# Historicity of *Swasthani*
## (Redrawing the borders of Swasthani Bratakatha in light of New Historicism)

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## Abstract

This research paper is an analytical study of the popular Hindu myth *Swasthani*, with the goal of redefining its boundaries and separating it from mythological and religious interpretations. For this reading, the researcher has taken Pallav Ranjan's *Swasthani* to English adaption as a major source of data. By applying new historicism as a literary tool, the researcher has analyzed *Swasthani* to draw the new boundaries of this popular myth in Nepal. From this qualitative analysis, it is concluded that this mythological narrative, when recorded for the first time in Nepal Bhasa by Jayanta Dev, mirrored the social reality of Medieval Nepal. Through the medium of myth, the social reality of the period is depicted in this mythical text. The study concluded that *Swasthani* is not merely a myth, but also a socio-historical record of Medieval Nepal, when Newar kings ruled the Kathmandu Valley.

*Keywords*: Myth, New Historicism, Socio-cultural context, *Swasthani*

## Introduction

*The Skandha Purana* depicts the Hindu mythological tale of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, Which is known as the *Swasthani*. In Nepal, Magh is observed as the holy month of fasting and devotion to Swasthani Devi. Particularly among Hindus, the story is told every evening between Poush Shukla Purnima and Magh Shukla Purnima. Buddhists in the Kathmandu Valley also listen Swasthani tales. The *Swasthani Brata Katha* is a collection of tales that Lord Kumar, the eldest son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Pravati, tells Agasthya Muni (Saint). The myth goes around Lord Shiva. It is also a kind of praying to Lord Shiva as well as the different incarnations. Katha starts from the full moon day (Purnima) of the month of Poush/Magh (January) and goes on for 31 days till the next full moon.

*The Swasthani Brata Katha* is available in Nepali, English, and Nepal Bhasa. Birkenholtz (2010) asserts in her doctoral research that it was originally written in Newari before being translated into Nepali. A handwritten Swasthani book written in Newari is still in possession of the people of Sankhu. In comparison to how it is narrated in Nepali, the story is told slightly differently in other languages.

Some women fast throughout the whole month, eating only one meal each day, and reading Swasthani's narrative. Those who do not fast, retell the narrative in the evening before dinner. They worship the *Swasthani* book with Abir, Dubo-paati, Kesari, as well as Jauand Til. Flowers, Dhup Batti, and Diyo are kept before narrating the tale. Fasting ladies offer 108 counts of Dhup Batti, Laddu, and flowers. It is said that if someone fasts for Goddess Swasthani, she will grant all of his or her requests.

The stories in this Swasthani are primarily about devotees who commit crimes as a result of their ignorance and are afterwards rescued by Goddess Swasthani. Goddess Parvati is the major topic of the first few chapters of *Swasthani* Brata Katha. In a few chapters, it is detailed how Sati Devi, Lord Shiva's first wife, struggled and how Shree Swasthani helped to free her from her troubles.

When Agasthi Muni inquires about the origins of the cosmos, Kumar begins to inform him about the origins of the universe.  The beginning ststement is "*Kumarji Agya Garnu Huncha hey Agisti Muni*," which means" Kumar orders hey Saint Agasthi."

**The Swasthani Myth**

The story of Swasthani begins with an old Shiva Bhatt Brahmin. Goma's birth and unequaled marriage, Nawaraj's birth and marriage, Goma and Chandravati's Swasthani fast, and eventually Goma's delight and fulfillment after being selected as King of Nawaraj are the primary themes of the Swasthani narrative.

Thirty-one chapters and a month of fasting are also examples of prior transformations. There were only 22 chapters before. After the introduction of *Swasthani* into Nepali, the technique of Swasthani fasting and prayer described in the renowned *Swasthani* narrative book was devised. *Skanda Purana* is listed as the narrative's source after each chapter of the popular Swasthani story.

**Nature of *Swasthani* Brata**

The fast of Swasthani Devi is the longest fast in Nepal, but, it is not as strict as other fasts. In today's world, the easy alternative of fasting is very popular. Apart from the Swasthani legend, a Pandit is required simply since the rites have been devised and are written in Sanskrit. Otherwise, it is a fast that is customarily observed by the Swasthani family. Without any other forms of devotion, fasting can be completed just by reading and listening to stories.

