

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Newars, of all ages, whether male or female, go to other villages, towns, or cities to participate in the jattras, especially the local jatra, whether by invitation or by their own volition, to entertain or as a ritual. The main role of these people is that of spectators. The most obvious reason for participating in the jatra is to watch the jatra procession and to worship. Then, at a social level, the tradition of participating in jatra is a movement of people from their localities to another locality to watch the jatra procession.

People come from outside the locality to which jatra is being conducted for many reasons, but the main purpose of participating in the jatra is not to participate directly in the ritual but to observe the jatra as a spectator. Then, the role of spectator and that of participant must be differentiated. Groups of people from different parts of the valley come to a jatra to actively worship the deity; for example, headpersons of guthis of different villages. Mostly, they are invited for the ritual, and these include form nearby towns and villages as well as faraway villages and towns. For example, two days after the chariot arrives at jawalakhel, headperson from the “seven villages”, viz, Pulchok, Kirtipur, Panga, Bhaubahal, Bhaktapur, Thimi, and Naro-Bhare(a double village near Thimi), along with hundreds of others, come to worship the Machendranath deity. The headmen then perform different rituals and worship the deity. This purpose of this type of active participation by outsiders is different from that of the outsiders’ spectators.

A more interesting case is that of many different musical groups coming from different villages and towns of the valley to the jatra procession. This is true especially for the big jattras that involve a whole city or the whole valley, such as Kumari Jatra and Machendranath Jatra. They can be considered both participants and spectators. They move along with the procession, as participants, but they include not only the musicians but also their escorts without the musical

instruments, the spectators. Then, they are simultaneously participants and spectators, the jatra-goers.

Another type of participation in a jatra is the visit of a king or royal member in the jatras. As the king is considered as a reincarnation of the god himself, the presence of the king in various major jatras of the valley is of religious as well as historical importance. For example, the visit of the king of Nepal in Machhendranath and Krishna Jatra of Patan and in Kumari Jatra and Pachali of Kathmandu has important historical and ritual importance. But this visit of king cannot be considered as the participation in jatra, as its function is not to observe or participate in the jatra but to justify the royal approval and support.

1.2 Statement of the research Problem

The Newar society is a relatively cohesive society. The numerous feast and festivals bind Newars of a particular locality or settlement. But what binds Newars from different localities, say from two different villages or towns within the valley? Besides the Newari language, specifically, how and to what extent the different jatras-an important part of Newar society and religion-contribute to the cohesiveness of Newari society? It is on this inquiry that I have based my study.

Although there are numerous studies on Newar jatras, there has been no major study on the participatory aspects of jatra, i.e., study that explores the role of people coming to observe jatra from neighboring and distant places. So, this study tries to throw some light on the tradition of participating in jatra by people of neighboring places and how this tradition contributes to solidarity of Newars.

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1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are:

- A) To analyse the tradition of “participation in the jatra” and “going to watch jatra”; and
- B) To examine how the tradition of going to watch jatra is rooted in the social structure of Newars

1.4 Rationale of the study

Although there have been innumerable studies on Newar religion and festivals, the tradition of “going to watch jatra” is often neglected. Although there are mentions of people coming from all over the valley to participate in the jatras, researches have not given much attention to this tradition itself. It may be that they are not aware of its pervasiveness and social significance, and being myself a Newar, the researcher may have been more able to appreciate it. Moreover, it can be seen that it has its historicity and roots in the social structure of Newars, their marriage patterns, their agriculture and economy, and their regarding the valley as a sacred place. So, this type of study can bring into light a tradition which is hitherto “unknown” and have remained in the interstices of Newar society and culture. It may also enhance, to some extent, the cultural revivalism and consciousness of Newars.

1.5 Organization of the study

This dissertation has been divided into six chapters. First, Introduction background of the study, Statement of the problems, Objectives of the study, Rational of the study. In chapter two, various books, articles, reports and documents related to the present study are reviewed. Likewise, chapter three presents various methods employed for the study. Here, I have touched upon the description of the study area and provided a detailed explanation of the research design and procedures including data collection methods and analysis. In the fourth chapter, there is overview of the study area and local festivals were explained. The chapter fifth is concentrated on observation and analysis of findings including factors in the traditions and objectives of the traditions. The chapter six, analysis including historicity of the tradition on the basis of different kinds of jatra. Chapter seven deals findings, summary, conclusion and recommendation.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Newars: Origine and History

The origins of the Newars are shrouded in mystery. Levi (1950) has proposed that the Newars may have migrated to the valley from the region north of the Himalaya. Furer-haimendorf (1956) writes: “there is every reason to believe that the bulk of the Newar people have been settled in the Nepal valley since prehistoric times.” Among scholars there seems to be consensus that the Newars can be traced back to the ancient kiratas, who inhabited the valley two millennia ago. The kiratas fought wars with the Indo-Aryan invaders and are mentioned in the Mahabharata. The kiratas tribes, the Rai and the Limbu of East Nepal. Are thought to be descendants of the Kiratas. The Kiratas were followed by the Licchavis, who founded a dynasty and left the earliest sources thus far discovered inscriptions from the fifth century A.D. There is also agreement that the Newars and the valley have been repeatedly invaded by other people from the surrounding hill country and the Gangetic plains. The invaders were attracted to the valley by its rich alluvial soils, its urban riches, and the chances for spoils. Some of the invaders founded new dynasties; most prominent of these were the mala dynasties, which are thought to have come in the 12th century from Tirhut in Bihar. These early immigrants tended to become newarized; that is, they assumed cultural patterns from the Newars and adopted their language, making it their own. After some generations, such immigrants or invaders would be more or less indistinguishable from the original inhabitants. This is certainly an important part of the explanation for the great variety among castes and localities that one encounters in Newari culture (Nepali 1965).

The Newars speak a Tibeto-Burmese language which indicates their affinity to other Nepalese tribes and castes who also speak such languages; for instance, Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Rai, and Limbu. However, there are several important aspects of Newari culture which differentiate it from these to such an extent that it would be grossly wrong to put the Newars squarely in the same category.

Firstly, the Newars have a well-developed script of their own, as well as a large body of literature, mainly of religious character. The Newari script fell into disuse during the 19th century. Generally speaking, today it is only known by some members of the priestly castes and Newars who have a keen interest in Newari history and culture. However, this does not imply that Newari is no longer a written language. Modern Newars use the *devnagari script*. There are several Newari authors, both of short stories and poems, literary societies, Newari language conferences, treatises on Newari culture, and daily newspapers. Secondly Newari language, as well as Newari society, has become deeply Sanskritized, i.e., penetrated by words and idioms of Indian origins, although its grammar is Tibeto-Burmese character. Just as Newar social and cultural systems are a product of a fusion of two streams, similarly classical Newari literature is a most tangible evidence of the symbiosis between a Tibeto-Burman language and the Indo-Aryan literate culture.

Physically, the Newars represent an extreme mixture. Their facial types vary from the Mongolian to the Indo-European. The Newars themselves have different theories about their origins; some think they are the descendants of the Kiratas, while others claim that they have migrated to the valley from Malabar in southern India. The foundation for the latter claim is the similarity between the word 'newar' and 'nayar' (Nepali 1965), the implication being that the Newars were somehow related to the (formerly) martial Nayar caste of Kerala. Still others claim to be descendants of immigrants from the region presently known as Bihar on the Gangetic plains. This claim can be verified for certain groups of high caste Newar Hindus, notably the Jha Brahmans and possibly certain other groups of the Brahman and Shrestha castes. However, even these groups have to a large extent intermingled with the earlier inhabitants. Thus, the Newari society has to some degree been a crucible, a melting pot, in which various influences have been synthesized. The Newar own explanations of their origin vary, depending on caste and individual sophistication, some castes, e.g, the Jha, know that their ancestors once migrated to the valley, whereas the Uray know that many male children in the caste have had Tibetan mothers, the Acharyas are thought, according to the Newars, to have their origins in Karnatak (Nepali 1965). That various immigrant groups have mixed is common knowledge. Even if one belongs to a group which traces its origin from present day Indian territories, the Kiratas tend to be regarded as the proto-Newars.

On the realm of religion, Newars can be considered as both Hindu and Buddhist. The two major religious currents, Vajrayana Buddhism and Hinduism, offer two

differing myths to explain the origin of the valley's civilization. The Buddhists maintain that the valley was once a lake, which Manjushri drained by the sword, whereas Brahmanical accounts claim that the valley originally was the land of Gods (Devpuri). The history of the Newars is closely related to the history of the valley, and to some extent the history of Nepal, and there are versions to both Buddhists, history begins in gigantic heavenly cities, populated by gods, demigods, and living Buddha who converted hundreds of thousands to become ascetics who came to the valley on pilgrimages to worship the self-existent (swayambhu). The Buddhists of Nepal at the present day consider Manjushri a Tibetan.

The Hindu origin myth is rather pastoral and places Pashupati in a central position. This myth also accounts for golden ages which preceded the human era. In one of the jungles called Slekhamaviti was buried the image of Pashupatinath under the ruins of his own temple. This image was brought to notice and dug out thus, a Brahman inhabitant of Kirtipur had a cow named Kapila who used to go there to stream her milk on the heap, where the image of Pashupatinath, lay hidden. This was perceived by Gopala the Brahman, who to satisfy his curiosity removed the material of the ruined temple when he found the image of Pashupatinath, which he worshipped in a temple. Afterwards, "Nemuni," a sage, came there and bestowed the sovereignty of Nepal on Gopala, who accepted it with reluctance (Slusser 1982).

Slusser(1982) has divided the valley's history after the little – known kirata period into seven eras:

1. Licchavi, ca.300 to ca.879 A.D.;
2. Transitional, ca. 879 to 1200;
3. Early Malla, 1200 to 1382;
4. Late Malla, 1382 to 1769
5. Rana, 1846 to 1951,
6. Shah, 1769 to the present, But interrupted by the loss of power for a century;

When a local family usurped the power but not the throne of the shahs;
and

7. Shah "restoration," 1951 to the present.

One notable thing is that during these eras the contacts with the cultures of the Gangetic plain have been important. The Licchavi rulers were already Sanskritized. It is generally accepted that they had their roots in present day

Bihar. During the Licchavi period the valley is said to have been under the sway of the Tibetan king Srongtsen Gampo for a short time, and both Newars and Tibetans popularly believe that a Nepali princess who was sent him as wife, together with her Chinese co-wife, converted him to Buddhism, thus initiating the conversion of Tibet.

Buddhism has existed in the valley side by side with Hinduism and had its heyday during the transitional period, when Vajrayana Buddhism developed and established several important centres in the valley. Then, the valley became more Hindu oriented again, paralleling the development on the plains. According to legend, Shankaracharya, the Hindu reformer, is said to have visited the valley and defeated the Vajrayana priests who were responsible for the worship of Pashupati, where after he drove them out of the temple and substituted Brahmans (weight 1877). This legend reflects a Hindu revival and corresponds to a similar development on the Gangetic plains, where Buddhism declined during this period.

The Malla period can be divided into two stages, early Malla (1200 to 1382 A.D) and late Malla (1382 to 1769 A.D). During the former, the political centre seems to have been weak and even lacking at times. The era ends with the ascension of Sthithi Malla to the throne. Sthithi Malla centralized the government and, according to popular belief, introduced a legal code which divided the populace into castes. Little is known about the early Malla period; not even the kings' names are known with certitude. During this period contact was also maintained with China and Tibet, as both domains shared an interest in Buddhism with the inhabitants of the valley. Indeed, "Tibetans still turned to Nepal as a source of Buddhist cult objects," and Nepalese artists even went to build temples in Tibet (Slusser 1982). Most famous and still widely known in Nepal was Araniko, "who at the instance of Kublai Khan was brought to Tibet with a retinue of craftsmen to construct a golden stupa." (Slusser 1982).

