

Body as Theatre in *Bode Jatra*

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By

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

We hereby recommend that the dissertation entitled “**Body as Theatre in *Bode Jatra***” by Hukum Thapa be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Philosophy in English degree.

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Abstract

While poking into the facade of the performance of body, the present dissertation receives its critical insight through the seminal ideas of Kapila Vatsayan, Conquergood, Turner, Grotowski, Schechner and *et.al.* The present research work locates body as the site for theatricality of the performance in *Bode Jatra*, exclusively the performativity of the tongue-piercing as an expression of cosmogonic consciousness. It incorporates the movement of the body both from micro and macro aspect which constitutes the theatrical culmination. The body in *Bode Jatra* turns into the liminal space that transcends the corporeal world to create space into the world of spirits, and returns dawning with newness, thereby evoking the sense and sensibility of theatricality.

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Chapter I

Body and Ritual

While delving into the shell of the performance of body, the present dissertation heavily relies on the critical forays of body, theatre, and body performance evoked by both western and non-western thinkers, like Kapila Vatsayan, Conquergood, Turner, Grotoswky, Shechner and *et.al*. This dissertation treats body as the territorial site to foreground how body performance itself becomes theatrical by taking the performance of *Bode Jatra*, exclusively the performativity of the tongue-piercing as its text. The raving performance of tongue piercing generates an expression of cosmogonic consciousness .It encompasses the movement of the body both from micro and macro facet which constitutes the theatrical culmination. Therefore, performativity of the body becomes a trope that necessitates in studying the conception and evolution of theatre with the view that bodily performance is the epitome of theatricality which has hitherto remained veiled. The body which performs liminal in *Bode Jatra* exerts cosmogonic force that subverts the traditional hierarchy—mundane world and the world of spirits.

Performativity being a contested concept recaptures the elements of uniqueness, strategy, evanescence, presence and becoming in social action that are lost by a concentration on the meanings in fixed texts. Unlike text which exists over a period of time whereas performances are ephemeral. They construct their effects and then set down their

reverberations as the performance grows to the medium of artistic expression that lets somebody see the tangible art form. Rose Lee Goldberg states that performance “has been considered as a way of bringing life to the many formal and conceptual ideas on which the making of art is based since live gestures have constantly been used as a weapon against the conventions of established art” (47). Performance thus divulges many untold anecdotes of society.

The performances correspond to the social events not separated from the community activity where a self-motivated member of the community contributes a substantial mission to vitalize the ritual practices of the society. The notion of performing culture is modifying regularly with the time as John Tulloch says, “The performing culture has become a whole way of life” (2). Within sociological and psychological framework, performing culture hooks up to the everyday life, which constitute the everyday as a performance because of an individual and society.

Clifford Geertz characterizes the culture of the people as “an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over shoulders of those to whom they properly belong” (67). Geertz’s approach towards performance ventures basically semantic: ritual primarily exemplifies communicative significance in which symbols carry meanings and understandings of the society. The efficacy of the symbols centers on the matter of revealing the logic of thought and the motivational force that buttresses them.

Thus performance studies agenda revitalizes connection between artistic accomplishment, analysis, and articulations with communities; between practical knowledge, and political savvy. Dwight Conquergood says that the epistemological connection of the performance between creativity, critique, and civic engagement is mutually “replenishing and

pedagogically powerful” (71). The association between society and arts pilots to create relationship between ritual and theatre. Theatre comes into view out of ritual practices.

The connotation of ritual has long been thrashed out; proposed delimiting features range from biological bases to functional values; to linguistic, symbolic or semiotic forms; to rejection of the category altogether, and insistence that the proper starting point is indigenous experience and category. But the definitions of ritual that have been offered to share a presupposition about their objects. Many rituals are indigenously represented as ‘ancient’ and unchanging rituals unlike riots, for example- carry an albatross of connection to ‘tradition’ the sacred, to structures that have generally been imagined in stasis.

Some scholars pore over rituals as expression of relations between historically specific selves and others in theories of identity and alterity. Others study rituals within dynamic cultural systems and articulations in the colonial encounter. Still others focus on rituals of rules and resistance in studies of domination, which call “Hegemony”. Rituals then become one of the many vehicles for knocking together and expressing those self/ other relations. Analyzing confrontations of knowledge and power in the Spanish Conquest of America, Todorov argues that rituals are the conservative vehicles for making and expressing self-other relationships.

Rituals are texts, which can be read for their symbolic significance. Most of the rituals are staged to achieve a conclusion of performing culture, so there is always something at stake in performances since the outcome can not be known in advance, success and failures are contingent, however rituals are the aesthetic mirror of society. Ritual is therefore inherently risky. Rituals are also often dangerous because of the unavoidable contact with powerful and

unpredictable forces. The erroneous performance brackets together with the extrinsic risk that brings awareness while rituals are staged.

The images found in the society portray ritualistic twine. Some rituals are in the category of secular rituals whereas some are not. The anthropological images of ritual have always existed in complex reactions with a reservoir of image in western culture more generally, relations of displacement, usurpation, inversion, subversion, incorporation and transformation, or images authored by missionaries, travelers, conquerors and others, such as juggernaut, suttee, yogic asceticism, Vedic mystery, human sacrifice, cannibalism, herd-hunting, fire walking, charlatan priests, and natives dancing in firelight. Recent reconsiderations of the rituals and histories of kingship have reopened basic questions about the power of rituals to structure society.

Schechner writes that so often the jump from ritual to theater is assumed or attributed to ancient events, the evidence for which is suspect. The Originist and evolutionary methodology have, however, a built-in criterion for their own evolution: their ability to identify the links, transitional forms. In the case of Shamanism, this is apparently self-evident. Theatre occurs when the Shaman “pretends” substituting possession by with impersonation of the spirit- and of ecstasy itself.

To Levi-strass, the rituals of kingship are an intellectual mistake and an historical failure, a scandalous interlude between the science of the concrete and the science of abstracts. Sacrifice simply does not work: practical action “produces returns” while ritual action does not. In Fiji and other divine-kingship societies, social realities are constituted by the acts of kings and descended from the top- down, especially in ritual interactions whose efficacy lies precisely in the way that they structure society in history. In Fiji, life really did

hinge on ritual exchanges of land and sea goods, especially “raw women for cooked men” between the people of the land and their chiefs.

Rituals can be highly formalized; repetitive and marked not by the propositions or arguments they embody but by the way they imply no alternative. They reduce to little or nothing the choices of the agent. Ritual is a kind of tunnel into which one plunges, and where, since there is no possibility of turning either to right or left, the only thing to do is to follow. Rituals are the special strategy of a special form of authority- traditional authority.

In Bloch’s view, rituals do not give a picture of a necessary part of social life. In some societies rituals remain ubiquitous that correlate with the amount of institutionalized hierarchy and in some societies rituals do not play dominant role in the social transformations. From the perspective of the others, each of these models works circularly. Specifically, Bloch’s theory informs and is vindicated by, his method of locating and delineating rituals. Some studies contest Bloch’s arguments with ethnographic examples. Thus from Bloch we get a very different structural, hysterical anthropology. It reproduces and relicences structural-functionalism for the study of others; at the cost of making sinister all those, ‘others’ who are particularly eloquent, elite, and religious, and giving absolute privilege to a political, economic conception of this world.

Other anthropologists locate ritual in the articulation of societies and cosmologies in historical colonial encounters. Many recent studies concern the incorporation of colonial rituals and cosmology into local systems of belief and practice during colonial encounters even including a study of ritual incorporation of the Roman emperor into the local Pantheons of civilized Greek cities in Asia Minor in the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

A different terrain is proposed for the understanding of ritual by scholars of domination, hegemony, and resistance interested in ritual of rule, rituals of resistance, and struggle for possession of the sign. Scholars now explore the varied means through which rulers, states, and colonizers have made their power visible and sought to order 'others', describing projects we would include as rituals of rule: not only creating state shrines and rites; but also reordering local ritual practice through inquisition, sanitizing the colonized landscape and trampling the ritual landscape.

John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan lay hands on the idea of Geertz and articulate, "rituals bestow models of and models for society" (139). W.B. Worthen accedes with him and says, "performance studies has developed a vivid account of non dramatic, non-theatrical, nonscripted, ceremonial, and everyday life performances that appear to depart from the authority of texts" (1093) nevertheless Asad criticizes Geertz for neglecting power in his focus on symbols, and following Foucault, yearns for to study the instrumentalities of rituals, what they do rather than what they mean.

Geertz believes that ritual is primarily communicative for symbols carry meanings, and understanding the efficacy of symbols is mostly a matter of revealing the logic of thought and motivational force that underpins them. Rituals are texts which can be read for their symbolic significance. Geertz is treating text as a stable and immutable entity since he deems that culture and ritual as 'text' (1098). Further he elucidates that 'the textualization of culture enabled literary studies to generalize interpretive practices from texts to other phenomenon' (ibid).

To Valeri, rituals are practices in which the participants do not believe themselves to be the author of what they do believing instead that their ritual significations are authorized

and prescribed by a superior authority. Bloch dismisses Valeri's structuralism and identifies rituals, "as assertions that book no arguments that suggest no alternatives and can not be contested; others then show that ritual is also a potent force for change, not merely a conservative power" (155). In Turner's words, drama and process encompass both order and change; in Comaroff's view, the drama is the struggle to control the sign, and ritual is historical practice, a highly encoded resistance to hegemonic order.

Ritual is inevitably interdisciplinary. Three primary areas of reference emerge as fundamental: a religious stratum, a sociopolitical stratum, and a psychological. The stratum the ritual does, indeed, function on a psychological level is undeniable; that it does legitimize sociopolitical orders as David E.R. George claims that, "ritual had been subjected to a multitude of explanatory systems for a long time" (138) and it has been conflated with 'ceremony' (ibid).

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Hocart argues that rituals produce life. In his own arguments about 'power over life' Foucault orients study of 'discursive practices' and reorganizes the study of power in sexuality medicine, penology, the state and other aspects of modern life. But surely Foucault is wrong to locate in 17th century Europe the first appearance of such 'power over life' mechanisms of power characterized by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life.

