



Jhwo Bhoye: Embodying Newar Indigenous Knowledge for Cultural and Ecological Sustainability in Bhaktapur

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Abstract

This study aims to explore Jhwo Bhoye [a Newari communal feast in Bhaktapur] as an essential manifestation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), highlighting its function in maintaining ecological practices and cultural identity. IKS refers to the traditional knowledge, practices, and beliefs developed by indigenous communities over generations, often deeply connected to their environment, culture, and spirituality. Jhwo Bhoye incorporates local ingredients, typical cooking methods, and rituals that embody the Newari perspective of being intertwined with the natural world and society. By employing an ethnographic approach that includes semi-structured interviews and participant observation carried out in 2024, this study examines how Jhwo Bhoye exemplifies IKS principles addressing the question: How does it maintain ecological and cultural practices in Bhaktapur? The findings suggest that Jhwo Bhoye uses sustainable methods to reduce waste, such as employing seasonal ingredients and biodegradable materials, which are aligned with agro-ecological cycles. Honoring ancestors and deities, and strengthening spiritual and social links, the sequential service of foods in Jhwo Bhoye reflects cultural symbolism and nutritional balance. Urbanization and modern trends like buffet-style dining, however, pose a threat to its survival, especially among younger generations who are attracted to modern lifestyle. The paper argues that by preserving Newari identity and ecological wisdom, Jhwo Bhoye serves as a decolonial praxis that opposes globalized cultural homogenization. Its methods, which prioritize community-driven resource management, provide insightful perspectives for sustainable development. Incorporating IKS into educational and policy frameworks is crucial to halting the loss of this intangible heritage. In order to preserve cultural and ecological resilience in the face of globalization, this research advocates for the inclusion of Jhwo Bhoye in modern curriculum that contributes to the wider discourse on conserving indigenous knowledge.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Jhwo Bhoye, Newar Cultural Practice, Decolonization, Sustainability



Introduction

Bhaktapur, often known as the "City of Devotees," is one of the three ancient royal cities of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal (Levy, 1990, p. 40). Bhaktapur has emerged as a living testament of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) of the Newar community. The city is well-known for its vivid customs, art and architecture, and cultural history that has been preserved. Knowledge that comes from the unique cultural, historical, and social backgrounds of indigenous people is referred to as indigenous knowledge. It is profoundly affected by the community, family, and environment. It has been further defined as "the cumulative body of strategies, practices, techniques, tools, intellectual resources, explanations, beliefs, and values accumulated over time in a particular locality, without the interference and imposition of external hegemonic forces" (Emeagwali, 2014, p. 1).

Jhwo Bhoye, a communal feast celebrated by the Newari people in Bhaktapur, is a cultural tradition that incorporates indigenous knowledge in social organization, culinary preparation, and cultural continuity. The term *Jhwo* refers to seating in a row, while "*Bhoye* is considered as ceremonial feast containing wide variety of dishes" symbolizing hospitality and community bonding (Rajbhandari, 2005, p. 44). *Jhwo Bhoye* reflects the Newari philosophy of interdependence with environment and community by incorporating locally obtained ingredients, traditional cooking methods, and ceremonies. *Jhwo Bhoye* prepares cuisine using traditional knowledge. Due to local people's knowledge on agro-ecological cycles, the Newars use local ingredients including beaten rice, legumes, buffalo meat, seasonal vegetables, and yoghurt in *Jhwo Bhoye*. These methods support worldwide demands for sustainable food systems by reducing waste and guaranteeing resource sustainability. *Jhwo Bhoye* is closely associated with Newari celebrations, which incorporate ceremonies dedicated to the deities and ancestors. Such events are evidences of a worldview that emphasizes spirituality and harmony with nature. Ecological concern is ingrained in indigenous rituals, as seen by the use of biodegradable materials in offerings made during *Jhwo Bhoye*. This paper analyses how *Jhwo Bhoye* embodies IKS values, with a focus on resilient communities and sustainable practices. It responds to the following research question: How does *Jhwo Bhoye* use local knowledge to maintain ecological and cultural traditions in Bhaktapur? Ritual functions support spiritual connections to the divine and are consistent with the Newari worldview. When taken as a whole, these ritualistic and cultural traditions oppose contemporary consumerist trends that lack the symbolic depth of *Jhwo Bhoye*, including buffet-style dining. However, these customs are under threat from urbanization, thus it is necessary to preserve them as Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Literature Review