The later Malla period saw the development of a high level of artistic achievement. Most of the famed pagoda-style temples and Newari architecture as we know it today developed then. During this period, the trans-Himalayan trade was important and provided the livelihood for a significant group of aristocrats and traders among the upper castes. For one century, the government was centralized in Bhaktapur, but later it was divided into three semi-autonomous kingdoms, which were often involved in disputes with one another to the extent that the divisiveness became one of the most important factors that facilitated the conquest of the valley by the Gorkhas.

The Shah period was initiated with the conquest of the valley by Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769. The Gorkha king intelligently used the divisions among the Malla kings. To gain a strategical advantage, he entered a pact with the Malla king of Bhaktapur against the Malla kings of Kathmandu and Patan. When he had conquered those two cities, he then turned to defeat Bhaktapur as well. He also blocked the important trade route between India and Tibet, causing great difficulties for the general populace due to the shortage and for the Newari upper classes whose wealth depended on the trans-Himalayan trade. The situation became so bad that it is said that the traders and the aristocratic caste finally supported Prithvi Narayan Shah in order to bring an end to the war and the blockade (Kirkpatrick 1811).

The early Shah period ended when the prime minister Jung Bahadur usurped the executive power in 1846. This initiated a century of autocratic rule. Following the rule of Jung Bahadur the prime minister's office (Rana) was kept within the bounds of one (Chhetri) family. The Rana regime has been much criticized because the Rana families used the state revenue as private income, largely wasting it on conspicuous consumption; they allied their regime with the British rulers in India, thus supporting colonial rule; large harems were kept; there was extreme Hindu-orthodoxy at the expense of other religions; Nepal was closed off from the rest of the world; and development which they thought could endanger their rule was intentionally prevented. The Ranas were ousted in 1950 in a revolution in favor of the king who nominally had remained head of state. The Rana period strengthened the Hindu current in Newari society and the tendency to emulate high caste (Parbatya) models for social behavior, while it suppressed Buddhism.

The revolution of 1950, in which the Newars took part by closing their shops and going out into the streets, was followed by a restoration of the Shah dynasty. Initially, there was an experiment with multiparty parliamentary system, but in 1959 it was replaced by the Unitarian Panchayat democracy, a system of directly selected councils in several tiers. Thus, there were village panchayats, district panchayats, zone panchayats, and a national panchayat. There was also class organization for laborers, children, students, ex-servicemen, women, farmers, and youth. The panchayat system allowed many Newars to be elected to public offices. The end of the Rana rule also meant that the country was opened to foreigners, and a road was built to India. Thus, new influences have affected the valley's culture, mainly from India, but also from the Occident and Japan.

The conquest of the valley, led by the Rajah of Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1768, has had profound impact on the Newars. One result, which the Newars sometimes explicitly resent, is that they no longer are masters in their own house. Indeed, they barely constitute half of the population of the valley. A second is that they, to a large extent, have become bilingual out of necessity and have taken an active part in the polity created in the late 18th century. Thereby, they have been greatly influenced by the high-caste parbatyas, who make up the politically dominant groups in modern Nepal. In spite of the resentment the Newars have felt at times, they have adapted rather well to the new political and economic situation. Newars provide a large portion of the civil servants and often reach very high positions in the Nepalese administration. Indeed, the Shah dynasty has oftentimes recruited its closest advisors from the higher echelons of the Shrestha cast, whose ranks previously, during the Malla reign, had provided the Newari kings with the same services. Nowadays, Newars are often found as ministers, etc. the creation of modern Nepal has also allowed Newars to migrate to new areas, and one presently finds many Newar communities outside the valley. A number of the better known are Palpa, Tansen, Baglung, and the old bazaar in Pokhara. However, some of these settlements may have been established before the conquest. The migrants have largely claimed to have Shrestha caste status, regardless of their ancestral caste. They have also intermarried with other castes and sometimes forgotten their mother language, becoming speakers of Nepali, and thus contributing to what has been called the “nepalization” of the country. Living outside the valley they have become merchants, traders and civil servants and have rarely taken to farming. These migrants have to a large extent lost their ancestral culture, the social order prevailing among the Newars in the Kathmandu valley.

2.2 Newars: Caste, Religion, and Identity

In the Newar context, while specifying precisely a person’s religion, caste and context also must be cited. For example, festivals and life-cycle rituals are observed as a member of one’s caste. Also, caste is the principal bases of social identity and hierarchy among the Newars. Caste cuts across religion and brings both the religious sections of the Newars under one single scheme of hierarchy.

Broadly, Newar society is stratified into three vertical classes of hierarchy: clean castes, water-untouchable castes, and untouchables. At the bottom are the untouchables, literally ‘those who may not be touched’ ; their touch requires purification. Above these, but still impure, are those castes which are not untouchables but are ‘water-acceptable’. Clean castes accept water from each other, but cooked rice, feast food, and shared cigarettes or hookahs are subject to

complex purity rules. The table below shows the principles castes of Newar (Nepali 1965)

The most important shrines in the valley are Swayambhunath (Buddhist) and Pashupatinath (Hindu). Different castes worship different deities at different occasions and more or less intensively. Only the higher echelons in the caste system claim to be exclusively Buddhist or Hindu. The Varjracharyas (Brajacharyas), Buddhist priests, will adamantly maintain that they are Buddhists, whereas the Shrestha, caste will maintain that they are Hindus. However, if one goes deeper into this issue in a conversation, one will find that the distinction between the two groups is largely artificial. The farmer castes, who we are mainly concerned with while studying the festivals, may be called as 'ordinary Newars', who observe the customs and festivals traditional to this caste and leave all niceties to the higher castes. For example, Hindu and Buddhist alike always worship Ganesh first in every ritual. Indeed, every locality has its local Ganesh (Ganesh Than). In addition, several of the valley's most important Mother Goddesses that are Hindu Tantric attracted by the Buddhist Gubhaju priests. "The differences between the two margas are smaller than their similarities. Both groups worship the same deities, speak the same language, and have similar social organizations. Indeed, they are both part of the same society. Further down in the caste hierarchy, no distinction is made between Buddhists and Hindus" (Gellner 1987).

Other important deities are Karunamaya, the Rain God; and the Asta Matrika, the eight Mother Goddess. There is also a multitude of deities of the crossroads, spirits, and ghosts. This category includes supernatural beings which are peculiar to each neighborhood. Most important are the Ajimas who dwell at the crossroads. The Ajimas are the Grandmother Goddesses and are regarded as the keepers of municipal records. Hence, they are propitiated with offerings both at the birth and the death of any member of the community.

In religious terms, one can easily detect that many of the elements of the Newar social structure correspond to religious and devotional levels or categories. Indeed, this can be extended to the bulk of Nepalese Hindus, who all worship Pashupati. Certain deities are worshipped by all Newars: Karunamaya who is the lord of rainfall; the eight mother Goddesses; Kumari, the deity of pure female energy; and the Bhairavas, the frightening Gods of movement, unruliness, and alcohol. Within the castes there are sub groups which worship different deities

. The higher castes have a type of secret god known as Agamdyo, and the cult acts of its worship are kept absolutely secret. One may also have *Digudyo* (lineage gods), which are propitiated once a year by the assembled members of the patrilineage. On the household level, the household's private gods are generally found. These commonly include Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, or in her place, Bhimsen, and an assortment of other gods (Gallner 1987).

Often special societies, guthis, which hold land, have been instituted to worship particular gods. These are invariably of a local nature, and participation in parts of the rites is restricted to the members of the guthi. Religion is highly significant in Newari society. Most Newars seem to be performing ritual acts every day, and most festivities have overt religious elements. The religious acts vary from the observance of rituals which last several days to minor ritual acts. Circumambulating the local temples, clanging a bell set up for the purpose. It is noteworthy that Newari religions, as exercised by the layman, places little emphasis on belief in religious dogma (often people cannot explain why certain ritual acts are performed) but great emphasis on physical acts. Religion to the Newar is not the confession of a certain creed but rather a way of life, which involves both belief and the observance of various ritual acts and rules (e.g.; caste endogamy) which may be highly varied, the religious pluralism is extreme to the extent that even the same image of a god may be taken to be different gods by different persons or groups. Thus, the favorite god of the Newar farmers, the rain bestowing Karunamaya, is worshipped by people of all castes and walks of life also as Bunga Deya, Padmapani Lokeswara, Matsyendranath, Visnu, Shiva-sakti, Bhaskara, Brahma each according to his devotion (Locke 1980).

2.3 Religious History

Religious history of the Kathmandu valley, and hence of the Newars, can be classified mainly into that of Licchavi and Malla period, as these are the main periods when temples were erected and many festivals were commenced. The era before the Licchavi is lost as there are no historical records, and after the modern era, although changed considerably, the whole state has become more secular.

According to Slusser (1982), the Licchavi religious climate encouraged the practice of many faiths. Foremost were Hinduism and Buddhism, but the Vedic tradition and popular cults also flourished. Not only were all the deities of the formal Hindu-Buddhist pantheon worshipped, but also autochthonous mother goddesses and multitude of godlings and demigods, many of which must have

originated in local cults. By the fourth century at the latest, the paramount deity of Nepal, Shiva Pashupati, was worshipped in the form of a symbolic linga on the sacred bank of the Bagmati. At about the same time, another illustrious deity, Changu Narayan was installed in a sanctuary crowning the Hill of the Palanquin (Changum). The frequent of inscriptional references and the number of extant symbols and images of Shiva and Vishnu attest to the high esteem with which the Licchavis regarded these two principal Brahmanical deities. That worship also rendered the paramount female deity of Hinduism, Durga, is also attested through inscriptions and sculptures. Epigraphs and images reveal the presence of tantrism and the cult of a host of les Bhramanical deities.

By the beginning of the fifth century, the arch holy place f Buddhism, the stupa of Syambhunath-almost certainly a foundation of Vrsadeva-crowned Cowtail Hill (Syengum). Gifts of successors kings, the exalted stupas soon followed it – Dharmadeva (Chabahil), Bodhnatha, and others. Clustering about the stupas, in the viharas and domestic courtyards, by the wayside, and at the fountains, were thousands of miniature stupas or chaityas of stone, exquisitely carved. Both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism were practiced, and by Amshuvarman’s time at least, Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhism. Images of Buddha, the Vajrayana pentad, and certain favored Bodhisattvas were consecrated. The cult of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, which could burgeon in the following centuries, was firmly established. The ancient indigenous deity Bungadyo, installed at modern Bungamati village, had already been assimilated into the Bodhisttva’s cult of Bunga-Lokesvara apparently in part of King Narendradev’s influence. In this guise, the village god would remain until his further transformation centuries later in the yogi Matsyendranath.

The Malla years, particularly from the time of Sthitimalla, mark the increasing Hinduization of the Kathmandu Valley and concomitant decline of Buddhism. “By the late Malla period, also, the celebrated deity of Bungamati, which in the Malla period merged with the yogi Matssyendranath, is a case in point” (Slusser 1982). Sivamargi of Buddhamargi was now united by the all-pervasive bond of tantrism. In this tradition, the gods were not only worshipped but manipulated. To the gods were joined the demigods-ghosts and globins, witches and haunts of every kind.

2.4 The structure of the Newar Pantheon

Anthropologists studying Hinduism have generally identified six distict levels in the pantheon. These may be listed as follows (Gellner 1992):

1. An undifferentiated godhead, namely simply isvara or bahgawan
2. The great god, Siva and Visnu, and the goddess (Devi) in her form as Parvati, Siva's wife
3. The sons of Siva and Parvati: Ganes and Kumar
4. Fierce forms of Siva (i.e Bhairav) and Devi (the eight mother goddesses, including Kali, Durga)
5. Fierce or capricious non-sanskritic guardian deities, such as village goddesses and lineage deities; holy serpents (naga, sages (rsi), the earth god (bhumi), ancestors (pitri)
6. Ghosts (bhut, pret) and demons (raksasa) and others.
7. For completeness, one needs to add to level (ii) the various Buddhas and Bodhisttvas.