Numerous foreigners who arrived in Nepal after Prithvinarayan Shah made no mention of *Swasthani* when addressing various celebrations held in the valley. In the Hindu faith, many of the vows are centered on women. At Teej, Rishi Panchami's fast is clearly carried out by females. Parvati is also said to have fasted for Teej in order to obtain Mahadev as her groom.

**Different Readings of *Swasthani* and the Research Gap**

*Swasthani* Barta Katha is a holy scripture that may be found in practically every Hindu (and to a lesser extent, Buddhist) home in Nepal. *Swasthani* is also considered a well-known illustration of how the Hindu faith thrived in Nepal, as well as a representation of how religious scriptures evolved over time. As a result, several studies and research projects have been conducted on and around the tradition, attracting the attention of many foreign students and scholars. Many others have also translated the text into various languages.

According to the sources, Jayanta Dev wrote *Swasthani* in Nepal Bhasa (as early as 693 Nepal Sambat, or approximately 1573 AD) when the Newar kings ruled Kathmandu. Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz, a US citizen, completed her Ph.D. in 2010, from the University of Chicago on *Swasthani* Bratakatha. She researched the tradition several times in order to understand it from a feminist viewpoint, and she discovered that both the patriarchal and feminine power perspectives on the tradition were true.

In her PhD dissertation on *Swasthani* and Newar women, Iltes (1985) claims that this holy literature, a narrative collection of legendary stories about the goddess Swasthani and other Hindu gods and goddesses, becomes a part of daily life for a full month every year. Despite the fact that the month-long ceremony is quite popular in Nepali communities, many Nepali feminists have recently questioned the text's validity, claiming it is patriarchal and sexist.

According to Brikenholtz (2019), the Swasthani devotional practice is a cultural phenomenon with great social and religious significance in Nepal. It holds a special place in Nepali culture as a Brahmanical tradition, a written tradition, and a tradition that has such a deep impact on Nepali homes, hearts, and imaginations. Nevertheless, it is a relatively modern custom given the long history of so many of Hinduism's practices.

One of the most well-known Nepalese tale traditions is the *Swasthani Bratkatha*. Hindus in Nepal perform a devotional ritual every year in honor of the regional deity Swasthani in the hopes of earning religious merit and the goddess' approval. It is a family gathering where family members and friends of all ages and genders get together to listen to the book's well-known tales rather than a national holiday, public celebration, or text studied in class (Brikenholtz, 2019).

According to Benet (1983), patriarchal Hindu practices and sacred texts such as Rishi Panchami and *Swasthani Bratkatha* suppress women. Gender inequality in Hindu society and culture is exacerbated by myths like this. Within this framework, this essay will attempt to determine the societal structure of the Swasthani era. Another critic Adhikari (2020) says:

> *Swasthani Bratkatha* is a devotional text dedicated to the local goddess Swasthani. Its story shows the agro-based socio-economic structure in the medieval period of Nepal. This     paper attempts to analyze the social structure at the period, in terms of the production     system, marriage, family, and status of the female.

*Swasthani* is used as a historical text in this case because it depicts the socio-cultural environment of medieval Nepal. It depicted the plight of women in the patriarchal society of the time.

After reading the aforementioned literature, the researcher came to the conclusion that none of them had approached this myth from a fresh historicist standpoint. As a result, the researcher attempted to determine the historicity of *Swasthani*, which is a medieval Nepalese historical document. The main goal of this research was to see how the myth depicted the socioeconomic and cultural history of the time.

**Historicity of Myth: A Theoretical Framework**

New Historicism is a literary theory established on the concept that literature should be analyzed and evaluated in light of both the author's and critic's histories. New Historicism assumes that a work of literature is influenced by its author's time and circumstances. It was born with Stephen Greenblatt's literary criticism in 1980s, and was influenced by Michel Foucault's philosophy.

A New Historicist examines literature in a broader historical framework. It looks how the writer's time influenced the work as well as how the work represents the writer's periods. It also says that contemporary cultural factors distort the critic's views. The work must be assessed in the environment in which it is created. Cultural history may be revealed by examining the work. The text reveals more about the history, and the history reveals more about the text.