Ritual plays a crucial role in practice as a vehicle for all forms of authority. From the Foucauldian point of view, this makes all ritual sinister, and the best defense is ironic distance whereas the Hocartian sense of rituals endows with the life-empowering fluid, and the Persian conviction that many structures exist, have existed, and can exist in history since Victor Turner spells out that ritual embraces the ideas and images of cosmos and chaos; oral traditions provide symphonies with the rituals and give importance to the subjugated knowledge and bodily performances.

Michel Foucault coins the term subjugated knowledge to include all the local, regional, vernacular, naive knowledge at the bottom of the hierarchy--the low and other side of science. Those are the non-serious ways of knowing that dominant culture neglects, excludes, represses or simply fails to recognize. Subjugated know ledges exist, by and large, as active bodies of meaning, outside of books, eluding the forces of inscription that would make them legible, and there by legitimate by means of ritual practices and performing culture of the society.

Dwight Conquer good puts into words that, “the culture of the people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist stains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong” (452). Geertz figures culture as a stiff, awkward reading room. The ethnocentrism of this textualist metaphor is thrown into stark relief when applied to the counter cultures of enslaved and dispossessed people. Culture itself is a text. The culture generates the ideas of text from which theatricality unfolds. The culture foregrounds the performativity of theatrical approaches.

In examining those rituals, we see many elements of theatrical performance. The performer must carefully prepare (memorize) a series of words and movements. Special

clothing is made and worn. The ritual is a special event set aside from ordinary life. Light and space are manipulated to create a certain atmosphere and enhance communication between performer and spectators. There is also an agreement to suspend every day reality and the performer stands in a liminal world, turning him to the frontier of the real world and the world of spirits.

A different terrain is proposed for the understanding of ritual by scholars of domination, hegemony, and resistance interested in ritual of rule, rituals of resistance, and struggle for possession of the sign. Scholars now explore the varied means through which rulers, states, and colonizers have made their power visible and sought to order 'others', describing projects we would include as rituals of rule: not only creating state shrines and rites; but also reordering local ritual practice through inquisition, sanitizing the colonized landscape and trampling the ritual landscape.

Ritual and theatre have a good rapport from the earliest performances. Efficacy is a characteristic of ritual as Victor Turner says, "the object and activities in point are not merely things that stand for other things or something abstract, they participate in the power and virtues they represent" (183). In addition to what has been said above other elements of ritual and theatre combine in performance. Richard Schechner's theory that efficacy and entertainment exist as opposites on a continuum is useful in this regard. He observes that, "whether one calls a specific performance ritual or theatre depends on the degree to which the performance tends towards efficacy or entertainment" (75).

W. Tatarkiewicz spells out about theatrics and puts into words, "derived from the theatre elucidates the science of entertainment in which people assemble for recreation" (264). The theatre primarily is the place noted for recreation more than any other. Certain

types of entertainment take place in theatres, other in halls, gymnasia, amphitheatres, arenas, banqueting halls and temples; however theatrical signification is not reducible to a set of one-to-one relationships between single sign vehicles and their individual meanings. It moves from body to variable social activities in which sometimes bodily performances and sometimes community activities empower theatrical signification.

Jerzy Grotowski states, “The actor makes a total gift of himself” (22). This is a technique of the ‘trance’ and of the integration of all the actor’s psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of this being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of ‘trunslumination’. Impulses and action are concurrent, the body vanishes, burns and the spectator see only a series of visible impulses.

Jerzy Grotowski further exclaims, “Most of the actors at the theatre set up to work toward the possibility of making such a process visible” (ibid). In their daily work they do not concentrate of form, on the expression of signs on artifice. There is no contradiction between inner technique and artifice. Personal process which is not defended and expressed by a formal articulation and disciplined structuring of the role is not a release and will collapse in shapelessness.

In terms of formal technique, proliferations of signs or by accumulation of signs do not function properly. It is very difficult to say precisely what elements play the constructive role to shape theatricality. Basically ritual roots create theatricality and their functions in community activity help to bring bodily performances. Jerzy Grotowski makes clear that bodily performances have intentional return to ‘ritual roots’ (23). At the present point of artistic awareness, the problem of mythic ‘roots’, of the elementary human situation, has definite meaning to formulate bodily performances.

Body art emerged through the 1970's as a function of conceptualism but there is in the existing plurality of these events a range of configured experience that seems to be a grotesque invasion of the birthing rituals of the 1960s, with their synesthetic imagery and collective swapping of body parts, women with penises, pregnant men, in an ideology of liberation. Gradually by eliminating superfluous performances, body transforms into the center of theatricality. It argues with the orthodoxical notion of theatricality.

Body develops into a trope to explore the conception and formulation of the theatre. The study of theatre extends the area of definition of the theater. The bodily performance occupies centrality of definition of the theatre. Body becomes the site for the theatre as Jerzy Grotowski avers that, "theatre can exist without make, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area(stage), without lighting and sound effects,etc,but, it can not exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual ,direct,' live' communion''(23).The analysis of the theatre challenges the notion of theatre as a synthesis of disparate creative disciplines-literature,sculpture,painting,architecture,lighting and acting.

Further Jerzy Grotowski natters on rich and poor theatre to show the bodily performances. According to him, the rich theatre depends on artistic kleptomania, drawing from other disciplines, constructing hybrid-spectacles, conglomerates without backbone or integrity, yet presented as an organic artwork. By multiplying assimilated elements, the rich theatre tries to escape the impasse presented by movies and television. The rich theatre counters with a blatantly compensatory call for total theatre.

Correspondingly, he speaks on poor theater to flourish the idea of bodily performance. In line with Jerzy Grotowski, there is no necessary of stage and auditorium-plants for the

bodily performance. The actors can play among the spectators directly contacting the audience and the actors can build structures among the spectators. The actors can perform by abandoning make-up, fake noses, and pillow- stuffed bellies-everything that the actor puts on in the dressing room before performance. The actors can transform from type to type, character to character, silhouette to silhouette in a poor manner by using only his own body and craft.

Similarly, Jerzy Grotowski negotiates with the costume that unfolds theatricality. According to him, a costume with no autonomous value, existing only in connection with a particular character and his activities, can be transformed before the audience, contrasted with the actor's functions. The actor's gestures also play the crucial role to bring theatricality as Grotowski states that by the actor's controlled use of gestures, the actor transforms the floor into a sea, a table into a confessional, a piece of iron into an animate partner. He elucidates that, "we know that the text *per se* is not theatre that it becomes theatre only through the actor's use of it- that is to say, thanks to intonations, to the association of sounds, to the musicality of the language" (25).

Kapila Vatsayan makes clear that the discussion of the importance of human movement as "an integral part of the dramatic spectacle" (50) can be traced through the theoretical texts on drama ranging from the time of Bharata to Ram Chandra. Further he adjoins that the movement of the different parts of the face, head and especially the movement of the eyes, are almost as important as "the *hastas (hand)* in the *abhinaya (acting)* technique of the dance, and each of the glances (and the movements of the eyeball eyebrows) is related to its corresponding *bhava and the rass'*" (48) which inculcate theatricality.

Vatsayan further reveals that the actor needs a great skill in the manipulation of hands, arms, eyes, and head to coordinate these movements with the text of recited verse. The word-gesture relationship of a descriptive nature, almost like an action song with stylized vocabulary, would be the essence of the presentation. That presentation provides ample opportunities to grasp the theatricality by means of bodily performances. The bodily performances centralize the movement of different parts of body.

The theory and technique of dancing construct theatricality as Kapila Vatsayan claims that drama can not be understood without full realization of implications of these assertions ,which have been so aptly made by Bharat since “the theory and technique of dancing is an integral part of this conception of the drama”(229).Consistent with Vatsayan, dancing as an independent art does emerge once this is done, but all the same , it continues to be a very important limb of the many branched tree of drama, and indeed such an important part that the character of the drama is lost once the most important aspect of what we understand by dance today. The dancing movement puts together the bodily performances and theatricality.

Kapila Vatsayan more unveils about Indian dancing and its relation to theatricality and discloses, “Like the Indian sculptor, the dancer also does not lay much emphasis on the muscles of the human form, and takes the joints and the fundamental anatomical bone-structure of the human form as its basis: this enables the dancer to achieve the ‘absolute form’, and in so far as the whole process of dancing is considered a yoga this inevitable, for the muscles can not suggest absolute form and create abstract geometrical patterns easily” (233).

The geometrical patterns in theatre further are created by means of different parts of the body and their respective movements. According to Vatsayan, an attempt can be made to

make a comparative study of the movements of major limbs, and these can be correlated to each other. The hands are only parts of the human body which have both qualities of theatricality and dancing. The dancing becomes an integral part of theatre.

Correspondingly; the movement of other parts of the body facilitates to craft theatricality. The body itself ripens into the location of theatricality.

While breaking and tearing continued through the anatomy of modernism as the structural principle of artistic forms, there were as a preface to postmodern performance various notions of body consciousness or disciplines of the thinking body or the signifying body or amidst the baffling semiurgy exchangeable signs, regimens of the body as its own authority in the rhetorical struggle, but about the particular system in the theatre.

Richard Schechner characterizes that gathering, playing out an action or actions and dispersing create theatricality. The pattern of gathering, performing and dispersing is a specifically theatrical pattern. This pattern occurs naturally in urban settings. An accident happens, or is caused to happen: a crowd gathers to see what is going on. The crowd makes a circle around the event or as in the case of accidents, around the aftermath of the events. Slowly the crowd disperses which is called "Eruption" by Schechner. An eruption is like a theatrical performance.

The eruption shows the quality of the theatricality in which the crowd itself turns into the actor's roles and the street develops into the stage. The essence of theatre does not reside in its aesthetic quality or in its capacity to represent or criticize life. It consists rather in radiating through the rigor of scenic technique an individual and collective form of being. Theatre can be a social cell that embodies an ethos, a set of values that guide the refusals of each of its components.

Form is fundamental to theatre. Through the discipline and precision that form requires the actor absorbs and displays a nucleus of information that escapes words and contains the spirit of the ethos of refusal. From the very first exercise on the first day of apprenticeship, a form of being may be shaped from real actions that have been performed in dissensions with the commonplaces of thought and professional practice, obvious opinions, and the ease of choice.