2.5 Jatra and Its Types

For the purpose of our study, jatra will be mainly include palanquin festivals (kha jatra) and chariot festivals (rath jatra) and dance performances (pyakha).

Juju and Shrestha (1985) discusses about these three types of jatra as well as their significance. In palanquin jstras, the palanquin containing the deity is carried in shoulders of men and is rallied around the village. He considers some of these palanquin jstras as observed as "birthday" of a diety, as some deities worshipped by Newari were once immortal humans who, due to their deeds, had been deified. Examples include all the small local festivals in the villages and towns. In the second type, the ratha jatra, the chariot containing the deity is pulled from one part of the city to another, and the purpose of these jstras is to let people of different parts of the city to worship the deity, so that even the sick and old can worship the deity. Matsyendranath and Kumari jstras fall in this category. Whereas palanquin festivals are observed by people of only a particular village or town, the chariot festival is observed by the whole city in palanquin jstras, the deity is usually a representation of the original deity, which is kept intact in the temple. But in the chariot jatra, the deity put in the chariot is the main deity, and the temple is locked and closed.

In dance performances (pyakha), men wearing masks, representing as deities, ambulate from one place to another, performing dances. Bhadrakali Dance and Pachali dance, Astamatrika dance of Bhaktapur, etc fall into this group. The purpose of these dances is to get rid of eh evils, and it is considered as a war against evils. In these dance jstras, the musical procession is always at the last,

whereas in palanquin and chariot jatras the musicians are at the beginning. The logic is that in warfare, musicians follow the warriors, but in ceremonies music is placed at the beginning. Moreover, the role of the music is to inform people that jatra is going or commence.

Apart from this, there are many classifications, but one has to be cautious not to include all festivals as jatras, as there are festivals (rituals and processions) which do not include procession of deities through a locality. For example, the two biggest festivals of Nepal, Tihar (Swanti in Newari) and Dahsain (Mohani in Newari) are not jatras but only festivals. More precisely, they fall into calendrical festivals which are actually domestic events, although observed nationwide.

Gellner (1992) distinguishes between two types of festivals: local and calendrical, and this distinction is very useful for our purpose.

“A sociological distinction can be made between two kinds of festivals that occur once a year, and there are Buddhist and Hindu versions of both; the local festival and the calendrical festival. The local festival is the annual festival of a local deity. The date on which it falls is determined by local custom and the festival is celebrated only by locals. On a few days each year, there are local festivals in numerous places at once, but in general there seems to be a principle that adjacent villages celebrate the festival of their main local divinities at different times. The best-known Buddhist local festivals are the chariot festivals of the various Karunamaya-Matsyendranath. In outlying villages, festivals are usually devoted to some form of Mother Goddess”.

Calendrical festivals proper are those which are observed by all Newars, and in many cases by all Nepalese too. There is, however, a certain overlap between the two categories of festivals, either because certain local festivals have come to be celebrated throughout the valley as a calendrical festival, or because a given calendrical festival is particularly associated with, and paradigmatically celebrated in, one locality. Examples of basically local festivals are Yenyah (Indra jatra), which is fundamentally a Kathmandu festival, or the Karunamaya-Matsyendranath jatra of Lalitpur. In the latter, only the final day (the ‘showing of the vest’) is a festival for the whole valley.

But, as can be seen, the calendrical festivals can include festivals like Mohani, Swanti, Ghantakarna, which for our purpose are not jatras, as Newars do not regard them as jatras.

Gaborieau (1982) advances a neat interpretation or schematization of the Hindu festival cycle, and Newar calendrical festivals fit the pattern the outlines. Main calendrical festivals fall in the period of 'four months' (caturmas) from Sravan to Kartik when Vishnu is sleep. This is a time of disorder when demons are particularly threatening. It is also the time of the rains, and of the hardest agricultural work (rice planting and weeding). It is the time of the year when people fall ill with fevers and stomach complains. This period is brought to an end by the two great festivals of Mohani and Swanti.

Here again, most of the festivals Gaborieau defines are domestic events, not the jatras, and most of them fall into this four-month period. Actually, most of the jatras fall outside this period.

Nepali (1965) classifies festivals into two groups: community events and domestic events. In the first, participation is inter-caste, based on locality or settlement solidarity. All the palanquin and chariot processes come into this. The other category consists of Hindu calendar festivals as are confined either to the members of the households or kin groups. The festivals of the second group are observed to reinforce solidarity among the patrilineal groups (Dewali) and members of the joint households. Mohani and Swanti fall into these domestic events.

If the jatras are considered as movements in space which bridge the gap between the human worshipper and the objectified sacra, there are two such movements, according to Michael Allen:

“.....on the one hand the going forth of humans from their various residences to visit temples, shrines, rivers and other forms of sacra, and on the other the periodic going forth of iconographic representations of deities from their abodes so that humans may the more easily see, worship and make offerings to them. The most elaborate and popular festivals in the Newar religious calendar combine both forms of movement, that is to say, humans and gods meet whilst both are aboard on ritually prescribed journeys.”

Then, the procession of jatra, for that particular locality, is the movement of deities or their representations from their dwelling places to the whole locality so that humans can see, worship, and make offerings to them. On the other hand, the travelling to shrines, and traveling to watch jatra to other localities, is the

movement of humans to the residence of the gods to see, worship, and make offerings to them.

2.6 Jatra and Calendar

The first consideration in the jatra swowanegu tradition is, “How do Newars know that there is jatra in one of the localities of the valley?” Obviously, one always has to refer to a calendar to know where a jatra is being held. It is not an exaggeration to say that Newars have a “calendar” in their “heads.” There are many feasts and festivals in every month, and they know “by default” that there is some jatra going on somewhere. Nepal sambat , a lunar calendar, is the one which determines all festivals and jatras of Newars , but the official one is Kikram sambat, which is a solar calendar. The date for a given jatra, and for that matter every festival or religious observance, is specified with the Newari month, the pakchhey (dark and brief half) and tithi (day). Generally, Nepal sambat is used mainly by higher castes and the learned. People generally are aware of the days of the full moon and new moon of every month, they associate this with the month and season, and they consult a calendar. It is interesting to note that although there has and season, and they consult a calendar. It is interesting to note that although there has been going on a movement of decades to establish Nepal sambat as national calendar, especially by Newars – and this has become a part of Newar cultural revivalism- the ordinary Newars even do not know, or cannot recall, the names of the months of this calendar.

Another way a Newar knows about a jatra somewhere is by invitation. Two or three days before a jatra, a person invites his or her relatives to come to watch jatra, and this is the highest form of hospitality in the Newar culture. Invitation, and therefore presence, of one’s married daughter and her husband and children to the jatra is mandatory, and it is a social obligation. This invitation of relatives to one’s jatra is so much important that, often, not inviting relatives to a jatra is

an indication that their relationships are terminated. Also, people invite their friends to watch jatra.

2.7 Jatra-goers and “jatra swowanegu”

The next consideration in the jatra swowanegu tradition is who goes to watch jatra, or who those jatra-goers are. Obviously, and person outside from the locality where the jatra is being performed is a jatra-goer, but it can be analyzed according to caste, gender, age, etc. as discussed earlier, a married daughter, along with her husband and children, always goes to her thachhen(maternal home). Often, due to his job, may visit in the evening. Married daughters also may invite their parents and siblings to observe the jatra. Children seem very excited to go to watch these jatras, as they can have the opportunity to go somewhere new and outside their locality. Nowadays, people often go to watch jatra anywhere for entertainment, and this has been made easier by the modern transportation system.

Now the objectives of the jatra will be considered, what people ‘watch’ as a festival-goers? Obviously, as jatra is a procession, people watch the procession itself. Moreover, as jatra is a special kind of procession, with people carrying palanquin on their shoulders, or pulling a chariot, they also watch the deity and worship it. This worship is of ritual importance of many reasons. First, the outsiders have the opportunity to worship this specific deity, which he or she may not bother to visit at other times of the year due to his or her own restrictions. Moreover, even if one goes to worship this deity at its temple, one may not be able to worship as the temple may not be open all days of a year and all time of a day. So, it is very important that one visits and worships the deity when there is a jatra being held of that deity. Also, each jatra has its own peculiarities, and people are interested in observing these “esoteric” rituals. For example, in Handigaon jatra of Kathmandu, near the end of the procession, people carry the palanquin to the center of a pond called “Gahanapokhari”, which is very usual in a palanquin jatra. Moreover the palanquin itself is decorated in the most unusual way, with anything, including old, useless, umbrella. Similarly, in the jatra of seven villages of the east of kirtipur near the Balkhu river, palanquin from seven suburbs villages of kirtipur are brought

together to celebrate their jatras together. Also, as jatra involves music, dance, costumes, and other performances, people also enjoy these things. In addition, people also move along with procession and the outsider has the chance to become familiar with the different places, temples, and the whole locality.

2.8 Palanquin, Chariot and Dance Festivals

Now we come to the question, how jatra is watched? Generally, people come outside their house in the streets to watch the jatra when it comes to their tole. Old and young, men and women all come outside to worship the deity, put the tika on their forehead from the deity, and offer things to the deity. Actually, the main function of the circumambulation and procession to rally all around the locality is to let people worship the deity in their own toles and from their houses so that even the sick and old can get the blessing of the deity, even from the windows of their houses if they cannot come outside. The outsider festiveal-goers also usually worship at this time. Then, they may join the procession and move along with to visit different toles and temples of that locality. Rarely outsiders move along with the procession the whole route. This depends on the size of the locality and the grandness of the jatra itself. For example, for a national jatra like Machhendranath and Kumari, due to the very large area it covers- in the case of Machhendranath jatra the whole Patan city and in case of Kumari jatra the whole inner Kathmandu- it is not possible for the outsider, and even the insider, to visit all the places along with the procession. But a jatra such as Bishnudevi jatra of Panga village in Kirtipur, even outsiders may ambulate with the jatra the whole village.

Another important consideration is the involvement is the involvement or participation of these outsiders in the procession itself. As already noted, palanquin jatras tend to be local in nature, observed in a village or a small town; whereas chariot jatras usually involve the whole town or city. Then, in palanquin jatras, the carriers of the palanquin are exclusively the insiders and there is a differentiation possible between an outsider and an insider, and involvement of

outsiders may generate some enmity in some cases. But in chariot jattras, as it covers a whole town or city, it is not possible to identify who is an outsider and what is an insider. So, anyone can pull the chariot for some distance. Also, the grandness of the chariot itself necessitates that it is pulled by a large number of people, as it is not possible for a limited group of people to do so. Moreover, as the procession involves the whole city, people from every street and tole participate in it. Thus, chariot festivals tend to be not local, but national, as in the case of Machhendranath jatra. In the dance festivals, however, all insiders and outsiders alike can be regarded only as spectators, and there is no direct involvement of these people other than the performers themselves. Usually, these dance festivals cover a whole town or city. Nawadurga cance of bhaktapur and various malakar dances are to name of a few. These dances start from a specific place, such as dance training house, nasa chhe, and move to different toles and villages. Usually, they are performed in the nighttime. Outsiders usually stay the night to watch these jattras. Usually, outsiders, as well as insiders, watch these jattras when the jatra come to their own village or tole. That is to say, they usually do not go to other villages or toles to watch the jatra. If the dance jatra is specific to a certain locality, then those people to the locality may have feasts at their homes, but in surrounding villages, this may not be the case.