In the same manner that literature reflects and is reflected by its own historical circumstances, contemporary literary criticism is influenced by and exposes contemporary views. New Historicism recognizes and accepts the concept that our perception of great literature will evolve as time passes.

The literary philosophy of New Historicism gives emphasis on the assumption that literature should be understood in relation to culture, politics, history, and social reality. It means creative creation is inextricably linked to the social and cultural activities of the moment.

Tyson (2005) notes that thinking about the retelling of history is a beneficial method of contemplating New Historical theory "Traditional historians ask, "What happened?" and "What the event tells us about history?" New historicists ask, "What does the event tell us about history?" 'How has the event been interpreted?' and "What do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?" (278). As a result, New Historicism goes against the idea that "history is a succession of actions with a linear, connecting relationship: event A caused event B, event B caused event C, and so on" (Tyson 278).

New Historicists never look at history objectively. They interpret events as products of our time and culture. Tyson (2005) puts it, "we don't have clear access to any but the most basic facts of history...our understanding of what such facts mean...is strictly a matter of interpretation, not fact" (279). Furthermore, according to New Historicism, we are hopelessly subjective interpreters of what we see.

Foucault (1972) states, "Discourse is the power to be grasped, not only that which interprets struggles or systems of dominance." Discourse tells us more than just who has authority. Discourse is a form of power in and of itself. Controlling speech also means controlling power.

Culture-as-text, as defined by Geertz (1973), was extremely essential to the New Historicists because it allowed them to go beyond traditional literary "texts" and evaluate things like Elizabethan theatrical traditions, historical documents, and tales alongside literary texts. In other words, Geertz's views call into question the difference between "literary" and "non-literary" texts. The New Historicists, following in Geertz's footsteps, questioned that difference as well.

Myths had a significant role in ancient history, while they are less prominent today. Myths provided solace and explanation for occurrences that people wanted to comprehend during a time when scientific findings were few. Myths are significant for us to read today because they provide insight into the morality and customs of many communities. Myths are stories with religious overtones that give explanations for natural occurrences, moral wisdom, and supernatural creatures.

According to Balodhi (1996), mythology has always had an impact on a person's religious, cultural, social, and political life. It has such a strong impact on the human mind because the human mind is continually thinking in terms of archetypes that are buried deep inside the collective psyche." These archetypes are projected into myths. It is man's endeavor to bring order out of chaos, to make sense of the vast diversity that exists in the world.

Here, the study was focused to analyze *Swasthani* myth in the light of New Historicism. The popular assumption of New Historicism "fiction is history and history is fiction" has been applied to analyze it. Marxists' assumption of impact of socio-economic base structure on literature-like superstructure has been taken consideration to interpret this myth. Though the myth are assumed of having oral tradition and of having no definite origin and history, *Swasthani* has a definite beginning as it was written in Medieval period of Nepal when Mallas were ruling in the Kathmandu Valley. Therefore, Socio-economic context of the then time has been presented in it.

**Medieval Nepal and Historicity of *Swasthani* Myth**

From the PhD research of Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz, it was the established fact that *Swasthani* was written in the Medieval Period and was originally written in Nepal Bhasa (as early as 693 Nepal Sambat or approximately 1573 AD) by Jayanta Dev when the Newar kings ruled over Kathmandu. Later, it is written in Nepali language after the time. Hindus in India did not have a tradition of reading *Swasthani*. For that reason the narrative of *Swasthani* is almost certain have been written in Nepal. For that reason, *Swasthani* has carried out the social, economic, and cultural backdrop of the Medieval Period.

Nepal, like all other countries, has a prehistoric past that is shrouded in mystery. Its early records are renowned as well. In the lack of facts, data, and documents that allow one to make a definitive statement on a historical event, one must rely on myths and tales, whether one likes it or not.

Nepal has its own origin myths and traditions. According to Shrestha and Singh (1972), the Kathmandu Valley, Swayambhu Puran, and Nepal Mahatmya are the only parts of prehistoric Nepal that can be found today. This suggests that Nepal was originally a lake with no water outlets. The valley of Kathmandu was submerged until Manjushree, a Bodhisatwa (potential Buddha) who came from China on a pilgrimage somewhere in the Tretayuga to pay unreserved tribute to Swayambhu, who manifested on the lotus that grew out of the seed that Bipasvi Buddha, who arrived to Nepal sometime in the golden era, threw into the lake, who appeared on the lotus, had cut the hill of Chobhar.