Eugenio Barba puts in plain words, “Theatre is intolerable if it limits itself to spectacle alone” (17). The rigor of the craft or the elation of invention is not enough any more than the awareness of the pleasure or knowledge that we can induce in the spectator. Our work should be nourished by subversion that projects us beyond our professional identity, which acts as a wall, both protecting and at the same time imprisoning us. The performance sows a seed that grows in the memory of every spectator, and every specter grows with this seed.

Eugenio Barba further enlightens that historically, European theatre was not born from Greek ritual but in the markets of Italy around 1545 when the first contract was signed by man and women intending to live by the craft of performer. All theatres are antediluvian; however within this ancient and noble art the most anachronistic passion is the search for something permanent that outlives the performance. An important factor that determines the nature of the scenography in the theatre is the non-realistic and metaphysical treatment of time and place.

Theatre can exist without make up without autonomic costume and scenography without separate performance area (stage) without lighting sound effects etc whereas the professional theatre is a financial enterprise producing performances. It can not exist without the actor spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, live communion. This is an ancient theoretical truth of course, but when rigorously tested in practice it undermines most of our

usual ideas about theatre. It challenges the notion of theatre as a synthesis of disparate creative disciplines- literature, sculpture, painting, architecture, lighting, and acting. This 'synthetic theatre' is the contemporary theatre, which we readily call the rich theatre- rich in flaws.

Victor Turner says that, "ritual and theatre crucially involve liminal events and processes and have an important aspect of social metacommentary."(11). Rituals are the aesthetic mirror of the society. Turner stresses for Breach-Crises-Repressive action and negative and positive denouement for the bodily performance. He stands for ritualistic repressive action which is used at the moment of life-crisis. He believes that theatre emerges out of ritual practices. He primarily stresses on the relationship between ritual and theatre. Ritual lays foundation for the theatre.

Religious custom and belief play creative role in service to professional theatre is a skill the blend of ritual and performance. Jatra is a professional traveling theatre in the round, very popular in Katmandu valley: heavy doses of melodrama leavened with over played comic sequences, a heightened exaggerated style of acting and dialogue delivery; glittering costumes, stylized make-up; live music from a line-up of musicians, and story taken from myth or legend are typical features of this form.

Usually, *Jatra* is performed in the open with the audience sitting all around and acting area either on the same level or in the folk theatre tradition, actors are not professional in any sense of the word, or folk theatre can make a whole village or community take part in the performance both as participants and spectators. In the popular theatrical tradition, actors are fully professional, yet they have nearly always had a secondary occupation which provides the major part of the performer's income. Still some of them derive a major part of their

income from their art. Striking differences in the two traditions would be the degrees of improvisation. Since the folk theatre tradition mostly has its origin in rituals, in certain parts the acting as well as the speaking exhibit a certain rate of constancy.

Theatre is a cognitive act, and it is cognitive reconditioning which created and continues to create ritual dramas. They are therefore not necessarily forms in which either 'ritual' or drama somehow preceded and then annexed the other; they are, rather meeting places for two ways of thinking with the same cognitive-origin. Theatre is theological and theology is theatrical in ways we are only beginning to realize.

Theatre is the place in which the living could meet the non-living, the dead the ancestors' reformers who had crossed the desert. Their lives, their performances, and their books have illuminated the performativity guiding us toward a technical knowledge that is our way of breathing. They have inspired the tacit knowledge we have absorbed during the course of so many years, and they have protected the essential in our productions.

Theatre is the art of actualizing rehearsals. The rehearsal is the means of developing their individual shapes and rhythms by turning possibilities into action, into performances, whole words otherwise not lived are born. Theatre does not arrive suddenly and stay fixed either in its cultural or individual manifestations. Theatre has transferred from ceremonial aspect to bodily performances.

Strong traditional elements and beliefs, custom and rituals, a love of novelty and experimentation lead the peasants to an incredible number of variants of the fixed themes even from year to year within the same region, in which they draw inspiration from the times, the place, and the topic of the day adopting it to the existing traditional patterns. On the other hand in the popular theatre tradition, there is more freedom in improvisation; every

performance varies at each presentation, seeming different at every performance, a brilliant ephemeral result born of the moment and for the moment. Certain stock phrases, songs, verses, rhymed couplets, Jokes, certain opening and closing formulas are really fixed. Because of the flexible and open form of the popular theatre tradition, the sequence and order of the scenes and passage often vary and they build up a montage of varied scenes on the spur of the moment.

The body has its own authority. It conveys its own messages and heralds the newness in the performance. The body becomes the site for the performance. The body emanates the performance through various gestures, symbols, actions and activities. To deal with the body in the desolation of its decay demands at great performance, whose magnanimous ectoplasm is thoroughly prepared, as through the artifice of the centuries a kind of viscous excess of materiality, baroque, funeral, achieving its counter gravity by painting an inch thick, thicker, the white on the ankles, and then the ball down. The shamanistic conjecture has close association with the theatrical performance in which body plays the remarkable role to unfold shamanism on the stage.

Shamanistic theory has enjoyed a remarkable recent success. Shamanism has become a big issue in recent scholarly and popular debates. Its most notable exponent and comprehensive can be found in E.T. Kirby's Ur- drama: *The Origin of Theatre* (1975), which traces Japanese, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Greek drama all back to a single common ancestor. His argument is historical and the attraction obvious; he says, "a shamanic séance is a performance" (45) with props and even sets, costumes, musical accompaniment, dance, and dialogue, all arranged around a basic "quest" or journey plot in which the shaman travels out of body to another stratum and returns bearing 'gifts' which he or she then practices. The

immanent direction is overt and reinforced. The typical education of a shaman is to progress from possession by the spirit to control over the spirit, the typical history both of the individual shaman and of shamanism in general is from ecstatic trance to controlled impersonations.

The controlled masquerades inspire for the bodily performance. The power of the Shamans exists in on the recognition of their congregation or clientele. The whole point of their narrative is not to communicate a state of mind but to demonstrate the difficulty of the obstacles. They have to over come and then they demonstrate their strength. If they are seen to act, they lose status. No doubt, this does some times occur, but the transition is, on more careful analysis, not a casual progression or a single leap but it comprised of at least three major siffts.

In the first step the shamans themselves, by increasing control over their ecstasy and through the intricate narrative complexity of their material, pretend ecstasy- in which however the audience still believes. At this stage, what is being performed is “theatre” for the shamans but not for their audiences. The Shamans have performed a cognitive leap but their audiences have not.

The second stage would be when the audiences, in time, see through the pretense. The Shamans are then relieved of any further need to supply magical results but the subsequent confrontation of pretence with skepticisms suggests two denouements. Either audience leave these Shamans for other, more ‘authentic’ séances or they take the third step: enjoy these performances now, as theatre.

The third step is usually assumed, even though it means that he whole institution would have to pass first through an intervening stage of disbelief and even contempt which

would either cause the whole institution of the self-destruct or at the very least, necessitate a radical redefinition of a new actor/audience relationship. It is certainly possible that the whole sequence occurs that laymen begin to imitate the Shaman's performances, of which there is also some evidence. But the conclusion of this theory is, nevertheless, that Shamanism becomes theatre when it ceases to be authentic, indeed ceases to be a religious phenomenon at all.

Shamanism is related to mystic voyage. A system of transformation emerges in terms of communication: mystics, plunged into solitude, describe with precision their ecstasy after the fact, Shamans surrounded by their assistants and patients, and onlookers, relate during the trace itself, their masterful feats, as for the possessed, also surrounded not only are they relatively uncommunicative as they undergo their transformation, but they subsequently remain silent on the subject of their experiences as if affected by amnesia.

Just a few decades ago, shamanism appeared to be dead issue in American anthropology. Geertz deemed it one of those "desiccated" (75) and "insipid categories by meant of which ethnographies of religion devitalize their data."(ibid) whereas Spencer consigned it to a disciplinary "dustbin."(230). More recently, Taussig (236) declared that "shamanism is.... a man made, modern western category, an artful reification of disparate practices, snatchers of folklore and overarching folklorization, residues of long established myths intermingled with the politics of academic departments, curricula, conferences, journal, juries and articles and funding agencies. Despite such dismissals, the topic of shamanism has proved remarkably resilient (146). Indeed the 1980s witnessed resurgence--some call it a renaissance --in scholarship on shamanism.

The study of shamanism has been revitalized by multidisciplinary interest in states of consciousness and mechanism of therapy, and by popular interest in alternative forms of spirituality. This reawakening has not been a function of internal developments in anthropology, but then shamanism has never seen the exclusive purview of anthropology. Flaherty (67-70) depicts 18th century European fascination with shamanism, which then, as now, influenced scholars across a range of disciplines.

As the category of shamanism is being reconstituted and revitalized by Academic and popular interest, it is being deconstructed within the field of anthropology. Among cultural anthropologists there is wide spread distrust of general theories about shamanism, which run around in their efforts to generalize. Holmberg claims that “shamanism remains intractable as a general field of study, in part because disparate practices have been dissociated from larger cultural contexts linked to universal motivations.”

The contemporary literature reflects the patterns of shamanism differently. Shamanism is used as a gloss for certain discusses and practices that operate in local, regional, national and transnational contexts. Extracting shamanism from such context to be studied as a detachable and self-contained problem is at odds with the goals of such research which is aimed at understanding historically situated and culturally mediated social practice.

Scholarly constructions of the category of Shaman reveal highly gendered assumptions. One of the long standing debates in the literatures on shamanism hinges on the issue of gender that has been inadequately explored. The classic shaman defined by Eliade and portrayed in Siberian and central Asiatic literature is the master of spirits; not their puppets.

The issue of control becomes a triad on the distinction between possession and shamanism. Male practitioners predominate in the traditions to which Eliade assigns the label shamanism, whereas women are conspicuously present in traditions relying on possession. Lewis has attributed this pattern to women's "peripheralization and deprivation" (145). His argument has been challenged as "mechanistic and inapplicable in certain cases" (130). Nevertheless where women dominate in the shamanic ranks, it is often the case that shamanic prowess has been edged out or subsumed by political and religious centralization.