2.9 12-years Jattras and Dances

One should also consider the 12-years jattras and dances, those special jattras and dances held every 12 years apart from their annual observance, when talking about the jatra and the culture of jatra swowanegu. These jattras and dances draw many more people than ever from the whole valley. For example, in the 12-years Macchhendranath jatra, the chariot is constructed in Bungamati and is carried from there to the patan city and is moved about the whole city, and then returned back; whereas in the annual Machhendranath jatra, the chariot is made in the and is pulled throughout the city. Another important 12-years jatra is the Pachali Bhairav jatra, in the which the Pachali Bhairav exchanges swords with the king. Many other Gana Pyakha, or Malakar Dances, are held in different parts of the valley once in 12 years, and especially important is the malakar cance of kirtipur. During this dance, which lasts for almost a month, people from all over

the valley come to watch the performance. These dances consist usually of different Bhairav, Ganesh, and their escorts. Newars usually recognize them as “colored masks” such as “tuyu khawpa” or white mask, “mhashu khawapa” or yellow mask (Bhairav), etc. spectators need to stay night long to watch these jatras as it is performed at nighttime and may involve the whole night. In the 12-years malakar dance of kirtipur, especially spectacular is the funeral ceremony in which the dancers carry their masks in a solemn procession to cremate them in their own grave in the western part of the town. These dance festivals are regarded as a battle against the evils powers, and are reenactments of the fight between the gods and demons, or historically between the people of Kathmandu valley and outside invaders. Although each family in kirtipur holds feasts during this dance jatra, the neighboring villages such as Nagaon and Panga do not regard it as a major festival, although the procession encompasses these villages and relatives of people in these villages also come to watch jatra from around the valley.

2.10 Staying during jatra

As mentioned earlier, when the jatra occurs at nighttime, people often have to stay the night, and that is why one needs relatives or friends to go to watch a nighttime jatra. But in most cases, the jatra is held during the day. This jatra swawanegu can be considered as a pilgrimage, which will be discussed later in greater detail. Then, it becomes a local pilgrimage which can be accomplished without staying overnight away from home. Most of the desh jatras are commence during the daytime. Moreover, there are jatras which are observed for many days and nights. Bisket jatra of Bhaktapur is held for almost seven days. But jatra goers usually attend the jatra on the main day when the deity is rallied around the whole town or city. Then, usually married daughters and their children stay overnight to watch the jatra. As on the day of the local jatra, there is a feast held in each house of the locality, the festival-goers also enjoy the best meals and drinks they ever can get. Especially important is the buffalo jelly meat, called takha. As already noted, most of these local jatra fall outside the chaturmas, in the winter season, and food and drinks are necessary to keep oneself warm. Not only relatives and friends, but Newars also invite unknown

spectators to come into their house and have meals during these jatras, as hospitality is the main principle in these jatras.

The frequency at which people nears go to watch jatra to other places depend on the gender and age of the people. For example, older women go regularly to watch jatra in other places, as they have time and interest to do so. As mentioned earlier, married daughters always visit their maternal home during jatra, and husbands have an obligation to visit. Nowadays, due to transportation facilities, may young men and women go on their own. It should be noted that they usually go to places where they have relatives, and this can be said in the past also, even in the Malla period and Rana period, when there was no transportation system.

The belief held by most people is that one should go to watch each and every jatra of the valley in one's lifetime. But in the case of Machhendranath jatra, it is said that everyone should observe every year; people from all walks of life should go at least once to worship it. As it is a national holiday when big festivals like Machhendranath, Kumari, and Bisket jatra of Bhaktapur are held, people from all over the valley go to watch it. But in case of other local jatras, which fall on different dates in the winter season, this is not the case, and only relatives and few enthusiasts visit these places to watch jatra.

Due to modern transportation facilities, including one's own vehicle, especially motorbike, there has been a veritable increase in the number of people going to watch jatra in any place in the valley, even outside the valley such as Banepa. Moreover, more and more non-Newars are participating in these jatras and have been attracted to this culture. But the difference is that, for Newars, jatra swowandegu is a ritual, and they consider these jatras as their own, whereas for others it may be just for entertainment or for personal worship.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Rational of the Site Selection

The Kirtipur Municipality was established in 1997 by combining eighteen wards and stretches from Bagmati River and Chobhar hillock in the east to Balkhu River in the west, and the southern hill of Champadevi to Tyangla and Tribhuvan University in the north. The people in the Kirtipur hillock are almost all Newars but the Naya Bazaar and surrounding villages of Panga and Nagaon have been infiltrated with people all over from Nepal coming to study at the Tribhuvan University and settling here. It can be said that in Kirtipur, Newars are becoming a minority in their own land. Although agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Kirtipur, the residents of Naya Bazaar are, which is the hub of the town, are mostly involved in business.

The town of Kirtipur occupies a long, low ridge 5 kilometers southwest of Kathmandu. Established as a western outpost in the 12th century, Kirtipur had a nominal independence by the time Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of modern Nepal, conquered the valley in 1767. The hilltop position, once a zone of security, has proved to be a serious handicap to development due to the cutoff by the Tribhuvan University isolating Kirtipur from the greater Kathmandu city. The main commercial center of kirtipur is the Naya Bazaar, on the southern base of the hill.

3.2 Research Design

Newars are very religious people and their jatras can be considered as “social religious” (Gellner 1987). In this respect, a functional explanation will become

necessary as one considers social and religious structures of the society to explain this tradition. This functionalist paradigm becomes more obvious when considering the social factors that tend to maintain and perpetuate the different local festivals and the participation of festival-goers.

Also, here, as it is tried to establish the historicity, the historical component of the study becomes apparent, based on local myths and literature. Then, it can be considered as a historical study. As it is a study of legends and myths, and their interpretation and analysis in reference to this tradition, an interpretative approach would also be utilized to some extent. So, overall, it oscillates between symbolic and interpretive approaches, and functionalist approaches.

3.3 Nature of Data

Due to the ethnographic and historical nature of the study, the research design is mainly qualitative. In regard to treating jatra as a special form of ritual, and the tradition of “people’s participation in the jatras,” the study will be descriptive in nature. Since the study concern on the cultural practices on its myths and paradox, the data is not gender sensitive.

3.4 Sampling procedures

In the process of research and data collection, interviews related to the main topic was prepared and distributed to the participants within the Kirtipur. Each questionnaire contained 25 questions and 50 questionnaires were distributed to the different participators in the jatras.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Although there is much literature regarding different jatras of the valley, there are very few regarding the festival-goers, which must be gleaned from secondary sources. The researcher’s own observations of behavior of the people participating in jatras as well as the jatras themselves, and unstructured interviews with the jatra-goers, and analysis regarding the social aspect of the tradition will be relied upon. Observations included the jatra-goers themselves, how much they enjoyed watching jatra, how much time they spent watching the jatras, etc. interviews, mostly unstructured, were conducted during the jatra itself about how they feel when they go to watch jatra.

3.5.1 Interview

A structured questionnaire was designed for research interview. Both open and closed ended questions were included in the research interview questionnaire. Closed ended questions gave the quantitative information. The open ended questions provided in depth information which is qualitative. They were explained about objectives of the study. This is both due to the little spare time people have and because if it is too long it is hard both the interviewing team and for the respondent to concentrate. The interview started by telling the purpose of asking questions, pointing out that the respondent would not get any benefit of bonus by answering the questions, that everybody was free to say no, and that the answers would be handed anonymously.

Interviews mostly unstructured had conducted during the jatra itself about how they feel when they go to watch jatra. The persons interviewed included youth and elderly, as well as women and children. Moreover, it was also tried to gauge their perception as to change in the pattern of going to watch jatra.

3.5.2 Observation

At the time of collecting information, emphasis was given to “Participants observation” method. The researcher was involved in close observation on the Balkumari festivals of the study site. For this researcher had attended Meetings of communities for the conduction of jatras.

This observation method helped to cross check and verify the information collected through secondary sources and interviews. It helped to gain deeper insight into the process and patterns of users behaviors. It further helped to cross check the information gathered from the respondents.

The observation of different jatras and the behavior of the people participation in jatras as well as the jatras themselves, and unstructured interviews with the jatra goers, and analysis regarding the social aspect of the tradition had been relied upon, observation included the jatra goers themselves, how much they enjoyed watching jatra, how much time they spent watching jatras, etc

3.6 Analysis and presentation of research data

The data collection through various instruments and sources were edited, coded and processed towards the completion of the study. The data was broadly

categorized according to the research objective and data were presented both qualitative as well as quantitative forms.

3.7 limitation of the Study

Every research work has its own limitations. So the present study also has its limitations, which is as follows:

1. This study is an academic research conducted as a partial fulfillment of a degree in M.A anthropology where only 50 respondents were interviewed, which may not represents the people from other areas.
2. The study area is based in Kirtipur Municipality.
3. The study is mainly focused to Newars communities jattras.

CHAPTER 4 STUDY AREA AND LOCAL FESTIVALS

4.1 The Town of Kirtipur

The town of Kirtipur occupies a long, low ridge 5 kilometers southwest of Kathmandu. Established as a western outpost in the 12th century, Kirtipur had a nominal independence by the time Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of modern Nepal, conquered the valley in 1767. The hilltop position, once a zone of security, has proved to be a serious handicap to development due to the cutoff by the Tribhuvan University isolating Kirtipur from the greater Kathmandu city. The main commercial center of kirtipur is the Naya Bazaar, on the southern base of the hill.

The Kirtipur Municipality was established in 1997 by combining eighteen wards and stretches from Bagmati River and Chobhar hillock in the east to Balkhu River in the west, and the southern hill of Champadevi to Tyangla and Tribhuvan University in the north. The people in the Kirtipur hillock are almost all Newars but the Naya Bazaar and surrounding villages of Panga and Nagaon have been infiltrated with people all over from Nepal coming to study at the Tribhuvan University and settling here. It can be said that in Kirtipur, Newars are becoming a minority in their own land. Although agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Kirtipur, the residents of Naya Bazaar is the hub of the town, are mostly involved in business.

The population size and sampling methods had been adopted as follows

Table 1: Respondents by Age groups

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
15-25	11	22
25-35	9	18
35-45	8	16
45-55	12	24
55 and above	10	20
Total	50	100

The age group of the respondents of the sampled ranges from fifteen to twenty-five. Among them 15-25 and 45-55 age groups are the maximum.

Table 2: Respondents by Sex groups

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	29	58
Female	21	42
Total	50	100

Source : field survey 2009

As seen from the table, out of the 50 respondents 29 peoples were male and 21peoples were female which is 58% and 42% respectively, whose views are analyzed in the form of data in this study.

Table 3: Respondents by Religion groups

Religion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
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Hindu	32	64
Buddhist	15	30
Other	3	6
Total	50	100

From this table no of Hindu religious respondents are high in compare to Buddhist and as well a little percentage of other religious peoples also get participate in the jatra.

4.2 Deities, Temples, and Shrines

Kirtipur, a historical town, has many temples and shrines of historical and religious importance. The Bagh Bhairav Temple high up in the hillock serves as a war memorial and a cathedral to Bhairav in tiger (Bagh) from dating to early 16th century. Many different weapons are seen hanging from the temple, those left behind and captured from the soldiers of the Prithvi Narayan Shah, who invaded kirtipur twice before being successful in conquering Kirtipur. The Bagh Bhairav (Aaju deo, or ancestor deity, of Kirtipur) is represented by a tongueless silver Bhairav mask. In the upper chamber of the temple is kept the separate image of Indriani, one of the mother goddesses. Kirtipur's biggest festival (jatra) is held in November or early December when the image of Indriani and Ganesh are paraded through the old town and two pigeons are ceremonially released. At the southern end of the compound are shrines of Ganesh and mother goddesses. The jatra of Bagh Bhairav is held in the middle of august.

The northwestern end of the town is mainly Hindu, southeastern Buddhist. On the top of the northern, Hindu hill stands elephant-guarded Una-Maheshor Temple. Southward from Bagh Bhairav is Loha Dega, a stone shikhara. The chilancho stupa across the southern hill is believed to be erected by Asoka. The major attraction of the Naya Bazaar is the Thai-style Theravada temple completed in 1989.

The small village of Nagaon is south to the hillock and they celebrate the jatra of Balkumari one day before the jatra of Kirtipur. East of the Nagaon lies Panga, a bigger village with high population density, where the two jatras of Bishnu Devi and Balkumari are held the day before the jatra in Kirtipur.