As a result, the kings of numerous tribes and clans who intermittently migrated into the valley ruled over Ancient Nepal. In the past, the Gopal, Mahuishpal, Kirant, and Lichchhabi Kings ruled over the Kathmandu Valley. They each had their own unique cultures, traditions, religious convictions, and social customs. Nepal seems to have progressed socially, economically, and religiously under Kiranti rule.

The Lichchhavi era seems to have progressed in every way. In Nepal's ancient past, it is referred to as "golden age" The administration of the Lichchhavi was well managed. Nepal's borders had expanded outside the Kathmandu valley. The Lichchhavi rulers began to compete in pomp and splendour with India's great kings (Shrestha and Singh, 1972).

Buddhism had already become popular in Nepal. On the other hand, the Hindu Lichchhavi kings had no desire to damage Buddhism. As a result of Shankaracharya's arrival in Nepal, several Buddhist texts were destroyed and a large number of skilled Nepali Buddhist monks fled to Tibet. After that, they went back to Nepal to spread Tantric Buddhism. Tantric Buddhism and Hinduism coexisted well in Nepal due to the tolerance of the Lichchhavi kings.

In Kushinagar, Pawa, and the Vaisali area before the sixth century B.C., the Mallas had their own republican form of governance. According to Buddhist scriptures, Buddha taught his disciple Ananda the importance of the Malla monarchs' domain. An inscription at Changu

Narayan's temple claims that Mana Deva oversaw a conflict with Mallapuri, the country of the Malla people on the other side of the Gandak River.

**Socio-economic and Religious Context of Nepal under the Mallas Regime.**

Nepal was a powerful and independent monarchy before Yaksha Malla divided it into the four kingdoms of Kantipur, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, and Banepa and distributed them among his sons and daughters. Since then, despite advancements in the fields of art, literature, trade, business, and other areas, Nepal has been politically weak. The division of Nepal into many kingdoms had an impact on the division of the Malla monarchs. They started fighting among themselves because they were so split apart by rage and jealousy. They didn't appear to be communicating effectively. They were unable to reach a man's level, not even when faced with a shared danger (Shrestha and Singh, 1972).

Bhaktapur's kings felt themselves superior to other Malla kings in the Valley since Bhaktapur was Nepal's historic capital. Kantpur, being larger and more powerful than the other Malla kings, was wealthy and boasted of their supremacy. Lalitpur's Malla kings regarded themselves as no less powerful as the Valley's other Malla kings. Acting on their vainglory, they decided to slit each other's throats. The Valley's situation deteriorated much further on the eve of the Gorkha takeover. The Malla rulers had never been so close to drawing their daggers as they were at this moment.

*Socio -economic Condition:*

According to Shrestha and Singh (1972), religious injunctions ruled or regulated all social conventions throughout the Malla era. Brahmans, Kshetriyas, Baishyas, and Sudras were the four main classes among the 36 castes. By recommending different callings for members of diverse castes, Jayasthiti Malla, on the other hand, sparked societal transformation. Brahmans take on the roles of priests and preceptors. Some were in the trade and commerce industry, while others worked in agriculture. Manual labor was assigned to those at the bottom of society's hierarchy. Buddhist society was divided in a similar way based on callings. Priests and preceptors were to be served by the Buddhist monks who had returned to home life. Their primary employment was gold mining. This division of society into castes based on different callings led to individuals from diverse castes demonstrating competence in their respective fields.

During the Malla era, Hinduism was the predominant religion. Hindus were divided into two main parts: Shaivism and Vaisnavism. They were also present throughout the Malla era. The number of people who worshipped Shiva was significantly more than the number of Vaisnavas. They consider Buddha to be a divine manifestation and worship him as such. Tantricism, on the other hand, was the most popular cult throughout the Malla era. Tantra was practiced by both Hindus and Buddhists. Almost all gods and goddesses were placed and worshipped according to

Tantricism's doctrines; for example, Tulajabhavani was worshipped precisely according to Tantricism. Veteran Tantrics such as Jamana Gubhaju and others were there. They were able to do great things with the support of Tantricism.