Perhaps the most important development in studies of shamanic ritual has been the increasing attention paid to the conditions and dynamics of shamanic performance. Important here has been the legacy of Victor Turner, whose influence both in and beyond the field of anthropology continues. Together with Turner, Richard Schechner finds in shamanic ritual what he takes to be a goal in postmodern theatre--namely an emphasis on performance not as a finished product but as a process of religious self-expression.

There were other visionaries of the theatre, like Heimlich von Kleist and Gordon Craig, who felt the body as "the encumbrance and, what's more, not the sacred vessel of the superior disease but an irredeemable source of pollution" (23). Kleist attributes this to "the disorder that consciousness could produce in the natural grace of humankind," (67) and his preferences for the poppet has to do with the advantage of counter gravity; the inanimate doll being exempt from the 'inertia of matter' or not only in the exertions of the dance, its waste.

Bode Jatra puts down roots in the category of folk theatre tradition as it goes back to its prehistoric antiquity. Although with the development of organized communal life, each community has endowed them with their own local color and originality and the pattern and the ritual of culture have undergone a corresponding change, similarly Bode is not exceptional

for that change. Folk plays, in general, have never died in the rural areas, even today with the emigration of the rural population to big towns or to work outside Nepal, and the negative influence of mass media such as radio and television, however Bode Jatra and its unique performance tongue- piercing remain impervious where body becomes the site for theatricality.

On the words of Mary Anderson, “ Nepalese are for ever hunted by evil spirits, fearful demons, witches and devils, which are said to infest their homes and roam the land” (72). Some people live in mortal fear of neighbors possessed of the ‘evil eye’, who practice the black art of malevolent curses and magic spells. Among many Nepalese, Newar community holds a significant association with the rituals and bodily performance. They uphold their name ahead in the Nepalese society for cultural performances and exulting assorted modes of jatras cum festivals.

Chapter II

Locating Body in Newari Cultural Performance

Anne Vergati hails as, “The Newars have a veritable passion for secrets” (10). The Newar community accords great importance to their festivals and jatras in which their identity reside. Some anthropologists, for instance, M.Allen, had noted the difficulty of talking with Newars about religious and *tantric* rituals. In accordance with Anne Vergati, they have attributed this to the influence of *Tantrisan* on Newar culture. A number of western anthropologists have exerted themselves in Nepal but none has ever had access to the inner sanctuaries of certain temples. The ‘*diksa*’ ritual of Tantric initiation which is supposed to take place in the inner sanctuaries has not yet been scrutinized by foreign scholars.

Mary Anderson, however, claims, “the fun-loving, frank, hospitable Newars have since remotest times been owners and tillers of the soil, still cultivating today with the few hand implements of their ancients forebears” (34).Through the ravages of time much of their lands have been lost, but almost Newars, no matter what their occupation, still cling possessively to a tiny plot of land. They hit upon by enjoying their rituals, festivals jatras and culture despite the influence of other communities and globalization. The festivals and jatras have been their part of life, culture and identity since far-flung times. They rejoice an assortment of festivals and jatras which have directly or indirectly association with the bodily performances.

Indra Jatra, one of the important festivals of Newari culture, officially opens on the twelfth day of the waxing moon in September with the raising of the flag of Indra before the old palace at Hanuman Dhoka in Kathmandu. Mary Anderson writes, “ this flag signifies that Lord Indra has come to the valley, and when it flies, peace, prosperity and unity are assured in the land”(128). Mythology says such a flag pole was presented by Lord Vishnu to Indra, which unified his forces and gave him divine strength to overcome the demons. Nowadays, it is worshipped in Kathmandu as a symbol of unity, victory and power.

Abhi Subedi identifies that the *Indra Jatra* contains “mask dance which is a strong element of theatre” (30). He further states that the wearer of the mask, *the demon lakhe*, becomes possessed by its spirit while dancing. *Lakhe's demon* attributes wearing mask and being possessed by its spirit has analogies with similar myths in other culture as well. The effectiveness of the *Indra Jatra* is enhanced by the element of the power that is embodied in the masks and dances. The ornate costumes, colorful masks and the dancer's skills bring forth the dramatic quality of the festival. The dramatic power of the mask is enhanced by the jet of beer coming out from the mouth of gigantic white mask of *Bhairab* in *Hanuman dhoka*. Similarly, the blue visage of Akash Bhairab adds to the power that comes out of the relationship between the wearer and the mask or the deity and the mask. This subject has become a matter of great interest in discourse about the semiotics of theatre in which bodily performance stars as worthy mission.

Fig.1 People worshipping Living Goddess *Kumari*.

Kumari Jatra Living Goddess festival as believed that the ceremonies in their present form were inaugurated in mid- eighteenth century by Jay Prakash Malla, the last of the 'Newar' kings, is another important event of *Indra Jatra*. The Legend puts into words that in the afternoon of the day before full moon ecstatic mobs gather near Hanuman Dhoka for the long-awaited Living Goddess procession and to glimpse the beautiful Newari girl who has been deified as the Vestal Virgin, Kumari, worshipped as a goddess by peasants and king alike. The Kumari Jatra makes the close relation with the bodily performance and theatricality.

The Legend further claims that during the reign of Jay Prakash Malla, a Newari girl of Kathmandu became possessed by the spirit of Taleju, the divine Mother Goddess, who for centuries has been patron deity of Nepal and her royal families. The King, thinking the young girl a fraud, possibly afflicted with the 'evil eye', banished her from the city. That very night one of his queens went into paroxysms and declared that the spirit of the goddess had now entered her body. Losing no time, the worried king had the child returned to the city, publicly acclaimed the Living Goddess Kumari, and worshipped at her feet. He further ordered an ornate home to be built for her, and instituted an annual jatra, in which she is drawn through the streets attended by two small boys representing Lord Bhairab and the elephant headed Ganesh. In the entire heritage of Kumari jatra, the body claims as the site for theatricality.

The heritage of street performance is closely associated with the history of the theatre of travel in Newar community. In accordance with Abhi Subedi, sphere festivity, forms and urban architecture become parts of the theatrical traditions as *Rato Machhindranath Jatra* (The chariot ride of red Machhindranath) has also immense role in Newari culture of Kathmandu valley. *Rato Machhindranath* is an annual festival of Patan-residents. It is considered as the rain-god. Among the farmers of the valley, *Machhindranath* is adored under his ancient name of *Bunga Deo*, the god of Bunga who presides over agricultural prosperity through his agents the snake gods. Most people at all casts avoid killing a black bee, regarding it as a form of Machhindranath and he is often worshipped as the ceremonial vessel in which he reached the valley. Deep and abiding affection for this merciful god of rain reflects the isolated valley's complete dependence in former years upon local food production.

Mary Anderson writes, "*Machhindranath*, however, is a male god, he is attributed also with feminine characteristics, an adoring parent and sustainer who loves and feeds the people

when they pray to his image'' (56).The festival of *Machhindranath* starts from Pulchowk after certain rituals in April.*Machhindra's* chariot is always followed by *Min Nath*, considered to be *Machhindra's* daughter or son. As the procession inches along narrow lanes, hundreds of celebrating devotees swarm alongside and in its train to worship the God of Harvest. Those who pull the thick ropes of the chariot, or push it from the rear, consider it a sacred duty. Bands of barefoot musicians and marching soldiers provide noise, music and color. The chariot pulling procession undergoes from different parts of Patan city.

The climax of the celebration takes in an open field at Jawalakhel any time between

Fig.2: People celebrating the closing of *Rato Machhindranatha Jatra* called *Bhoto Jatra* at Jawalakhel, Lalitpur.

May or June when the auspicious day arrives the word travel for and wide, as in all festivals where the timing is fixed by astrologers. They come by the tens of thousand, many keeping an all-night vigil burning oil-wick lights in *Machhindranath* name. On the day of *Bhoto Jatra*, the sacred waistcoat, or 'Bhoto' is displayed for the entire populace to behold. On the entire ritual of *Machhindranath Jatra*, Newar priests and chariot pullers make a significant role in which bodily performance and theatricality are unearthed.

Fig.3: People observing *Bhimsen Puja* at Mangal Bazar, Lalitpur.

Newar community acts upon another *puja* that is *Bhimsen puja* who is the symbol of having Herculean strength. The mythological Mahabharata stories of famous *Pandava Brothers*, five Hindu princes whose heroic feats of strength and valor in epic struggle against

a clan of one hundred cousins—Kauraba-- enthralls all the Nepalese. Bhimsen is deemed as sacred and placed in the mind of Nepalese whose idol is always found in the temples. An oddity in Kathmandu, Bhimsen shine is the stooped and shrouded figures which flank two brothers and their wives. Some say these are the two youngest *Pandava* brothers, while other believes they represent the parents.

The Legend unveils that for centuries, the tradesmen of Kathmandu have believed that Bhimsen every twelfth year makes a journey to Lhasa, where he visits and gives blessings to Newar merchants who have long maintained residence in this capital city of Tibet, conducting trade with their counterparts from Nepal. For this journey, a farmer is chosen to represent Bhimsen and sent on his way by a great gathering of rejoicing devotees. When he reaches his destination, they say he is warmly and reverently received by the Nepalese of Lhasa who return him to their country men laden with riches and presents.

In the village all over the valley, and outside where Newar merchant have made their homes, Bhimsen's annual festivals, hold at various times throughout the year, are occasions of tumultuous merrymaking. In Patan town, two days after Lord Krishna's birthday, Bhimsen is taken from his silver-encrusted temple near the old palace square, placed in a temple-like litter and carried triumphantly through the streets with a fanfare of music and a parade of celebrating devotees. The Bhimsen puja endows with the bodily performance and theatricality since the body of Bhimsen is worshipped believing as Mary Anderson writes, 'people of Nepal believe that Bhimsen is the guardian deity of all merchants and tradesmen, a bestower, controller and protector of wealth and prosperity'' (236).