The hillock of Chobhar overlooking the Bagmati River is of historical as well a religious importance. The Adinath Temple, which is equally worshipped by both Hindus and Buddhists, is an ancient one and is idiosyncratically decorated with pots, pans, and jugs as offerings from people. The Karunamaya is worshipped in the form of a red mask. The “bathing” of the Adinath is a major festival for people of Kirtipur as well as for people of Kathmandu and Patan.

4.3 Jatras in Kirtipur

The old town of Kirtipur and villages of Panga, Nagaon, and other hamlets celebrate their main jatras, the local jatras, nearly successively in early December. Besides these local jatras, the jatras of deities such as Krishna and Ganesh are held at times other than the major jatras. These jatras attract many people from the nearby villages as well as from outside Kirtipur. The local jatra, or desh jatra, is the major festivals for a village or town, and each jatra has its own special importance.

4.3.1 Indriani jatra

The Indriani jatra of Kirtipur falls on Bakhu Mara Asthami, the pigeon festivals of the eighth day, which comes during the waxing moon in December, when this ancient hilltop town, with its dense houses, bazaar, and temples teem with unaccustomed activity. The ascending roads, steep rock pathways, and stone steps are filled with colorfully dressed festival-goers. They come to present Indriani with gifts and to watch her taken from her shrine near the famous “Bagh Bhairav Temple” and placed in a decorated palanquin. They follow in tumultuous procession as she is carried through the sloping streets and installed in her “outdoor temple,” a shrine under a great gnarled tree in Devdhoka, the westernmost part of the town.

Goddess Indriani of Kirtipur visits her outdoor temple all throughout the night, surrounded by jubilant worshippers, entertained by troops of musicians and singing devotees. On the tenth day of the fortnight, the palanquin of Indriani, accompanied by Ganesh in his own palanquin, is carried back to the village square where throngs gather to offer gifts and blood sacrifices. In early afternoon, a flurry of activity and blare of trumpets announces the arrival of the king’s sword from old Hanuman Dhokha palace in Kathmandu, which symbolically represents the ruler’s presence and sanction. This group carries a great banner of multicolored paper with pomp and ceremony through the mobs and carefully arranges it over the roof of Indriani’s palanquin. Now the

procession is led by the village chief carrying the ancient sword. After the sword is presented to the goddess, once again offerings and blood sacrifices are performed. Then, the palanquin is carried through the narrow streets and installed in her temple, and the whole town celebrates the jatra with great family feasts.

4.3.2 Nhaya Gaya Jatra

The Nhaya Gaya Jatra (Jatra of seven villages) in Kirtipur attracts people from not only the suburbs of Kirtipur but also from across the valley. In this jatra, dozens of smaller surrounding villages honor their own patron goddesses. It can be said that these villages bring their palanquin together for a common celebration because their population in each village is low, so it would not be spectacular to perform individually. Another way, it is believed that these seven goddesses are sisters, and they are brought to the shrine of Balkhu Bishnu Devi on the bank of Balkhu River as a meeting of these sisters. Here, the guardian goddesses of seven villages, carried in festive palanquins, meet in the morning while crowds of villagers come to worship and give offerings to the goddesses. Countless animals and fowls are scarified.

In the evening, there is a communal feast at which people from the seven villages-friends, relatives, and guests-drink together. One time-honored ceremony of this evening feast, at which the en sit cross-legend according to seniority and rank, is that Newari man of untouchable Pode caste occupies the honored seat. The remainder of the year, he is generally avoided. Once each year at this gathering, he reigns as king for the day. This jatra coincides wit the Indriani jatra of Kirtipur.

4.3.3 Bishnu Devi and Balkumari Jatra of Panga

The day before the Indriani jatra of Kirtipur, people in the village of Panga, south to the Kirtipur hillock, celebrate the jatras of goddesses Bishnu Devi and Balkumari. The idol of Bishnu Devi is brought out of the temple which stands in the central square of the village, called Lacchi. Next morning, all the inhabitants worship her. She is then carried in a procession to the temple in the northeastern boundary of the village. Similarly, goddess Balkumari is taken to the southern extremity of the village where she has a temple of her own. Each of the idols of the two goddesses brought from the village temple is kept side by side with the heaps of stones representing her in aboriginal forms.

The Achaju priests worship these deities and on the occasion rams are scarified by the Kusle. When the worship is over, a feast takes place. After the feast is

over, both Bishnu Devi and Balkumari are conducted to the public rest house, Paati, at the northern entrance of the village. At this juncture, the Thakali (eldest) of the village has to worship them before they are carried into the village.

When the welcome worship by the Thakali is over, the two goddesses are taken through the different parts of the settlement where each time worship and sacrifices are offered to them. Thus, the jatra ends with the goddesses being finally restored to their respective shrines at the central square (Lacchi) of the village.

CHAPTER 5 OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Factors in the Tradition

The tradition of participation in and observing jatra has its social, religious, and economic bases. These factors can sometime account for not only the continuity of the tradition but its very original. These can broadly be identified as:

1. Spatial organization and agricultural economy
2. Marriage patterns, and
3. Perception of the valley as a sacred place.

In this chapter, these three factors are discussed and it will be shown that these form the basis for initiation and continuation of the jstras. It should be noted that jyapus, the farmer caste, are mostly responsible for organization and conduction of most local jstras (desh jatra), although people from other castes also participate.

5.1.1 Spatial Organization and Agricultural Economy

The spatial organization of Newar habitat is of utmost importance when one considers the origin and function of jstras. About spatial organization of Nepal, Bhattarai (2003) writes, "The initial differentiation in the rural habitat types in Nepalese history were perhaps in the form of greater spatial dispersions of Khasa people of western hill against a more compact grouping of Kiratas in the east as determined by faster class differentiation or evolution of private property in the former society than in the latter. The first rural-urban divide was, however, to be witnessed in Kathmandu valley, where greater degree of social

division of labor facilitated by higher natural productivity of soil plus favorable location as an entrepot trade center gave rise to Greek-like city states quite early in the history.” “moreover, at the time of state unification in the mid-18th century, the only settlement modes with a semblance of “urban” character were the three towns of Kathmandu valley, viz, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, and Bhaktapur.”

Then, there is evidence that Newars, the original inhabitants of the valley, acquired urban character early in the history of Nepal. As most of the Newar jattras are organized by the Jyapu caste, jyapus are often termed as “urban farmers.” This urban character is a must for origination and continuation of these various jattras, as it is obvious that in a region with wide spatial dispersions like that of Khasa people in the western hills, there will be not enough communication and conglomeration of people to form dense settlements and hence no form of coherence at all. The Newars are a community of urban disposition and whether they live in the towns or in the villages; their settlements always reveals an urban character. In the valley of Kathmandu, the settlement is built on high grounds or on the flat tops of the hills, which are not used for agricultural purposes. The clustering of houses and their physical compactness are the features reflective of the Newar’s gregarious living. The form of social division of labor indicated above is exemplified by the various caste relations among the Newars. Moreover, for a social religion to be formed, it requires conglomeration of not only the houses and settlements but also religious coherence, which is provided in the valley by the numerous temples and festivals.

Again, Jyapus are the main caste group which is responsible for carrying out the different forms of jattras. Although in a jatra there is participation of different castes, which is a necessity; for example, people from the priest castes are necessary for the conduction of worship and consecration. But, no doubt, the “burden” of the palanquin mostly falls on the “shoulders” of the Jyapus. As farmers, it can be said that historically Jyapus had the “time” to engage in these jattras as they are relatively free for the most part of the year except the rainy season, when they transplant rice, and during harvest. It is, then, logical to suppose that the jattras originated as a form of entertainment. In fact, desh jattras, the local festivals, fall outside the period of ‘four months’ (chaturmas) from Shravan to Kartik, which is the time of rains and of the hardest agricultural work (rice planting and weeding). Also, it is supported by the theories of ecological anthropology that people developed many rituals of worshipping various natural

objects and phenomenon, the rain gods being the most important. As agricultural productivity of the valley depends on the rain, there is every reason to believe that Newars worshipped Rain God from the ancient times. Moreover, there are many other rituals, such as yomari puhni, which is celebrated by eating a special kind of cake called yomari. It marks the celebration of the new harvest. This close connection between jatras and agriculture is best exemplified the fact that the major festivals are devoted to harvest gods or rain gods, such as Karunamaya, the most important one for the entire valley.

5.1.2 Marriage Pattern and Kinship

The marriage pattern and kinship structure of the Newars have also relevance to the jatra. Jatra is a local as well as a family event. The organization of jatra at a community level can be considered as a social event, whereas the rituals and feasts observed in the household during the jatra can be considered a family event; and in each jatra, married daughters (mhayamacha) are invited. Moreover, jatra *swowanegu* has intimate relation with marriage pattern, as it is through marriage that relations are made and propagated, and inviting one's relatives and kin is the essence of jatra. Moreover, inviting relatives and friends to watch one's jatra is the highest form of hospitality in Newar culture.

In Newar society, the relationship between a husband's household and his wife's parental household is close and ritually important. Unlike the Parbatya castes, the Newars prefer to marry within their own neighborhood, allowing the wives, their offspring, as well their husbands to frequently visit the wives' parental home. Also, Newars are endogamous groups; they usually marry within the caste group.

A Newar how want to get his or her son married makes a search for a suitable mate in the locality, failing which he would try in the neighboring regions. Only after having failed to find in the neighboring areas does he or she proceed to search in the distant areas. This local preference for marriage has resulted in the concentration of Newar marriage-ties over a limited area. Moreover, not surprisingly then, village endogamy is also common. For example, in Kirtipur, there are more marriage-ties between areas of the Kirtipur town than between Kirtipur and Kathmandu. Similarly, there are more marriage ties between Kathmandu town and Patan than between the former and Bhaktapur, which is situated toward the eastern extremity of the valley.

Such territorial and caste limitation of Newar marriage depends on many factors, such as the concentration of one particular caste in a single region, inter-regional variation in the cultural life of the same caste, difference in occupations, and the help provided by married daughters for agriculture in the case of Jyapu caste. The important sociological fact to note in this respect is that a large concentration of marriage relations over proportionately smaller areas, interconnection localities and neighboring villages, is consistent with the ritual function that the married daughters have every now and then to fulfill in the families of their birth. In every feast, ceremony, and important festival, the married daughters and their children are the indispensable persons to be invited and feasted. Again, in marriage and in death, there are important functions which the married daughters perform.

But nowadays, inter-caste marriages are also common. And in the last decades, as Newars are now more in contact with other ethnic groups, and also Kathmandu being the capital of Nepal. These practices are changing rapidly.

Then, the invitation of married daughters and other relatives in every jatra contributes to the jatra swowanegu culture, and a married daughter and her husband and children become spectators of the jatra procession. This also functions in socializing children to the cultures of the locality of their maternal uncles.

The role of the kinship in jatra swowanegu is also evidenced by the fact that people usually go to watch jatra only in the localities where they have relatives. Many of the jatras are observed at nighttime or throughout the night, for example, Pachali Bhairav jatra of Kathmandu. Then, a person without any relatives in that locality cannot go there as he or she will have difficulty staying overnight. Although modern transportation-especially one's own vehicle-may solve this problem, the practice of going to watch jatra solely for entertainment and experience is low.

One significance of the jatra swowanegu on the marriage pattern is that these jatras are often used as occasions for courtship. It is also through participating in jatras that young men and women of different places come in contact and get to know each other. Many courtship relations occur in such jatras. Moreover, if it is a local jatra in nearby villages or towns, the occasions are the most suited for courtship, and one can see young men and women dating, especially in nighttime. These practices are often expressed in old Newari songs as well.