People were superstitious and fearful of God. They were terrified of God's vengeance and believed in the existence of ghosts and spirits. Both the king and the people were religiously inclined and charitable in nature.The Malla era gave birth to the majority of the Valley's festivities. They were all colored in a religious manner. All of the Malla rulers were religious, with the exception of a few. They constructed such magnificent temples as Krishna Mandir, Nyatapol temple, Maha-Bauddha temple, and others.

### Polygamy and Women's Position in Medieval Nepal

Polygamy was widespread in Medieval Nepal. It frequently resulted in heated competition among the king's women for the title of favorite wife, as well as ferocious conflicts over their sons' right of succession. The issue of whether or not boys born out of wedlock should be permitted to accede to the throne arose as a result of cohabitation.

Women were traditionally excluded from succession to the monarchy, according to Shah (1990) in his seminal article "Ancient and Medieval Nepal." This did not, however, imply that women had no influence over political processes or that the husbands and sons of royal women were excluded from succeeding to the throne. In this regard, Princess Nayakadevi of Bhadgaun and her daughter, Princess Rjalladevi of Bhadgaun, as well as their grandparents, Padumalladevi and Devaladevi, who served as their regents, should be mentioned.

In the fourteenth century, the cult of Taleju or Mnesvari, the tutelary deity of the later Mallas, reached its pinnacle. The feudal chiefs of Pharping worshipped Jhankevari, Rajarjesvari, and Kubjik as tutelary deities during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

According to Shah (1990), people in medieval Nepal lived in mortal fear of a plethora of demons and deities, ogres and ogresses, supernatural beings and godly creatures, ghosts and evil spirits, all of whom required constant protection from superior gods and goddesses, who, in turn, were expected to be appeased and propitiated in the same way that ordinary human beings were. The exterior world was totally populated by ghostly entities, airy nothings, shapeless and bodiless apparitions that were mostly the invention of their imaginations for individuals who lived in medieval times. The kind and nice beings significantly outnumbered the malignant and wicked ones among these fantastical species. Magic, incantation, and esoteric ceremonies appealed to the simple-minded people who lived in an atmosphere of blind faith and superstition as a method of appeasing the malevolent spirits and earning the blessings of the benign ones.

Both Buddhism and Brahmanism's logical and mystical aspects were weakened by the introduction of countless ceremonies and the multiplication of gods and goddesses. Both of these

faiths grew to be seen solely as guides for doing religious ceremonies in order to appease gods and goddesses in order to achieve pleasure in this life and the next. As a result, people began to think of gods as human beings with human flaws like hatred, rage, jealousy, and greed.

### Interpretating *Swasthani* from the perspectives of New Historicism

This myth was initially written during the medieval times. As a result, it reflects the social, economic, and cultural conditions of Kathmandu Valley throughout the Malla era. In the severe winter of January, regular bathing and fasting might be regarded Hatha Yoga's inspiration. Hatha Yoga was also performed by several Malla rulers, according to legend. The narrative starts with a description of the beginning of time. The narrative is then overstated with significant themes of heaven, hell, and the mundane world.

In her study, Brikenhitz (2019), states,

> The Swasthani devotional tradition is a cultural phenomenon of considerable social and religious significance in Nepal. It holds a privileged position in Nepali culture – as a Brahmanical tradition, a written tradition, and a tradition with such an extensive reach into so many Nepali homes, hearts, and imaginations.  Nevertheless, it is a relatively young tradition, considering the antiquity for so many of Hinduism's traditions. The *Swasthani* Vratkatha, commonly shortened to *Swasthani* Katha, is one of Nepal's most well-known and often read\heard storytelling traditions.

The mortal world's tale is told through the eyes of a Brahmin woman named Goma. There is a thorough picture of the extent to which ordinary women in medieval and modern Nepal may have suffered as Goma. His birth in the family of a couple who haven't had children in a long time, as well as an unsuitable marriage to an elderly man who was nearly handicapped as a youngster, appears to be the source of all his woes.

The narrative depicts the lives of people living in medieval Nepal's valley. Goma grew up in a cheerful family, but she discovers profound pain in her husband's. His father's property does not benefit him in any way. Even older husbands abandon their wives when they are pregnant. No one is available to look after the youngster.