Mary Anderson puts in writing that, "Nepalese people are for ever haunted by evil spirits, fearful demons, witches and devils'' (72). So people celebrate different festivals to

show their victory over all types of demons. In Kathmandu, Newar community observes Ghanta Karna, *the night of the devil*, to commemorate victory over devils. The Legend says that Ghanta Karna, often known as *Gathemuga or Gathemangal* was a devil of towering strength with glaring, evil eyes, the fangs of his gaping mouth dripping with blood of his victims. He was so corrupt that he vilified the gods themselves defiled and destroyed homes and fields, roaming the land, stealing children, maiming the weak, killing and devouring his captives. He depraved sexual orgies and unspeakable excesses with his countless wives horrified the pious people.

A Newar man of the so called untouchable *Pode* caste, a main character, who has the dubious honor impersonating *Ghanta Karna*, his near naked body painted with lewd symbols and picture depicting all types of sexual depravity goes about town crying “*Ghanta Karna* is dead” carrying a clay begging bowl hung from a pole. People are not likely to refuse him, for his curse can bestow all kinds of afflictions and misfortune. Toward sundown an eager crowd gathers around the bamboo effigy awaiting the untouchable *Ghanta Karna*. Suddenly as Mary Anderson writes, “they scurry to make room for the garish impersonator as he strides through the mob, holding his begging bowl and shouting hoarsely ‘Om Shanti, Om Shanti’, promising peace on earth to those who live” (74). The spectators whistle and jeer, but coins drop into the bowl nonetheless.

Mary Anderson further gives details, “convincingly with the ending of the *Ghanta Karna* rituals, when everything possible has been done to free people, their houses and the land from the menace of evil for the coming year, Nepalese families gather to celebrate in great, convivial feasts of thanks giving, usually in the home of the senior clan-member”

(76).In the entire rituals of Ghanta Karna, body centralizes to unfold theatricality and the city with its people becomes like a theatre.

Fig.4: People observing *Gaijatra* festival in Kathmandu.

The Newar community observes *Gaijatra* festival in high spirits. Abhi Subedi expounds, “*Gaijatra* festival, literally a cow festival, portrays a journey to the world of the dead. In this festival, death is dramatized through movements, impersonation and imagined and ritualized signs of cultural formation. Colorfully decorated bodies of the persons who take out the processions, the movement of the cow or the divine incarnation of the human person follow the contours of the journey through the towns, visiting important temples and places of worship” (49). In the complete processes of rituals of *Gaijatra* also, body feeds the kitty a

commendable role to create theatricality and the city with its residents incorporate for shaping theatre atmosphere.

Sithinakha, known as Kumar Sasthi, Kumar, Sixth Day, sets up an important place in Newari performance culture. The Newar community observes it to insinuate the instigating of rice planting season to mark the occasion of the birthday of warrior God Kumar in the bright lunar fortnight of May. On Kumar's birthday, religious ceremonies are performed with offering of six types of cakes, six types of bread, vegetables and grains, all placed within his sacred symbol. During the Kumar festival, lotus-shaped miniature paper windmills are fixed on rooftops to spin in the breeze, or made to whirl by little boys as they run through the streets. This windmill on Kumar's day is symbolic of the end of evil times and ushering in of an era of righteousness.

On *Sithinakha day*, a curious mock battle is still waged in many parts of Kathmandu, wherein the inhabitants meet on the river bank and hold a great feast. Then they separate into two groups and pelt each other with rocks and stones. However, nowadays as stated by Mary Anderson, "pelting stones and rocks is carried out by youngsters only" (68). The Jatra for Lord Kumar is held the following his birthday, the seventh day of the waxing moon. In the morning, thousands come to his temple near Jaisideval in north-western Kathmandu, bringing offerings in baskets and trays, and to carry away *Prasad*, blessings from their brave warrior-god in the form of red powder for the forehead, or leaves and flowers for the hair. These all ritual practices of *Sithinakha* illustrate the importance of body in Newari cultural performance.

Anne Vergati avows that, "In Newar culture, there is not so marked a difference between a village and a town as there is in India."(4). Every Newar village has something of

an urban character: the houses have two or three stories and population density is considerable. The three main towns in the valley are clearly the consequence of the aggregation in each case of previously extant villages or smaller settlements. In Newari, the word used by local inhabitant to designate a small or large settlement is invariably '*des*' which, in Sanskrit or in Hindi, has a different meaning. Perhaps the most satisfactory English word for Newari *des* is 'locality.'

Several authors have recently emphasized the urban character of Newar civilization. Sylvain Levi, first western Scholar to draw attention to it, and to compare Newar houses with those of Parisians, wrote: The outstanding trait in the character of the Newar is his liking for society. Further Vergati illuminates by revealing that, "a Newar never lives in isolation whether in town or village" (ibid). The member of Newar community likes to lodge in several storied houses, even if this means living in cramped conditions. He knows how to enjoy all the pleasures which nature offers; he sings he chants, he laughs, he is a shrewd judge of country; he likes to picnic in friendly company in some shady spot near a spring or stream; in the shadow of an aged sanctuary facing a friendly or a grandiose landscape.

When the Newars squabble about their language, they emphasize the differences between dialects spoken in the three principal towns of the valley. Newars constantly draw attention to the superiority as well as to the specificity of their own culture, comparing their customs in the first place with these of the Indo-Nepalese and then with these of other ethnic groups such as Tamangs, Gurungs, Bhotias etc. All cultural comparisons concerning Newar ideology or social hierarchy are based in the first place on local comparisons: one situates oneself, one's identity with the neighbors. The Newars are conscious of the fact that they belong to an ancient civilizations and in Conversation they stress that they are only ethnic

group in Nepal which has built monuments such as Royal place, temples etc since Newars are best known to the world for their amazing artistic creativity and skilled craftsmanship which was usually channeled toward expressing their fervent religious piety, producing culture which a few centuries ago ranked the highest in Asia. In their remote, secluded valley, the Newars developed their own distinctive art style which is now thought of as “purely Nepalese.”

When Newars have a word of themselves, in their own context, they also lay emphasis on Buddhist priests, *Bajracharya*, as well as Newar Brahmins comparing and keeping equal footing with the Brahmins of other ethnic groups because they are tantric, however they may munch meat and drink alcohol. For the Newars whether they are Hindus or Buddhists, the distinctive features of Newar society are not only religious but also social. For instance, the ritual such as *ihī*- the group marriage of young girls to god before puberty –confers a relatively high status on Newar women and then Vergati claims, “ they retain much more freedom than Indo-Nepalese women, even those of high caste” (11).

Newar society has faith in co-existence of Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddhists and Hindus adopt each other’s religious practices easily and confidently in Kathmandu valley as Vergati totes up, “ Buddhists of Kathmandu valley have great capacity for adopting Hindu ideology and practice” (24). Buddhists, without losing their identity and abandoning their ideology have accepted the Hindu caste system and the rules of ritual purity. More precisely the transformation of a precious Monastic community into a caste plays a major role in the survival of Buddhism. Each community of Newars has kept hold of its gods, pantheon, ritual and practices.

Newar social organization in the Kathmandu valley possesses corporate life as Vergati writes, “Newar community observes its festivals and other rituals of life in group” (98). For that purpose they constitute a religious association called *Guthi*. The *Guthi* lends a hand to organize various festivals of Newar society. The Newari word *guthi* corresponds to the Sanskrit *Gosthi* that means assembly association. In Nepal, the term has the technical sense of religious associations.

Every religious association has its own principal divinity and is attached to a temple or shrine, which is the place where its members come together. The *guthi* are also financial corporations which possess wealth and to which members pay annual dues in order to cover the association’s costs, their priests’ salary, temple’s upkeep, and the annual banquet which falls at that time of divinity’s festival. Whenever the inhabitants of the valley speak of *guthi*, the implication is that its association owns lands which it farms out for cultivation to tenants, who are generally members of the *gyapu* or agricultural caste.

The *guthi* constitutes a network under girding the whole of Newar social and religious life. Every resident of the valley belongs, of necessity, to several *guthi*, by virtue of which he or she is incorporated into the social fabric. These include *guthi* of caste: of the professional association to which one belongs hereditarily; lineage- based *guthi*; in which membership is based on both birth and initiation, but in which kinship remains the determinant element; *guthi* of the dead, mutual support groups in which member is apparently depends upon place of domicile. The former Newar kingdoms had concentrated to protect their ritual practices.

In Newari cultural performance, every clan/every household seems to hold its own musicians, whose crashing cymbals, many torn drums and mournful blasting trumpets are heard at every festival. Their highly stylized pageants, dramatic presentations and ritualistic

dances, performed with grotesque masks and ancient ornate costumes, reflect their love of beauty and grace, their pride in tradition, and their aptitude for mimicry and humor. The spontaneous songs and lively dances of the Newars were noted hundreds of years ago in the travelogues of ancient globe-trotters.

Many festivals observed by Newar community own considerable convolution: they set hurdles the domestic and social life of the community. Such festivals are also a source of anxiety to the anthropologist who has great obscurity describing what is going on, even to his own satisfaction let alone that of his informants as Vergati recounts that “Many events occur simultaneously in different place and one can not be everywhere at once. Some short rituals endow with manuals, which prescribe which steps should be executed, and in what order. For large festivals one can only consult oral traditions and commentaries: thus one is led inevitably to accord a greater degree of confidence to some informants and less to others. One often hears that it is only by making lengthy stays in a given locality that one can hope to understand what occurs there”(7). This is true however even a lengthy stay is not a solution to every problem. For instance, between the celebrations of each festival of Bisket Jatra at Bhaktapur, there is a hiatus of one year: and even if one observes the festival several times, one also has to watch over its preparation and the packing up afterwards.

In the vein of many festivals observed in the valley of Kathmandu, Bisket Jatra is a succession of processions in the course of which statues of divinities are taken through the town following precise itineraries which allow very little place for innovation or personal initiative, Bisket Jatra takes place every year at the beginning of the month of new year. In the first place, Bisket Jatra is a mythical evocation of the founding of a town, the ancient capital of a kingdom, which, in a certain way, are the microcosms of the entire territory of Bhaktapur.

This foundation is replayed each year at the festival; the town is thus 'renewed' at each New Year and the forces re-generated which condition the fertility and prosperity of the locality.