5.1.3 Kathmandu Valley as a Sacred Space

The abundance of different jatras, many in each of the settlements of the valley, is possible because there are innumerable temples and shrines, and these all indicate that the valley is sacred space. Important in this context is the assumption that the religious geography of the valley coincide with an enveloping mandala, with temples marking key positions. This sacredness of the valley is due not only to the holy texts and myths regarding the origination of the valley, or as a result of unique historical events, nor are they evidenced just by distinct earth features, but also of because sanctification of space by configurations of shrines or temples dedicated to a particular, systematic group of gods or goddesses, by representing characteristics of the universe, both social and religious.

Spatially, the valley, which is circular, with a diameter of approximately 25 kilometers, is a fairly discrete region because of the surrounding mountains. The location of several temples within this region may be best understood when they are considered as members of a set, with each position corresponding to a part of a valley-seized mandala. Moreover, the temples are located in a different locality such as village, town, or city, and their annual jatra not only make each locality a sacred place but also gives them a special meaning and place in the sacredness. The fact that any place in the valley can be reached in a matter of four or five hours of walk lends support that these festivals are attended to by distant people, as they do not have to stay overnight. When one goes to watch jatra to another place, that place is sanctified and is given a special meaning and place in the ritual geography of the valley. Moreover, going to watch jatra in different locations, and this movement, perpetuates this sacredness.

Then, this tradition of jatra swowanegu has implications that it binds Newars in a ritual and religious bonds and of course, every Newar considers these jatras as “theirs,” i.e., belonging to Newars. Not only do they enjoy it, they also have a sense of pride that they have preserved, and need to preserve, this tradition, and it gives a sense that the valley and its culture is theirs. Then, it is clear that this tradition cements the bonds not only between individual members in each family, as jatra is also a family event and there are feasts; and ties within established social groups of caste and clan and class, as jatra is a social event; but also between a Newar of one village, town, or city to another, as the tradition of jatra swowangu binds relatives and friends from different places of the valley.

5.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE TRADITION

The tradition of jatra swowanegu is a very old one, and people have been visiting to various places in the valley to watch jatra for hundreds of years. The answer to the question –“Why people go to watch jatra?” – has as many answers as there are jatra goers. This issue can be considered according to the age, sex, and motive of the Newars. Moreover, it is prevalent in the whole Newar population, including different castes. But here important reasons for people going to watch jatra are discussed.

5.2.1 Pilgrimage

The first and foremost objective of jatra goers is to worship the deity whose jatra is being performed. One always invariably gets the same answer, “dyo darsan yayeta” (to worship god) when asked about the main purpose of jatra swowanegu. Obviously, this travelling or movement can be considered as a pilgrimage, pilgrimage meaning a journey to a sacred place or shrine.

Michael Allen (1992) has drawn a useful contrast between two types of pilgrimage. First, there is that undertaken at long distances in which pilgrims leave their own region and enter what would in the past have been another region, subject to another king. Contrasted with this is the local pilgrimage, which can usually be accomplished without staying overnight away from home. In any case, it does not involve leaving one’s own region such festivals which take the form of a local pilgrimage play a crucial role in legitimizing the view of the Kathmandu valley as a sacred space.

“.....on the one hand, there are those major pilgrimages, frequently of an arduous kind, which sometimes also involve the crossing of political boundaries, to remote and famous shrines, temples or other sacred places, and on the other hand, there are those much more concentrated journeys which involve the sequential visiting of numerous shrines within a restricted locality..... But before describing two of the more popular off such journeys, I need to place them in the broader context of ritual movement in general-movement, that is, that has as its primary aim the bridging of the gap between human worshipper and objectified sacra..... Such movements are to two main kinds, n the one hand the going forth of humans from their various residences to visit temples, shrines, rivers and other forms of sacra, and on the other the periodic going forth of iconographic representations of deities from their abodes so that humans may the more easily see, worship and make offerings to them. The most elaborate and popular festivals in the Newar religious calendar combine both forms of movement; that is to say, humans and gods meet whilst both are aboard on ritually prescribed journeys”

5.2.2 Entertainment

Another aspect which comes in participating, or even watching, a jatra besides worshipping is entertaining. It can even be said that jatra was a main form of entertainment of the Newars in the past. As the jatras are organized mainly by the Jyapu case, it can be ascertained that they originated these jatras for entertainment as they had ample leisure time after rice plantation and after harvesting. This form of entertainment is also made possible due to the urban nature of Newar settlements. In settlements of Parbatya or other ethnic groups, which are found outside the valley, it is not possible to analyze anything of this sort as the houses are scattered through a large area. It is only in an urban settlement that these jatras can occur, and this may explain why these jatras are absent in other parts of Nepal. Certainly, entertainment can be possible only through aggregation of Nepal.

As already noted, in every village, town, or locality, there is a *desh* jatra, the jatra of the main deity of the locality. It occurs only once a year, but there may be many jatras of other deities, such as Krishna, Ganesh, Mahadev, etc., which are not as much important as the main jatra. For example, in the village of Nagaon in Kirtipur, Bal Kumari Jatra is the main jatra, but there are also jatras of Krishna and Ganesh, in which these gods are revered in the same way, but these do not attract many people from neighboring or far-form of jatra to entertain. There are many other jatras in which to be entertained year round. But, it is the *desh* jatra which draws people from far and wide, and when one refers to jatra swowanegu, it is mainly the *desh* jatra which the researcher is talking about, and the periodic dance performances.

Then obviously, Newars go to other places to watch and participate in jatras to entertain themselves. This is to be believed that Newars are happiest when they are watching or performing their jatras.

Also, it should be noted that jatras in different parts of the valley do not coincide; every jatra is on a different day so that people can come from other villages and towns to observe them. The entertainment aspect of the jatra is exemplified by the “Nhajgaya Jatra,” the jatra of seven villages, of kirtipur and the surrounding villages. The villages has a small population, and if each were to conduct on its own village, then there would be no entertainment, as one can discern some decades ago, each village consisted of only 100 to 120 or more persons. But if they are to converge at one point with their palanquins and villagers, then there would be more entertainment and more romance.

The entertainment aspect of the jatra performance and the jatra swowanegu is also supported by the fact that in these desh jatras, or in any other jatra, all kinds of musical instruments are played, from the typical Newar instruments like dhime (drum), bhu sye (cymbals), khin (drum), basuri (flute), dapha (drum), nayakhin (drum) and kaha baja. Moreover, in a village or town, if each tole has its own musical groups, then in these jatras all these groups will play instruments and circumambulate the whole locality. Not only the participants of the jatra, but also the spectators can enjoy the richness and diversity of Newari music and dance. Children from their homes will run out of their houses when they hear the sounds of dhime, khin, and bhu sya. In a sense, jatra suggests that the village or town is lively, and children, young, and the elderly alike enjoy the jatra.

Apart from the music played in the jatra, there is food which adds entertainment. Food is one of those good senses that a person can have, and Newars eat a whole variety of foods during jatra. As the jatras fall in the winter season, takha, or buffalo meat jelly, is prepared, and is the main item in jatra feast.

Another aspect of entertainment during jatra is courtship. Jatra is the occasion of courtship. Especially young men and women from neighboring villages would like to come to watch jatra and meet their lovers, sometimes in the dark of the night when the jatra procession is commencing. It can be seen that women are in their high spirits in jatra as it is the occasion when they can come in their finest clothes and out of their houses and enjoy the jatra and roam the locality. Not only in neighboring villages or town, but people also go to watch jatra even in another city; for example, people from Kirtipur to Patan and Bhaktapur, and other places. By this, people will know the culture of people of other towns.

5.2.3 Social Outing

Jatra can also be viewed as an outing from the regularities of the daily life. In fact, jatra swowanegu, along with pilgrimage, is the main form of trip especially for women and children. One can imagine that from the ancient times, only in these occasions women and children have had time and freedom to travel to other places in the valley. Even now, many women and children travel to other villages and towns in the valley as a form of either pilgrimage or while going to observe a jatra. For example, rarely do women and children, and often men, go to Bode, a town near Bhaktapur, on their own for other reasons than watching the Bode jatra. If it is true even now, then we can assume that people of one part of the valley rarely went to other parts if they have no business at all except for watching the jatra.

CHAPTER 6

HISTORICITY OF THE TRADITION: A STUDY OF LEGENDS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will try to explore the historicity of this tradition by relying on myths and legends of different jatras, and present and analyze them as they relate to the origination and continuation of these jatras and as far as they give information about people from other areas of the valley coming to celebrate the jatras. Regarding the difficulty of establishing the historicity of the festivals, Regmi (1964) notes, “to date, it has been almost impossible to write the history of local yatras given the absence of documents with more or less certain datability pertaining to these festivals . even when it comes to supralocal festivals, however, we find that this is rarely the case.” Moreover, even if we are able to know when the jatras commenced in the festivals-goes from outside the locality.

Here, when these legends also support historical evidence, these historical accounts and facts are also presented. Moreover, the participation by some important persons from different regions in the rituals of these jatras also gives conclusive evidence that they are celebrated by all valley people since ancient times. Although legends cannot be exclusively relied on for historical information, they can provide insight into the culture and practice of those times, and for a study like this, these can provide useful information. It is also highly unlikely that history and legends give accounts of ordinary people coming to celebrate a specific jatra. Therefore, as can be seen, these are chronicles in which some respected personage, for example, a king, or even a god or goddess, came to participate in the jatra. This gives us some picture supporting that these jatras

are observed not only by the locality in which it is performed, but also that people from neighboring and distant villages and towns of the valley have been coming to celebrate, and in some cases, from abroad, the participation by not only mortal people but also by immortal gods and goddesses also lends support to the theory that many gods revered by Newars were once mortals, and due to their power and deeds they became gods.

6.1.1 Rato Matsyendranath Jatra

The magnificence of the Matsyendranath chariot itself and the involvement of the whole Patan city and its surrounding villages in the celebration of this deity, along with the length of time it is observed, must have attracted people from far and wide; and its origination account gives much to this fact. In this festival, the towering chariot with the image of Rato Matsyendranath in it is drawn around the streets of Patan each year before being carried to his temple in Bunga village, Bungamati, south to the city of Patan, for an annual stay of several months.

The Gopalraja Vansavali states that king Narendradev and Acharya Bandhudatt were jointly responsible for the initiation of the jatra of Sri Bugma Lokesvara. Also, it states that Balarjunadev gave his crown to Bungma Lokesvara. Historians agree that they reigned prior to the Nepal Era, i.e., before 879 A.D, in the Licchavi period.

The legends says that during the reign of king Narendradev of Bhaktapur, a 12-year drought in the valley brought famine and pestilence to animals and humans alike. At last, after long meditation, the king's spiritual Gide divined that it was a disciple to Lord matsyendranath, Gorakhnath, who had caused the drought by immobilizing all the rain-giving snakes of the valley under him, and that if Matsyendranath were to be brought to the valley that Gorakhnath would be impelled to leave the stronghold of the snake deities to bow before his Guru and thus would bring rain. Thus, the king of Bhaktapur, Narendradev, a Tantric priest Bandhudatt from Kathmandu, together with a farmer porter from Patan set out to fetch lord Matsyendranath in Assam, India. Overcoming many obstacles, and through the magic powers of the Tantric, they were able to bring Matsyendranath to the valley in a form of a bee in a vessel. When they stopped to rest near the Nakhu River, Gorakhnath rose to pay homage to his guru, and the entire snake Gods were released and sent torrents of rain over the land and its people. Then, the sacred vessel containing the bee was enshrined, priests

were appointed to worship the god of rain and harvest, and a great land endowment was granted for the celebration of the chariot festival.

This legend clearly indicates participation of three different persons from three cities of the valley; king Narendradev from Bhaktapur, the Tantric priest Bandhudatt from Kathmandu, and the Lalit jyapu, farmer-porter from Lalitpur. The great celebration given to this festival may be in part due to the involvement of the king at its origination, but the main reason for its acceptance by all the people of the valley is because it is the god of rain and Harvest, as agriculture is the main occupation of its people and the people of valley are supported by its rich soil then, it is plausible that a jatra of such magnitude and significance must have been observed by all the people of the valley, and people have been coming from different regions of the valley to Patan as a pilgrim to worship and participate by pulling the chariot from one place to another, albeit a few hundred meters. Moreover, the length of the procession, for a month or so, due to the size of the chariot itself and the fact that it should be pulled around the whole city, must have given ample time for people from distance places of the valley to come and worship, which is not the case for the most other jstras which are observed day long or night long.