She nurtures, educates, and even marries her son Nawaraj with the support of neighbors and villagers. The same son travels overseas once more. Maite also has her daughter-in-law. Goma's anguish hasn't changed. Parvati is looking at Goma during this time. The son not only returns, but also becomes the king of the adjacent state, thanks to Swasthani's fasting influence. Then Goma's anguish will come to an end.

As a punishing goddess, Parvati, Ganga, the snake lady, and Goma, the local goddess Chandravati, emerge. Chandravati has not only abandoned her mother-in-law in her sadness, but her haste to meet her husband Nawaraj after learning that he is the king makes her impatient and

insults the national deity. Swasthani is enraged by Chandravati's humiliation and gives her a lot of sorrow. He receives the Goddess's mercy after hearing the grandeur of Swasthani and fasting systematically, and his days of sorrow come to an end.

The geography covered by the underworld myth is unclear. Bagmati Bank, Ganga River, Karnataka Nagar, Brahmapuri, Chandranigahapur, and other names have muddled the topography. The name Shalini was not mentioned in the famous narrative at the start. The Swasthani fair on Sankhu's Shali river and the same-named river is a recent development.

## Social context of *Swasthani*

Adhikari (2020) states that the economic structure of the *Swasthani* Bratakatha reflects the pastoral systems of the then time.  At that period, private ownership, income, and resource distribution practices were formed.

In Chapter Four, page 64 of this book, Sati Devi said, "It is my fortune, I have no other alternatives, he is my husband, and I should execute my duty," The findings mentioned suggest that during the time, ladies believed in fortune and religious standards. This fact illustrates the agricultural and feudalistic elements of civilization.

Dakashya Prajapati says, on page 54 of *Swasthani* Bratakatha, "I don't have a son. Who will be in charge of the property's security?" Dakashya Prajapati is concerned about resource protection without a son in this remark. We may simply infer the practices of private property based on this reality.

Sati Devi, according to *Swasthani* Vratkatha's chapter four, page number 68, covered the earth with cow excrement at Mahadev's request. This suggests that cow excrement was employed for religious cleansing. This allusion also serves as a representation of animal husbandry at the time.

The information presented above shows that the production system is based on a medieval agriculture and animal husbandry system. On the other hand, according to Brikenhitz (2018), the Swasthani Bratakatha dates back 441 years. This depicts society in Nepal and the Kathmandu Valley before the nation was united. Swasthani exhibits the agroeconomic system. It depicts situations in which people must leave their country and home to provide for their families.

## Socio-cultural Diversity

Throughout the narrative of *Swasthani*, we identify divergent social circumstances. Shiva Sharma Brahaman states... "O, Mother!" on page 250 of the twentieth chapter, "In our planet, there are also elderly folks. There are also children. There are two types of people: good and evil. Some people are childless. There are some guys who are older than women. Others don't have

wives, some don't have men, and some are wealthy. Some of them are in bad shape. Human beings have a life cycle similar to that of a potter's wheel." Shiva sharma Brahaman conveys the tiered diversity and evolving realities of human civilization in this writing. These facts show how society changed throughout the *Swasthani* Bratkatha period.

## Medieval Marriage and Patriarchy in *Swasthani*

*Swasthani* Bratkatha represents the patriarchal family system's realities. Mahadev's, Sati Devi's, Nawaraj's, and Chandrawati's marriages are all examples of patriarchal marital traditions. Mahadev and Nawaraj, as male representatives, brought their wives to their house. Similarly, Sati Devi and Chandrawati, the female representations, left their natal house after marriage and traveled to the husband's home.

Swasthani Vratkatha's core topic is focused on the events of marriage. According to the *Swasthani* Vratkatha's contents, there existed a wide range of marriage forms, rituals, and traditions. "I have been worshipping Shri Mahadev since infancy," Parvati stases in the twelfth chapter of *Swasthani* Bratakatha, on page 158, "I would commit suicide and die if my father Himalaya handed my Kanyadan to anybody other than Mahadev." In this story, the female character Parvati has been worshiping the Mahadev since she was a child in order to marry Mahadev. She would commit herself if her father refused to let her marry Mahadev or if the God she adored refused to marry her. This data supports the widespread practice of love marriage at the time.