Abhi Subedi brings to light that, "the peasants intervened the urban centers with performances and in return got cultivated and organized forms" (66). The folk people's journey to the urban centers was entirely designed to occupy and aver a space which would be considered as the site for performance arts. The spatial concept is thus very important in *Newar* performance arts. The process of creating a concoction of the folk with the urban culture brings a live gesture for the cultural performance and identity of Newar of Kathmandu.

In the annual cycle of festivals celebrated in the valley, the royal festivals of the three ancient Newar kingdoms, those of *Machhindranath* at Patan, the *India Jatra* at Kathmandu, and the *Bisket Jatra* at Bhaktapur, occupies a distinctive place. The entire population participates with few caste constraints and little religious exclusivity in them. From a structural perspective, all three Newar festivals of the valley aim at ensuring the property of then Kingdom. Nowadays, people rejoice them for the continuation of their cultural identity. Each and every festival in the valley takes place around a temple. The territory which the Newars inhabit is demarcated by its temples. The site of the god who presides over festival is fixed.

The Myth of the establishment of the town of Bhaktapur designates a vital and living element in religious life that is written in the topography of the town and the location of its sanctuaries. It has inspired the town's great local festival, the *Bisket Jatra*, in which each year, the founding of the town is re enacted. The participants and the spectators of the festivals are fully conscious of its implications. The festival like Bode Jatra, a part of *Bisket jatra*,

observed by the residents of Bode, is an annual rehearsal of the naissance myth and closely associated with the bodily performance and theatricality.

Chapter III

Body as Theatre in *Bode Jatra*

John D.Kelly and Martha Kaplan assert that, “ ritual is a kind of tunnel into which one plunges, and where, since there is no possibility of turning either to right or left, the only thing to do follow’’ (125).Further, they affirm that’ rituals are the special strategy of authority that is traditional authority’’ (ibid).Similarly, Todorov argues that, “ rituals are the conservative vehicle for making and expressing self –other relationships’’(251).Some anthropologists locate ritual in the articulation of societies and cosmologies. And some of the rituals exemplify their add-on with the body. Most of the festivals and fares hook up themselves with the ritual practices and bodily performances.

Among such fairs *Bode Jatra* rejoiced by the residents of Bode has an adjacent relationship between religious ritual and the performance.Bode,a historical city, located at northern side of Bhaktapur district and Madhyapur Thimi Municipality, observes *Bisket Jatra* with festivity in which a unique practice of tongue-piercing performed which is called Bode jatra.Bode,however known by different names in different times as Sajib Shrestha writes,’ sometime as *Bosing Gram*, sometime as *Bunde* and sometime as *Dhampuri*’’(4:5), has been named by a historical king Subarna Malla in 633(Nepal Sambat).

Fig.5: People observing *Bisket Jatra* in Bhaktapur.

Fig.5: people observing *Bisket Jatra* in Bhaktapur

Newar community sets up to celebrate with the Nepalese New Year. The Newar community of Bhaktapur including Bode observes their New Year by celebrating *Bisket Jatra*. Bisket word is taken from Newari language, in Newari words *bi* for snake and *syako* for slaughter, forming the term Bisket which means a celebration to commemorate the death of two serpent demons. Bisket celebrations officially opens when Bhairab and Bhadra Kali are enshrined in their respective chariots and pulled by ropes through cheering and worshipping crowds.

According to the legend received from the knowledgeable elders, in the afternoon of Nepalese New Year Day, thousands upon thousands come from far and wide, crowding into the field around the pole. Two teams of celebrating men pull and strain at the ropes, causing the towering pole to sway first one way then another, while the crowds surge away or run for their lives. When the pole thunders to the ground a great roar of approval is heard, for most believe that only now does the New Year actually commence. The old year is dead and so are the evil serpent demons.

However, Bode celebrates the *Bisket Jatra* in the name of Bode Jatra in a spectacular and unique way by performing tongue-piercing event. The legend states that *Bisket* at Bode commences four days prior to the New Year of Nepali Calendar. On the first day of the festival, the priests (*Thakuli* and *Nanki*) observing fasting perform the special worship of Nillbarahi god for that the formal procedure of playing *Nayakhin* musical instrument proceeds from the house of the *Guthiyar* to the temple of Nillbarahi. The statue of god of two *Mana* rice (about a half kg) having eyes of black beans and silver belt is prepared to perform *Puja*. The performance of the priests and other rituals imparts the theatricality as Eugenio Barba writes, “ theatre is the place in which the living could meet the nonliving” (14).

The meeting of the living and nonliving even has been found in the interesting anecdote of the inception of *Bode Jatra*. The legend unveils the myth regarding to its inception as stated by B.P.Gurung, “In an ancient time, once the inhabitants of Bode were very much terrified and frightened by a ghost. So they were very much desperate and unhappy. One day they decided to go at Tantrik (soothsayer) named Bandhu Dutta Karmacharya. they requested him to set them free out of that agent. Soothsayer Bandhu Dutta calculated and blew his spiritual formula; and at last he succeeded to grab the ghost” (8). The stated myth clearly

shows the relation between self and ritual as Kelly&Kaplan says, ' rituals are the vehicles for making and expressing self\other relations'' (132).

Fig.6: The advertisement of *Bode Jatra* popularly known as Tongue piercing festival.

The legend further unfolds the details of *Bode Jatra* myth and B.P.Gurung writes, "later, people of bode assembled there, and shaved the ghost's head, tore his clothes and made him nude. After that they pierced his tongue along with a pointed iron's file, and paraded him throughout the city for the punishment to his mischievous deed; that had hampered the inhabitants of the Bode village. Also he was tied with a torched wooden load on his shoulder in such a way that he was unable to escape from there. The ghost was very much afraid; and at last he requested the soothsayer to release him out from that punishment'' (ibid). In this description, we unearth that body and ritual merge together to unfurl the theatricality.

Tadashi Suzuki divulges that, " in ritual drama the dramatic element is manifest when the individual or group in ecstasy aimed at communion with the metaphysical or divine power

displays a pronounced character'' (961) as *Bode Jatra* myth bolsters that the ghost promised before Bode dwellers as Sajib Shrestha writes, “ now onwards, he will not do any torment to the Bode residents and will offer them an abundance quantity of crops;and the Bode dwellers will not suffer from any kind of spiritual sickness. Thus the ghost was vowed there in front of all to protect the Bode inhabitants from any kinds of divinely victimizations. At last, they pulled the iron file out of his tongue in front of the courtyard of Mahalaxmi temple and freed him to go'' (25).

Tadashi further uncovers that culture is body. He tries to bring to the light the physically perceptive sensibility in actors' body funnels for the theatrical performances. He tries to focus on enriching actor's innate expressive abilities. Cultured body is one, which has expressive articulation. Actor should nourish a tenacity of concentration. According to him, a cultured society is one where the perceptive and expressive abilities of the human body are used to the full: where they provide the basic means of communication. The Bode society and the person involved in the tongue –piercing demonstrate the kinds of cultural bodily performances as insinuated by Tadashi.

The myth of *Bode Jatra* unfolds with an assortment of cultural performances. Among them tongue piercing embraces a significant place that occurs each Baisakh 2, coinciding a mark of New Year celebration according to Nepali Calendar, becomes theatrical. According to Anna Aalten, “the body has become an important and well- respected subject of anthropological and sociological scholarship which makes in roads to the construction of theatre” (111).Initially the body tended to be treated as an ‘object’ controlled by government and ‘discourse’ of researchers interested in bodily experience and a more fascia approach to

the subject, however in Bode Jatra the body of the performer becomes a locus on which ritual operation begins. In other words, the body is ritualized.

Fig.7: Mr. Sajib Shrestha at home who narrated the myth of *Bode Jatra*

Nancy Scheper and Margaret Lock add a cultural dimension to Leder's concern with the reappearance of the body by proposing to see "pain and illness, a form of communication which the theatre propels" (56). They suggest that illness and pain come into being and are expressed as a result of interaction between embodied individual's feelings and thoughts and the social relationship and cultural belief system of which they are part. As mentioned above, in *Bode Jatra* the cultural belief is that inflicting pain in the body, evil spirit can be driven out of the locality of Bode. Through pain and illness as Scheper and Lock call "the language of the organs, nature, society and culture make themselves heard all at the same time" (31), the character turned actor draws attention to the relation between the 'body' and its owner and social and cultural world it is part of. To grasp the meaning of pain and illness evoked by the

body, it is not enough to look at the body's presence and presence in the individual's consciousness but to see the theatrical performances.



Fig.8: *Mahalaxmi Temple and Lingo(mast):* Important location for *Bode Jatra*

On the last day of Chaitra month as per Nepali Calendar, a man of Bode usually volunteers to undergo this sacred religious atonement. If not, one is chosen who did it in past year. For the last four days this man has undergone a 'purification' ceremony during which beard, eyebrows and hair are shaved away to remove all unclean body growths. He withdraws alone to one room of the house so that no person may touch and besmirch him, eating one sparse meal each day of 'clean' food only, no meat, garlic or salt. The legend illustrates that he should be a man of means, for his family must give food and drink to all villagers who call at his home. For twenty four hours preceding, the ceremony he abstains completely from all nourishment. The body undergoes in ritualized mode.

Generally, a theatre is a place where events are staged or actions are enacted. During *Bode Jatra*, whole locality turns to be theatre; and the site of Pancho Ganesh at the centre of the town becomes the central stage on day of tongue piercing. The town-turned-theatre blurs the distinction between nature and theatre. Also, this kind of space, the theatrical place did not arrive late in the world but was from the beginning—is itself one of the characteristics of our species as Richard Schechner explicates'' the first theatres were ceremonial centers—a part pf hunting following food sources according to a seasonal schedule, meeting other human bands, celebrating and marking the celebrations by some kind of writing on a space: an integration of geography, calendar, social interaction and proclivity of people to transform nature into culture'' (12). The transformation of space into place means to construct a theatre; this transformation is accomplished by 'writing on the space'. This writing needs not be visual; it can be oral as with the local people.

Fig.9: A senior citizen of Bode who narrated about *Bode Jatra*.