It also must be mentioned that these chariot jstras give opportunity to directly participate in it, i.e., to actually pull the chariot, in contrast to the palanquin jstras, where only people belonging to the locality carry it on their shoulders.

Another evidence in this regard is the participation of headmen from different villages of the valley to the actual rituals. "The day after the chariot arrives at Jawalakhel, people from Jawalakhel and the Pulchowk area come to make their offerings. On the following day people come from the "seven villages". These include Pulchowk, Kirtipur, Panga, Bhaubahal, Bhaktapur, Thimi, and Naro-Bhare (a double village near Thimi). throughout the day, people come from different parts of the valley, and the last two nights there are large crowds coming to make offerings, burn lights, and chant the scriptures" (Locke 1973). It can be assumed that this invitation to different towns and villages for coming to worship is an ancient one and may date to the very origination of the jatra. This participation proves that the festival is not a local one confined to the Patan city but also has significance for the whole valley.

Moreover, the attendance of the king of Nepal on the day of "showing of bhoto" gives it royal approval, and this goes beyond the reign of the Shah kings. "In

Gopalraja Vamsavali the Khasya Malla rulers are described as visiting Bungamati along with Pashupati. Throughout the early Malla period, the kings participated in the festivals though their capital was not in Patan. After the separation of the kingdoms there are references to nearly every king of Patan and his connection with the festivals” (Locke 1973).

Also, the few foreign observers who visited Nepal before the end of the Rana regime and subsequently wrote accounts of their stay here have mentioned the chariot festival, including Fr. Guiseppe, who lived in Patan the last few years before the city was taken by the Gorkhali conquerors; Col. Kirkpatrick, who visited Kathmandu in 1793; and Dr. Oldfield, who was attached to the British residency from 1850 to 1862 (Locke 1971).

6.1.2 Changu Narayan Procession

The procession of Changu Narayan relates the old palace of Hanuman Dhoka to the northeastern village of Sankhu of Bhaktapur. In this procession, on Mila Punhi of Magh, Vishnu as Narayan is carried from his famous hilltop temple at Changu, two miles north of Bhadgaon and a short distance from Sankhu village. Narayan is represented as a craved silver water-vase, a *kalash*. Narayan is accompanied by his consorts Laksmi and Saraswati in smaller silver vessels. The procession passes through the narrow, crowded streets of Kathmandu at Asantole and Indrachowk just at dusk, led by elderly soldiers and musicians in rumpled blue uniforms, carrying antiquated swords and flags. Spectators dart out to scoop holy water from the garlanded kalash, while others snatch flowers from its decorate to place in the hair as a blessing from Changu Narayan. Making directly for Hanuman Dhoka, the cortege stops at the place gets for a short welcome ceremony by Goddess Kumari. Narayan then formally enters the palace for a rendezvous with Taleju and, traditionally, the king. After the appropriate ceremonies, Narayan and his company leave the palace and hurry headlong out of the sleeping city to make their way up to the winding paths to Changu Narayan before dawn (Slusser 1992). One legend regarding this visit of Narayan to Kathmandu is that once upon a time Vishnu came to Hanuman Dhoka to announce his intention of leaving the valley, the king, however, quickly instructed the populace to place broken water jars along the proposed route, since empty water jars are such an inauspicious sign that they would dissuade even an immortal from beginning a journey. As the king divined, seeing the broken pots, Narayan postponed his departure and returned to Changu to await a more propitious start. But to this day, since even now the broken water pots are carefully displayed along Narayan’s route through the city, the

signs have augured ill for undertaking a journey. Thus, Narayan always returns to his hilltop shrine and, while awaiting an auspicious day, continues to bestow his benevolent patronage on the valley and its populace (Slusser 1992). Obviously, this procession allows people of the Kathmandu city proper to worship Narayan in their own locality, which is the main function of a palanquin or chriot festival. Then, this procession can be considered a jatra, with the kalash representing Narayan carried by priests and so no need for a palanquin, it can be seen as a special case in which not people from distant villages coming to worship a deity in another place but people from a distant village carrying the deity to another place so that others can worship.

6.1.3 Indra Jatra

The Indra jatra of Kathmandu starts on the twelfth day of the waxing fortnight of Bhadra (September-October), with the erection of the Indra pole and ends on the fourth of the waning fortnight of the month of Ashwin (October-November), when it is felled. The pole is erected by the Manandhar caste (former “oil pressers”) in front of the temple of Indra at Hanuman Dhoka. The next day, devotees of Bhairava have to put in front of their house the images of Bhairava that they normally keep inside their homes. The Kumari Jatra begins on the third day; three chariots, bearing the Virgin Goddess, Ganesa, and Bhairava respectively, tour the southern half of Kathmandu. On the very same night, there is a funerary procession led by a farmer (jyapu) incarnating Dagini, the mother of Indra. The following full-moon day, the chariot tour is repeated, this time through the northern or upper half of Kathmandu. On the last day, the eighth, the three chariots converge towards Hanuman Dhoka at the centre of Kathmandu, where the king receives the legitimizing vermilion smear (Tika) on his forehead from the Kumari. The Manandhars fell the Indra-pole and carry it to the cremation ground in the south of Kathmandu beside the open air (pitha) temple Pachali Bhairava.

Sometime before Indra jatra begins a government-appointed priest and his porters go to Yosingu forest at Salaghari, four miles east of Bhaktapur, to select a suitable 50-foot pine tree. It is sanctified with blood sacrifice and certain rites, felled, cleared of its branches, and dragged in solemn procession into Bhaktapur town. A few days later, people from nearby Thimi village pull the sacred pole into the Tundikhel parade ground in central Kathmandu. About four days before Indra Jatra, men of Kathmandu drag the pole to Hanuman Dhoka Square, where

they are given a feast in the old royal palace under the auspices of the Government. This practice of men from various villages participating in certain important festivals is very ancient and seems to enhance unity among the people (Slusser 1992). The carrying of the pole from Bhaktapur to Kathmandu thus involves peoples from Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, and the towns in between them, this also serves as an invitation to the people of Bhaktapur that Indra jatra is nearing.

6.1.4 Bisket Jatra

Bisket jatra is celebrated on the first of the year in honor of a foreign prince who killed two monstrous serpents dwelling in a princess of Bhaktapur, the serpents had taken possession of her and would kill anybody who had made love with her. Then, after the marvelous deed, the mutilated serpents were hung from a tall pole in the city square, and the king instituted a gay festival, when an immense ceremonial chariot was pulled about the town, carrying Goddess Bhadra Kali, so that she, along with the multitudes, might witness the lofty victory pole and applaud the death of the evil snakes.

Legend has it that originally Goddess Bhadra Kali along was feted in the chariot procession, until one year Kala Bhairav from Kasi (Black Bhairav from Benares, India) came to witness the New Year festivities disguised as a mortal man. When the celebrating populace saw this tall foreigner in their midst, they suspected at once that he was some illustrious personage and notified their priests. They, through the arts of Tantric 'mysteries,' divined that he was indeed Lord Bhairav, the powerful deity who represents the awesome, destructive forces of Shiva. Eager to detain him in the valley, the priests cast mantras or magic spells about the great god of Wrath and Terror who, finding himself immobilized, attempted to escape by sinking into the earth, returning to Benares by the underground route. But just as he was about to disappear the people cut off his head, and that is all of Bhairav the Bhadgaon people were able to save (Slucer 1992).

Now he is depicted as a glowering brass mask enshrined on the upstairs landing of his great three-storied temple on a main square of the city. The actual severed

head of Bhairav from Benares, they say, is kept hidden in the temple, seen and worshipped only by the Tantric priests. But once each year, during Bisket festival, its mysterious locked box is brought out to ride in the chariot beside the shining mask of Bhairav, and to this day the people of Bhadgaon say the head of Kala Bhairav in Benares is not the original (Slusser 1992).

The visit of Kala Bhairav from Benares in India to watch the Bisket jatra is very interesting as it shows that not only mortals from around the valley come to participate in the jatras but also immortal from outside the kingdom come to watch these festivals. These large-scale, extravagant cultural production and grandiloquent displays of imagery evoking a diffuse sense of wonderment and awe have attracted people from far and wide, and thus lends support to their celebration as well as continuity from ancient times.

6.1.5 Pachali Bhairav Jatra

Bhairav is often referred to as “ancestor” or “grand-father” (Aju Dya) among the Newars, and this supports the conclusion that this Hindu god has served in the assimilation of lineage divinities deriving from the tribal ‘infra-structure’ of Newar society (Toffin 1984). Moreover, he is the most adored, feared, and propitiated gods in the valley. Bhairava is represented by and worshipped as a jar filled with beer. Of these Bhairavs, the most popular, powerful, and ancient is the Pachali Bhairav.

Confirming with legends in which many Bhairavs are identified as various ancient Nepalese kings, Pachali Bhairav is said to be a king of Pharping, a town to the south of Kathmandu, who had the habit of locking himself in a room of his palace to eat enormous quantities of rice and a goat. Once, his wife insisted upon coming and sharing his meal. The king accepted but informed his wife that he would have quite another appearance, and that she should throw some grains for rice on him in order to restore his human aspect. His wife was so terrified at the sight of Bhairav that she ran away forgetting to throw the grains. Afraid of being discovered by his subjects, the exposed king took refuge in the place where the temple of Pachali Bhairav still stands today. His wife stumbled a little further on and becomes Lumari, the dangerous goddess Bhadra Kali, whose temple stands at the edge of the Tundhikhel field (Slusser 1992).

In another version also, Pachali Bhairav is identified as the king of Pharping, who is said to be of farmer caste, who used to go each morning to bathe in the Ganges at Banaras and return to Kathmandu in the form of a handsome man. He once seduced a young girl of the butcher caste who tended a troop of pigs near

the temple site. Similar to the above legend, this Kasai girl also insisted his identity and, when revealed to her, ran away. The child born by her was identified as Ganesa, and thus Pachali Bhairav identified as Shiva also.

Pachali Bhairav also did have many wives. Because he married a second wife, his first wife went crying along the banks of the river. When she reached Khokana, a city north of Patan, she divined. That is why this village is called Khokana, meaning “teary-eyed”. Here dwells the Khokana Ajima, whose jar festival is celebrated on the same day of Pachali Bhairav jatra of Kathmandu.

These legends emphasize that ‘god Pachali Bhairav would be no more than the hypostasis of this Thakuri king. The cult of Pachali Bhairav, involving the annual rotation of a pot among the jyapu families, does indeed exist in this village at the southern rim of the valley. Even today, if somebody from Pharping is found among the spectators of the Malakar dances of Kathmandu, he is immediately promoted to the rank of Thakali for the duration of the dance’ (Visuvalingam 1992). Thus, Bhairav pervades all the territory of the valley, and it is the duty of people to participate in the festivals of their most adored god whenever and wherever they occur.