The numerous contexts of arranged marriage may be found in *Swasthani* Bratkatha. A debate between Shivsharma and Shivbhatta Brahman may be found on page 246 of *Swoasthani* Bratkatha's twentieth chapter. "Oh, Brahman! exclaims Shivsharma. Why have you been staring at me for such a long time?" Shiva Bhatta replied, "My name is Shiva Bhatta, and I am a Brahmin. In my house, I have a daughter. I'm looking for a Brahmin who can offer Kanyadan to me. Do you have any information about a suitable bridegroom?"

The preceding exchange demonstrates the father's obligation to marry his daughter. This fact demonstrates the widespread use of the *Swasthani* Bratkatha period's arranging marriage system.

In order to complete the marriage ritual, it is necessary to know the bride and groom's Gotra, which is referred to as *Swasthani Bratakatha*. In the twenty-third chapter of *Swasthani Bratkatha,* on page 174, Himalaya is mentioned "What is your Gotra, O Jagadishwar? I am conducting the Kanyadan for your daughter to wed you at this Shubalgan. Until I utter the Gotra, I am powerless to act." In this context, the significance of Gotra in matrimonial ceremonies is shown. They believed that Gotra stood for a consanguineous relationship.

*Swasthani* Bratakatha's chapters highlight the male-centric culture through a variety of examples. Goma discusses Purana and Smriti in the twenty-first chapter, on page 259 of the

book, "For the woman, the husband is like God. If the wife had glared furiously at her husband, she would have squinted. A woman who disobeys her husband is a sinner, a bitch, and a hater ". This perspective holds the husband in the same regard as God. The wife is also depicted as someone who needs to be subservient. It represents instances and situations when males predominate.

You may identify the many situations of the woman's purity test as you go through the Swastiani story's chapters. Mahadev declares on page 172 of *Swasthan*i Vratkatha's twenty-third chapter, "I am not the Indra, Parvarti; I have come to put your character to the test. I was overjoyed to see my natural shape..."

The Brata event of Parvati to acquire Mahadev as her spouse is depicted in it. At that time, Mahadev attempted to test Parvati's purity. This fact indicates the *Swasthani* Bratkatha period's custom of putting female purity and husband loyalty to the test.

In several chapters of Swasthani Bratakatha, it seems that women's contributions to the advancement and well-being of the family are emphasized. "Oh, my lawful daughter!" In Swasthani Bratkatha's thirty-first chapter, Goma makes an appearance. Pay attention to Chandravati and Lavanyavati: Without the sun, days are dull, and without the moon, nights are beautiful; similarly, no man has a respectable existence without a woman in the house. The significance of the woman taking on a more active role in the home during the period is highlighted in this paragraph. It has raised awareness of women's presence and needs.

*Swasthani* Bratakatha has explored the positive and negative characteristics of several female characters in various chapters. The sun, moon, lion, duck, and other symbols are used to compare the traits and character of a lady in this text.

The seventeenth chapter quotes the following from page 214 of the *Swasthani Bratkatha*: "Vrinda knew that Vishnu had tricked her by appearing in the disguised shape of Jalandhar. I now need to play games with Vishnu, like waving at him and asking, "O Swami, do you believe me when I say something?" Vishnu promised to do so while posing as Jalandhar. Vrinda also relocated to a different home while keeping Vishnu confined to a chamber. This poem claims that Vrinda, the feminine figure, tricked Vishnu, the masculine deity.

### Conclusion

To interpret historical and mythical literature from various viewpoints, it is necessary to redraw the borders between them. New Historicism is a strong notion that examines or interprets a text in light of its surrounding environment. The origins of myths may have an ambiguous history, but *Swasthani* was written during Nepal's Medieval Period. This research aimed to relate it to the socio-economical and cultural setting of the Medieval Period in order to make it a historical book and move it away from only being a holy book. In a nutshell, *Swasthani* is not just a myth, but also a true reflection of the socio-economic backdrop of Medieval Nepal at the

time it was written. *Swasthani* has the historicity of Nepali society and culture from the past, since new historicists believe that history is myth and myth is history. The Swasthani Vratkatha contains a narrative that reflects the pastoral and agricultural production methods of Nepal throughout the medieval period. In that agro-based sociocultural system, private ownership, income, and resource distribution were formed. Patriarchal norms and goals of the period had an impact on family and marital systems, which served as the foundation of societal structure.

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