Tadashi enlightens that, “in naturalistic theatre, the body undergoes a conscious and voluntary transformation so that one person (actor) becomes a completely different-likely fictional-character” (61). In the same way, the tongue piercer in Bode performs many rituals as the fictional character. The *Karmi Naike* (the man who lays the auspicious foundation stone to construct a new house and pierces the man’s tongue) takes some ashes from the bonfire, and places it on the forehead of the man. Then he blesses him for the good omen; so that he may not suffer from any kind of pain in the time of piercing. People believe that this ash (Kharani Tika) gives him a lot of spiritual encouragement in the time of piercing.

Fig.10: People worshipping the chariot of god at Bode.

Fig.10: A senior citizen of Bode worshipping the *chariot(ratha)* prepared for *Bode Jatra*.

The tongue-piercer undergoes in other ritual penitence. After *Kharani Tika*, he is given some oblation to eat. He abstains from eating any kinds of impure items such as meat,

egg and so on; and also he must not touch to any women. It is believed that, after the completion of this religious sanctification, any kind of spiritual sickness will not fall at the bode locality and good omen comes there for them yielding abundant quantity of harvest in their cultivated lands and the slightest sign of bleeding will not be seen since the blood gushing forth from the tongue is considered evil which portends that no merit has been earned; that the man, who evidently has ruptured some rule of the 'purification' period, will be punished by the gods. If however, no blood is seen, this marvelous display of religious zeal will surely bring such merit to the performer that at death he will be taken straight to Heaven, escaping thereby the punishing burden of repeated reincarnations. The body of the performer blends the ritual and theatricality.

Fig.11: A young man observing *chariot(ratha)* prepared for *Bode Jatra*.

Along with the man's purification performance, Bode ritual sets in motion by performing the Puja of Mahalaxmi and erecting the mast with the measurement of about 16

meter(32 *hata*) length. Local people gather around and fire is kindled in the locality of the tongue-piercer which forebodes itself as the important component for the evolution of theatre where body plays foundational role, Schechner deems that, “the pattern of gathering, performing and dispersing is a specifically theatrical pattern” (176). In other word, people who come to a special place to act something that can be called theatre.

Fig.12: Bode School Ground: people waiting for *tongue piercer*.

The performance embarks on with feasting, dancing, singing and playing musical instrument, *Dhime* and *Nayekhi* by Kasahi community. The space where eruption—evaporation of the event and the dispersal of the crowd—takes place, which functions natural theatre. Understood as a coherent system they form bipolar model of the performances that took place in the ceremonial centers. Ritual celebration on the last day of Chaitra month as

per Nepali calendar and the day of tongue-piercing underpins what Schechner notes “eruptions and processions can occur simultaneously, especially when large number of people is involved and the leadership of a group is flexible” (178).

Fig.13: *Mahadwip* (a bow shaped wooden lifter) stationed on the wall of Bode school.

Appropriating the view of Schechner, Victor Turner affirms that, “body, brain and culture create a theatre where there is no fixed leader to guide the theatrical performances, body itself is the guide” (221). From these aspects it is claimed that body and theatre that function simultaneously have cordial relation. In the highlight of one the other can not be discounted. That is why human body entails the trait of theatricality. It plays a crucial role for eruptions and procession as components of the theatre. Further body becomes the central point for the performativity of cultural phenomena. More over body remains very flexible as the theatre moves ahead according to the choice of audience.

Fig.14: Juju Bhai Shrestha of Bode saluting to the mass and demonstrating pierced tongue.

The purified body turns to be transcendental body which according to Kapila Vatsayan exerts theatrical “expression [which] is total” (55). She asserts, “Individual expression of the body is an important concept for the theatre” (ibid). In Bode Jatra, the tongue-piercer has to move the tongue up side down. The movement of the parts of body renders the theatricality. Performativity of the body inculcates the soul of the theatre. Life-functions, experiences, movements and sounds of the theatre have symbiotic relation with the body. In this sense, the recorded, structured, sculpted, written, choreographed or painted forms have this symbiotic relationship.

Fig.15: Juju Bhai along with People marching around the Bode town.

As *Bode Jatra* gets motion, Bode locality strikes a chord of the theatrical performance. The Bode Tole gradually turns into theatre. On the first day of Baisakh, in the premises of Mahalaxmi temple, there is a program of *Pasta Thayagu* in which the Bhinduwa caste people play three faced Baja and other eight\-nine people belonging to *Nilbarahi Dance* blow *Pwanga* (a Baja like trumpet made from copper). Sajib Shrestha writes, “ the chariots of Bhairab god and Mahalaxmi are brought to Mahalaxmi temple while *Pasta Thayagu* goes on” (20). From the different corner of the city people gather to observe the performances of the premises of Mahalaxmi temple which rings a bell of Schechner’s poetics of performance in

which he inscribes, “ the pattern of gathering,performing,and dispersing is a specially theatrical pattern’’(176).

Fig.12: Idol of Ganesh: An Important component of *Bode Jatra*

Fig.16: An idol of Goddess *Saraswoti*: An important component for *Bode Jatra*.

Subsequent to *Pasta Thayagu*, the gathering disperses and the groups go to the places of different deities of Bode to play *Pasta*. And then the mass along with musical instruments move to worship the chariots of Bode,Thimi and Nagadesh.Following the *Ratha puja*(chariot’s worshipping),in the evening, there is a performance of *Gal Thanegu* in which the main of Mahalaxmi Guthi pours the *Janda*(local wine) into the ditch excavated in between two stones of the temple. The legend expounds that the soonest fill up the ditch forecasts the earliest raining in the locality. The performances of Mahalaxmi temple hark back the aspects

of Victor Turner in which he brings up , “both ritual and theatre crucially involve liminal events and processes and have an important aspect of social metacommentary” (8).

Fig.17: People smearing vermilion during *Bode Jatra*.

Gilbert and Tompkins unearth about ritual practices and state, “ritual is always efficacious for the community and enacted for a particular audience to preserve the order and meaning of anything from harvests to marriage, birth, and death. And ritual has cultural significance blending with theatricality” (57). Correspondingly Bode Jatra turns into the agency of pursuit for the community and makes aware the people to preserve the cultural identity by practicing their rituals. As the first day of the New Year is waning, Bode locality rejoice the *Chanhesiya Jatra* commenced from the shrine of Kumari Goddess located at *Lachhin Tole* during night time. The Jatra embarks on with *Dhime Baja* and *Naike Pradhan* disembarks with *Nayakhi* traditional *Baja*. Subsequently *Gal Thanegu* event sets in motion in

which the *Janda* (local wine) is decanted into the trench crafted in the area of Kumari Goddess. All the activities of Kumari Goddess yield the sense of theatricality through ritual practices.

Fig.18: people performing *Pasta Thayagu* in the premises of Mahalaxmi temple, Bode.

Ritual practices continue in the night of the first day of the New Year at Bode as Victor Turner claims that theatre emerges out of ritual practices and states, “theatre is one of the many inheritors of that great multifaceted system of rituals which embrace ideas and images of cosmos” (12). Over and done with the *Gal Thanegu*, *Naike Pradhan* offers scarlet ceremonial powder and Aksheta (sacred uncooked rice) to *Kumari Goddess* then *Kumari Jatra* sets in motion keeping *Dhime Baja* ahead. *Kumari Jatra* evolves with the *chirags* (burning ceremonial oil torches) held by the locals of Bode up to the shrine of *Kalika* where *Kumari Goddess* kept for this night after the chariot of *Kumari Goddess* makes three round of *Kalika* temple and then the throngs move ahead towards *Pancho Ganesh* chariot. Later the chariot of

Kumari Goddess is brought without *Baja* from *Kalika* temple to Bishnughat tole chowk. At mid night, the tongue-piercer worships *Nityanath* god by offering cock from this way it is believed that he empowers himself to face tomorrow's tongue-piercing event. These ritual practices help to unite body with the cosmos.

Fig.19: Women's participation: Women of Bode observing *Bode Jatra*

Gradually *Pancho Ganesh* develops into the stage where various types of rituals occur in the form of theatricality. Following Kumari Jatra, three chariots of *Ganesh*, two of *Nilbarahi* and one of *Mahalaxmi* are placed in contour in the tole of *Pancho Ganesh* after making them round of each *Gallies* and *toles* of Bode. In the twilight of morning of second day of New Year, the chariot of Kumari is brought from *Bishnughat* to *Pancho Ganesh* tole in procession with other chariots to rejoice the much awaited tongue –piercing Jatra of Bode. These chariots not only stimulate the people to be there to glimpse the fair but also unveil the

significance of body and rituals for the theatricality. They become the source of cosmogonic consciousness and ritual practices in Bode.

Body plays very important part in the theatrical performances. The body is one such trope that brings the theatre on a par with the movements and performativity. Theatre is a spatial concept that creates a microcosm for the movement of the body. All the spectacles of performance are generated by the performers' movement over the space defined by the religion-architectural formation that is the theatre. So Kapila Vatsayan Views on Bharata's *Natyasatra* to show the analogy between body and theatre:

Fig.20: An idol of *Nityanath*: An important component for the *tongue piercer*.

The body in *Bode Jatra* itself becomes the battle ground for the various types of theatrical performativity. The sound, choreography, structure, painted forms and light of the theatre hit upon the body as the source for the performance. The body performs as the sound of the theatre guides. The body starts to perform in tune with the choreography of the theatre as in *Bode Jatra*. On the second day of Baisakh, which is called "Tongue-piercing jatra", the

man is again given holy bath; and a few drops of sacred water is given from the *Karmi Naike* and *Pradhan* (the traditional head man in the village).The fete embarks on from the Ganesh temple of Bode. A huge mass of valley people and the foreigners assemble near the Bode High School and Ganesh temple where a stage is prepared and a bow shaped wooden lifter (Mahadwip) kept opposite to the stage which will be shouldered by the tongue-piercer after completion of rituals to look the fair which strikes a chord the audience of the theatre.In this sense, rituals act as the theatre guides and vice versa.

On the day of tongue-piercing, Bode turns into theatre from early in the morning.

Fig.21: A pond located at *Lachhin Tole*, Bode.

