Neupane, Buddhi Sagar. *Performativity and Improvisation in the Hindu Ritual Upanayana*.

MA thesis, 2010.

Pandit, Bhulahari. Personal Interview 4 July 2010.

Parajuli, Bhim. Personal Interview 14 April 2010.

Rayamajhi, Sangita. "Women's Pain and Power in Folk Songs." *Can a Women Rebel?*,

Kathmandu: Across Publication, 2003.

Schechmer, Richard. *Performance Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1988.