Pachali Bhairav jatra also gives important insights into the participation of people from different castes, classes, and places. Regarding this, S.Visuvalingam and E.C. Visuvalingam (1992) writes: “It is possible to distinguish three socio-political levels that correspond to the daily ritual, the annual festival, and the twelve-year festival. At the daily level, Pachali Bhairav is a lineage deity belonging particularly to the Jyapu of southern Kathmandu while also playing an important role for the Kasai, Manandhar, etc. the Juju {Newar “kings” residing in the south and north of Kathmandu} does no more than offer a puja tray every Saturday, and the current nepali king does not participate at this level at all. In the twelve-year festival, Bhairav reveals himself to be a royal divinity, and it is a Buddhist Vajracharya who supervise the exchange of swords. By dancing in front of the house of the northern Juju and elsewhere in the valley, the Malakars extend the symbolic power of the king far beyond the southern part of Kathmandu. The Rajopadhyaya, who is the patron of the dance of Sweto Bhairav at Brahma tol, comes from Bhaktapur. Although centered in Kathmandu, the symbolic kingship of Pachali Bhairav seems to extend even beyond Patan to the whole valley and, now, embraces the modern state of Nepal. The Jyapu have no role in this festival. In their annual festival, however, the Kasai, the Sthapita, and the Chitrakar all take part; the Malakar continue to play

an important role and the ritual sword of the ancient Mallas is brought to consecrate the pitha of Pachali Bhairav with the seal of kingship.”

6.1.6 Indriani Jatra of Kirtipur

The Kathmandu festival of Indriani, also known as Luti Ajima, seems to bear some relationship to a festival held nine days later for their own Goddess Indriani by the inhabitants of Kirtipur village, two miles to the south-west. In former days, they say, during the sacrificial burning of male and female species in Kathmandu, pigeons were always included. One year a pair of pigeons tossed into the air took roost in Kirtipur nine days later, an omen which promoted the people of that village to inaugurate their own festival, which they had been longing to do. It is the practice also that certain people of Kirtipur come secretly to the Kathmandu Indriani festival every year and carry away coals from the ceremonial fire to ignite their own sacrificial blaze nine days later (Slusser 1992).

This indicates that people of Kirtipur used to participate in the Indriani festival in Vishnumati River just below the old Kathmandu. Kirtipur has much cultural resemblance to Patan than to Kathmandu, as indicated by marital relationships. Moreover, it was considered a town ruled by Patan kings, and until the 1970s was part of the Patan district. But as this legend suggests, the people of Kirtipur go far and wide to watch the jatras from ancient times.

6.1.7 Legend of Tika Bhairav

Tanka Bhairav (Tika Bhairav) of Lele, a village on the southern border of the valley, was once watching the Bunga-Deo (Matsyendranath) jatra in the guise of an old man in the Nuga Tol of Patan. An elderly, smoking the hookah, saw him through the window of his house and made room for this old man on the front part of his house. After the jatra, he was received as a guest, as is the custom of Newars after jatra, and fed him. But the Bhairav, in the guise of an old man, ate all the food and liquor prepared. Then, realizing that he was not an ordinary man, the elderly asked to reveal the guest's identity. The guest revealed himself as Tanka Bhairav. Then the Bhairav asked the elderly to beg anything from him. Not knowing what to do, the elderly begged that his house would never be caught in fire, and the Bhairav accepted and bestowed on. Even to this day, the family of that particular house says that their house has never caught fire, and this family makes an image of Bhairav and displays it outside their house during the Rato Matsyendranath festival, saying that they are showing Tika Bhairav the jatra (Shrestha, 2001). From this legend, it can be inferred that

the jatra of Rato Matsyendranath is a major one and that not only mortals but even bhairva used to come to watch the jatra and enjoy the celebration. It may be noted that this form of watching jatras by gods is different from the practice of orthodox Hindu gods looking down from the heavens upon their followers when the followers are performing austerities in their names, but that they have real sociocultural meanings, such as inviting guests and the presence of different gods at the jatras.

6.1.8 Legend of Chandeswori

Once, Goddess Chandeswori had come to watch the Jala Pyakhan (Harisiddhi Dance) of Harisiddhi, a village in Patan, in Ikalakhu. There also was a tantric called Ganapati Rajopadhyaya, who divined her. When he tried to throw magic on her, she knew it and disguised herself as a snake. Then, the Tantric picked her up, put her in his pocket, and carried home, he worshipped her for seven days regularly and then let her in a temple, and thus initiated the jatra of Chandeswori, which is now performed by the Gayo lineage of Lalitpur (Shrestha, 2001).

This myth indicates that gods and goddesses used to come and watch the jatras and dances and the tantric priests were always looking for those immortals so that they can be captured and then made to serve the people by protecting the village or city. These festivals and dances, performed by people representing themselves as gods, must have attracted gods, as well as humans, and they used to watch them in disguise as mortals. Then, festivals can be regarded as a meeting ground for mediating and communicating between god and humans.

6.2 CHANGING SCENARIO

The tradition of jatra swowanegu is based on the social structure of Newar society, and the Newar society has been changing, we discussed this tradition as if it were suspended in unchanging time and space. But with time, this tradition has changed, both for better and for worse.

First of all, Newars have become a minority in their own land, the valley, and this has immortal implication on every aspect of Newar society and culture, including this tradition. Apart from the jatras that have gained national status—for example, Kumari jatra and Machhendranath jatra—Newars have been trying hard to preserve their local jatras. Thus, these local jatras are now can be considered the festivals of a minority. But the national jatras have gained more and more status, and they are observed by Newars and non-Newars alike.

The great change in this tradition is brought by the media: radio, television, print. In the past, these festivals were the main forms of entertainment for the Newars, but now it has lost its glory. Youth and children alike are attracted to these new forms of entertainment and no longer care about the festivals. But on the other hand, due to the mass media, the jattras are being reported to the general public, and their publicity, and hence people participation, has spread, even to non-Newars. It can even be said that now non-Newars are a significant bulk participating in these jattras as spectators.

The role of modern transport system in the continuation of the tradition cannot be overlooked. Nowadays, people with their own vehicle can visit anywhere to watch jatra, even the late-night jattras, although people are spending less time watching jattras, and Newars are only fulfilling their obligations, for example, invitation by their in-laws. It is now common and easy to go to watch jatra in Banepa, 40 kilometers east outside the valley, which is far away if one has to walk.

The attitude among Newars towards their culture also has changed. As they have come more in more contact with non-Newars, they now participate less in these social and religious events, and some Newars themselves admit that they consider these jattras as a nuisance. This is especially true for lower- and middle-class Newars who cannot bear the obligation of these jattras. Moreover, Newars now do not possess the main economic resource for continuation of the jattras-the guthi land, so it is very hard for Newars to preserve these jattras out of their “pocket money”.

Anyway, the tradition has been in existence for hundreds of years. When Newars, as well as non-Newars, recognize the importance of the culture and heritage of Newars, we will see an upsurge in interest in these jattras. As long as Newars can preserve their jattras, there will always be people-Newars or non-Newars, coming to watch these jattras, for religious or entertainment reason-and this tradition will continue. Thus, the continuation and survival of this tradition depends on the continuation and survivals of the jattras themselves.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Findings

1. The main objective of the jatra is pilgrimage, to worship god, especially for older people.
2. The youth mainly considered as a form of entertainment.
3. Not only ordinary people come to watch jatras, but also kings and even gods. Sometime from abroad came to watch jatra.
4. Due to change in time and space, and modern transportation system and media more and more people are participating in these jatras.
5. Due to the jatras social solidarity in Newars communities is going on.

7.2 Summary

The jatras and the tradition of “jatra swowanegu” is a way of life for Newars. Every Newar goes, each year, somewhere to watch the jatra. This “jatra swowanegu” can be defined as movement of people from their localities to another locality to watch the jatra procession. The main role of these people is that of spectators.

The objectives of this study were to explore this tradition and to examine how this tradition is rooted in the social structure of Newars. Moreover, it also studied the legends relating to this tradition, helping to establish the historicity of this tradition. The study is based on observation of participation of different

jatras held in the town of kirtipur, including that of nearby villages of Panga and Nagaon. These included the Indriani jatra of Kirtipur, Nhaya Gaya jatra of surrounding villages, and Bishnudevi and Balkumari jatra of Panga. Also, unstructured interviews were conducted to find out the purpose of this tradition and how Newars feel when they go to watch jatra.

The urban nature of Newar settlement and their rich agricultural economy not only have sustained the jatras, and hence this tradition, but can be regarded as a basis for origination of these jatras and this tradition. In this tradition, as married daughters and their family are always invited in any jatra, it is evident that this invitation contributes to the tradition, and they are the main spectators of the jatra. Besides, friends and relatives are also invited. Moreover, the great number of jatras held in different parts of the valley allows people to visit different places to watch jatra during a year.

The main objective of this tradition is pilgrimage, to worship god, this is true especially of older people. The youth mainly consider as a form of entertainment, as do children and women, for women and children, this also allows them to go way form their homes and visit different places of the valley. The study of different legends relating to the tradition indicated that not only ordinary people came to watch jatras from different places in the past, but also kings and even gods-sometimes from abroad-came to watch jatra.

Lastly, Newar society has been changing both in time and space, and this change is having effects on the jatras and this tradition. Due to modern transportation system and media, more and more people are participating in these jatras.

7.3 Conclusion

It has been found on this study that the tradition of “jatra swowanegu” is prevalent in all sections of Newars of Kirtipur, across ages and gender, and now increasing non-Newars. The primary purpose of going to watch jatra is religious as well as a form of entertainment. The religious one is especially for older people, and their propose is. As they themselves say, “dyo darshan yayta” (to worship god), whereas children and women enjoy it as an opportunity to visit other towns and cities. Due to modern transportation system and the media coverage of the jatr4as, more and more people, including non-Newars, are now able to participate in these jatras, even late-night and night-long jatras.

Also, through the study of the legends relating to this tradition, it can be said that this tradition has been continuing from times immemorial, and even gods and goddesses-sometimes from abroad- used to come and see the jatras.

7.4 Recommendations

The jatras of Newars have attracted many researchers and there is a huge literature on it by both national and foreign scholars. Although these jatras have been documented in the greatest possible detail, the roles of spectators of these jatras are given less importance, and the tradition of jatra swowanegu is, in the researcher's view, often neglected. Although there are mentions of people coming from all over the valley to participate in the jatras, researchers have not given much attention to this tradition, in this study, the researcher has tried to gauge the pervasiveness and social significance of this tradition, and being myself a Newar, the researcher may have been more able to appreciate it. But a study of this small magnitude cannot cover all the issues regarding those spectators.

Moreover, this is only an "introduction" of the tradition, and the researcher has not had much time to explore the tradition in detail. Also, it is even more difficult to establish the historicity of the tradition, as it is highly unlikely that history gives accounts of ordinary people coming to watch a specific jatra, however great the jatra may be in terms of its importance, so it needs a highly sophisticated study to deal on this issue.

Moreover, this study is based on Kirtipur, where the jatras are only local ones, i.e., they do not have a national character such as Machhendranath jatra or Kumari jatra. So, the tradition of "jatra swowanegu" cannot be fully explored as these local jatras cannot attract more people as do the national ones. The full significance of this tradition, then, will be clearer if studies of people participation on these national level jatras are carried out.

Therefore, it is the researcher's belief that this aspect of the jatra, i.e the tradition of "jatra swowanegu" needs more research. The researcher is hopeful that more researchers will be interested in this tradition and will appreciate its pervasiveness and importance.

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Peoples Participation in the festivals: An Analysis of Myths and Paradox of Balkumari Festivals of Newars in Kathmandu Valley

Questionnaires:

1. Personal Details:

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Religion:

Marital Status:

Permanent Address:

Family Structure:

2. Knowledge of jatra:

2.1 How did you know about this jatra?

2.2 Why did you get participation in the jatras?

2.3 Do you think that this types of jatras makes solidarity in the society?

2.4 Do you believe in god?

2.5 What is your contribution to the jatra as being a participation?

3. Role of Jatra:

3.1 What do you know understand by jatra?

3.2 Which jatra is your most precious one?

3.3 What are the jatras do you know?

3.4 Which jatra do you have access at your place?

3.5 How much time do you spend in the jatra?

3.6 Do you have participated in the meeting, for organizing jatras?

3.7 Do you know the advantage of jatras?

3.8 How much do you enjoy in jatra?

3.9 Which jatra do you think is most effective and celebrated by more people?

3.10 Which jatra do you think to be nationalized?

3.11 What steps could be taken to make jatras effective?