Locals are found busy to show various types of peeping and sound of *Dhimaya Baja* heard in every corner of Bode. People are found dancing and smearing vermilion. The whole Bode grows into a stage where various types of performances acted before the audience. The climax comes around 10/11 am when people of the Guthi draw closer with *dhimaya Baja*. Then *Naike Pradhan* and *Karmi Naike* turn up along with *Nayakhi Baja*. As they roll up to the stage, people set off to fetch the architect of 10 inch long iron file

(Nakarmi) who dipped it in an oil pot one month previously. After that people set out to bring tongue-piercer for 3 times with *Nayakhi Baja*. Finally, tongue-piercer gets there clad with traditional costume. His influx in the *Pancho Ganesh* locality thunders the mass as the actors create enthusiasm and dimensions in the theatricality and audience.

Fig.22: *Lamps* waiting for *tongue piercer* at Bode School Ground.

Correspondingly, the structure of the theatre churns out new dimensions in the performativity of the body. The tongue-piercer walks in with burning candle in the name of all gods and goddesses before coming to the stage. Then *Karmi Naike* worships the man with flowers, edibles and some monetary donation, and pierces the pointed iron's file on the man's tongue in front of the mass. Traditional Newari bands played; thousands of people clap and scatter cinnabar in the air to express their jubilation. Subsequently the man lugs torched load (Mahadwip) on his shoulder and marches around the city along so many people behind the

procession along with a small chariot of Nilbarahi, Ganesh and Mahalaxmi deities are also taken around the city. In this sense, body acts as the theatre guides and vice versa.

Fig.23: An idol of *Bishnu God* placed at Mahalaxmi Temple premises, Bode.

Finally the procession hits on at Mahalaxmi temple and the *Karmi Naike* fishes out the file out of the man's tongue; and he gets hold of a few muds from the ground there and places it on the man's wound as per the tradition. He then hammers the file on the door of the *Nitya Narayan temple* there by worshipping. In this way Bode Jatra exclusively tongue-piercing fete gets completed. Locals of Bode want to keep it alive as they believe that it brings good omen for them. They develop unconscious heroism by creating theatricality and bodily performance becomes the site for the dramatic spectacle.

Kapila Vatsayan totes up that Bharata's *Natyasastra* proceeds to identify the different elements that go into the making of a dramatic spectacle. He analyzes word, sound, movement, line, color and finally, the inner states of being, which are evoked through different elements of the performance. In addition, a whole system of correlation and correspondence is worked out, where the smallest unit of any physical medium is capable of evoking a corresponding transient or permanent mental state. He affixes different gestures with the theatricality by saying that it is a "consciously evolved vocabulary for evoking the formless experience of *rasa* through concrete signs and symbols" (48). It is evident in *Bode Jatra* where body and its parts cause the dramatic expression through the individual body parts.

Chapter IV

Conclusion: Cosmogonic Consciousness in *Bode Jatra*

The performativity of the body communicates to the social events not separated from the community activity where a self-motivated member of the community in Bode contributes a substantial mission to vitalize the ritual practices of the society. The ritual practices gradually turn into theatricality where body performs the significant role as John Tulloch affirms, “The performativity thrust takes theatre studies further into everyday life”(5). Within sociological and psychological framework, performing culture ties to the everyday life, which adds up to the everyday as a performance because of an individual and society. Correspondingly, the performances shown by the tongue piercer and community of Bode have hooked up to the theatricality, and body has developed into the site of theatre.

Bode Jatra has revitalized connection between artistic accomplishment, analysis, and articulations with communities; between ritual knowledge, and theatrical savoir-faire as Abhi Subedi puts in writing that, “dramatic heritage is the continuation of a culture of performance that is vibrant at a particular time and space, but lives on with the succeeding times through a process of the transmission of the semiotics of theatre by trying to recreate the very ethos that created it”(18). The association between society and arts pilots to create relationship between ritual and theatre. Theatre has come into view out of ritual practices in Bode Jatra where bodily performances consolidate theatricality .

Gathering, playing out an action or actions and dispersing have been found in *Bode Jatra* which create theatricality as Richard Schechner terms that, “The pattern of gathering, performing and dispersing is a specifically theatrical pattern”(176). This pattern has occurred naturally in *Bode Jatra* since the Bode community engrosses in all aspects of Jatra keeping

the tongue piercer in the center of theatricality. The mammoth crowd harks back to Schechnerian term 'eruption' in which the crowd disperses subsequent to the tongue piercing episode calls a halt in Bode Jatra. An eruption in Bode Jatra is like a theatrical performance in which the performativity of body brings public interest to envisage body as theatre.

Performativity of the body in Bode has recaptured the elements of distinctiveness of theatricality. The performance of body in Bode has grown to be the middling of artistic expression. The live gestures shown by the body have become the bludgeon against the conventions of established art as Jerzy Grotowski elucidates that, "theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without lighting and sound effects etc, however it can not exist without live communion between the actor-spectator" (23). The ritual and bodily performances done by the tongue-piercer have lent a hand to hook up body with the cosmos.

The performance of body in Bode has revealed many untold stories of *Bode Jatra* and community. *Bode Jatra* through body has communicated many symbols and meanings of the society. The performers of *Bode Jatra* have uncovered cultural aspects and ritual phenomenon of the society. The performer's association with the ritual has created a bond between ritual and theatre since Eugenio Barba avows that, "the essence of theatre does not reside in its aesthetic quality or in its capacity to represent or criticize life. It consists rather in radiating through the rigor of scenic technique an individual and collective form of being. Theatre can be a social cell that embodies an ethos, a set of values that guide the refusals of each of its components" (16).

Body in *Bode Jatra* has developed into an avenue to explore the conception and formulation of the theatre. The bodily performance of *Bode Jatra* has occupied centrality of

definition of the theatre. Body in *Bode Jatra* has become the location for the theatre as Jerzy Grotowski avers that, “the actor makes a total gift of himself. This is the technique of the ‘trance’ and of the integration of all the actor’s psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of ‘traslumination’” (22). The self motivated individual’s bodily performances have challenged the notion of theatricality in Bode Jatra since he unconsciously funnels the Bode community to be a site of theatricality.

The body in *Bode Jatra* has involved in rehearsals. Four day long Jatra has developed an art of rehearsals. The bodily performance of the tongue-piercer has unfolded the theatricality even from rehearsal aspects since he does immense rehearsals before turning up to the stage to pierce his tongue. His tongue’s movement for three days continuously reveals the theatricality as Victor Turner illuminates, “theatre is the art of rehearsals” (14). Bode Jatra has built up a good rapport with the theatricality. It has inculcated theatrical dimensions keeping body as the centre of periphery of dramatic spectacle as it bequeaths foremost magnitude to the assorted aspects of tongue-piercer.

Human movements are the integral parts of *Bode Jatra* since Kapila Vatsayan stresses on the movement of diverse parts of body for the theatricality and puts in writing that, “the movement of entire body or parts evokes theatricality” (50). In the same way, body in Bode Jatra has its own authority and centralizes all the community to watch the distinct bodily performances from the beginning of the fete. The tongue-piercer has turned out to be the focal point and his rituals unfold the micro as well as macro aspects of theatricality as the Jatra puts its roots in the category of folk theatre tradition. The body in Bode Jatra has put across its own

messages and proclaimed the novelty in the performance. The body emanates the performance through varied actions, movements and activities to unveil theatricality.

Thus, body in *Bode Jatra*, especially, tongue that turns into the central site of the performance transforms into the theatre as the theatre refers to the sum totality of the performative terrain that yields in theatrical impression to the audience. The impression itself constitutes out of the ritualized performativity of the body which embraces the self-motivated accomplice of the audience, through which performance is internalized. The personal and scenic techniques of the actor hit upon the theatricality. The gesture, pain, rehearsal, sound costumes and language both verbal or nonverbal as being the appendage of the body itself with which the body burns, vanishes and exerts the flux of panorama bequeaths escalate to the theatrical concept. The performativity of the body as developing into a trope and trajectory for theatricality therefore holds the conception and the evolution of the theatre as evidenced in *Bode Jatra*.

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Appendix: 1

Questionnaires

-) Tell us about Bode.
-) Tell us about Bode Tole and Gallies.
-) What do you know about *Bode Jatra*?
-) Tell us about diverse communities of Bode.
-) Can you tell us about *Bisket Jatra*?
-) Why is it called *Bisket Jatra*?
-) Can you tell us about the myth of *Bisket Jatra*?
-) Tell us about the festivals celebrated in Bode.
-) Can you tell us why the people of Bode celebrate *Tongue-Piercing Jatra*?
-) Tell us about the myth of *Tongue-Piercing Jatra*.
-) How do you select the tongue-piercing person?
-) Can you tell us about the rituals performed by the man?
-) Does he eat anything or not during his rituals?
-) Why does not he touch the women?
-) On the day of tongue-piercing, what are things done by *Naike Pradhan* and *Karmi Naike*?
-) Does the tongue-piercing person visit all the parts of Bode?
-) Who helps to pierce the tongue of the man?
-) Where does the man stay during the *Jatra* period?
-) Does he stay at home or at any other place?

-) What is the importance of *Mahadwip* (*lamp*) shouldered by the man?
-) Can you tell us any symbolic meaning of tongue-piercing man?
-) Why does he tie his knee with the rope?
-) Why do you think that demon was caught in the past?
-) How did then people release the so-called demon?
-) How can you run the *Jatra* annually?
-) Does the government help?
-) Is there any *Guthi*?
-) Do you think that *Tongue-Piercing Jatra* is the identity of Nepali culture?
-) Can you tell us the works done to preserve or continue?
-) Are new generations interested in it?
-) Are you working any to lure tourists?
-) Where does the tongue-piercing person eject the iron-file?
-) Can you tell us about Mahalaxmi temple?
-) Can you tell any difference between *Dhime* and *Nayakhi Baja*?
-) How many days do you celebrate tongue-piercing Jatra?
-) Are you happy to celebrate it or not?
-) Is it a good tradition or is it time to change?
-) Can you tell us the importance of lingo (mast)?

What do you think that society or government should do to continue *Bode Jatra*?