The knowledge, skills, customs, and cultures of different countries and regions worldwide are interconnected. Undoubtably, these indigenous cultures, traditions, and expertise are not acquired overnight. Human civilization has developed over thousands of years, and the knowledge and skills acquired during that time belong to the entire human species, not just to a particular country. Indigenous knowledge generally refers to local,



traditional, technical indigenous, peasant, traditional, and ethnic knowledge. “Local and indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 8). Indigenous wisdom is transmitted orally through observation and practice in a dynamic process that adapts to the demands of a particular community. Indigenous knowledge is often overlooked in knowledge production phenomena. It is typically characterized by terms like “primitive,” “backward,” “savage,” “rural,” and “unscientific” (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019, p. 7). It is interpreted as the underprivileged’s wisdom, which has been suppressed over the world for millennia. Indigenous people are ethnic groups with different traditions, political, cultural, and social organizations, and modes of life that differ from the dominant societies with whom they frequently share their lands. Their members are often thought to be the descendants of people who once lived in a specific geographic location before new conquerors from various cultures or ethnicities arrived. These conquerors would eventually gain dominance by conquest, occupation, colonization, or other forms of exploitation. Local knowledge and skills were further eroded by the effects of globalization, which began with the industrial revolution and continued with heedless modernization and urbanization. The integration of IKS into natural resource management has gained increasing attention as a means to promote sustainable agricultural and environmental practices. Indigenous knowledge is defined as a dynamic, culturally relative body of knowledge, learned through everyday experience and varying by “gender, age, and occupation” within a community (Sillitoe, 2017, p. 2). Unlike Scientific knowledge, which is formally taught, “deductive” and seeks objective, universal truths, Indigenous knowledge is “inductive,” context-specific, and embedded in local practices, offering insights into sustainable resource management (Sillitoe, 2017, p. 3). Applied to the context of Bhaktapur’s *Jhwo Bhoje*, Sillitoe’s framework suggests that Newari communal practices, rooted in Indigenous knowledge, could inform sustainable ecological management, reinforcing the need to integrate local knowledge into policy and practice.

Indigenous knowledge serves as the foundation for decolonization. Decolonization's primary goals include restoring authority to conquered and oppressed populations, as well as devising a strategy for healing and reconciliation. “Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge” (Smith, 1999, p. 39). Decolonization requires first understanding and comprehending how colonialism influenced the world. “To fully understand the politics of knowledge and being, it is essential to situate contemporary issues in education within legacies of colonial imperial projects that have been imposed on peoples and places all over the globe” (Tom et al., 2019, p. 7). The authors criticize how colonial education has historically been used to erase Indigenous identities through assimilationist practices like residential schooling and linguistic suppression, which they present as a component of a larger “death project” associated with capitalism and colonialism (Suárez Krabbe, 2012, p. 345). The dominant white settler culture subsequently replaced indigenous culture, which has been suppressed globally over time and is still being suppressed today.



The term “research” is deeply associated with “European imperialism and colonialism,” as it has historically facilitated the exploitation, classification, and representation of indigenous people and their knowledge systems for Western gain (Smith, 1999, p. 1). She supports decolonizing research methodologies that give indigenous cultural values and self-determination top priority. She also maintains that indigenous people have frequently been dehumanized by Western research, which views them as study subjects rather than living beings with legitimate knowledge systems. “For many of us, the research on our communities has historically been damage centered, intent on portraying our neighborhoods and tribes as defeated and broken” (Tuck, 2009, p. 412). Research has historically framed indigenous communities as damaged and focused on repairing them to fit into Western civilization. However, postcolonial scholars at several universities around the world have now studied the importance of these indigenous talents and knowledge and started a conversation about how to preserve and promote them. Local knowledge, skills, customs, and culture are gradually starting to be recognized as world heritage, not simply a national one. Indigenous knowledge offers both “Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners in trans-systemic ways that Eurocentric knowledge alone cannot do” (Battiste, 2009, p. 13). By integrating indigenous knowledge into educational programs, Aboriginal people ensure to decolonize their communities, institutions, and identities, which leads to change and transformation.

In Newari culture, food has immense social, cultural, and ritual significance, which is shown in many facets of celebrations and everyday life. Indigenous communities that oppose globalized cultural homogenization, in particular, rely heavily on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to promote sustainable practices that incorporate ecological, cultural, and social elements. Nepal's Indigenous Newar people use their traditional knowledge and socio-cultural values, expressed in the "Guthi system," to contribute to "Indigenous tourism development" in Kathmandu Valley (Shrestha et al., 2025, p. 143). It is consistent with the ecological and cultural sustainability demonstrated by *Jhwo Bhoje*, which uses seasonal ingredients and biodegradable materials to correspond with agro-ecological cycles. Ritualistic in nature, traditional Newari feasts are frequently paired with religious rites and cultural displays. By honoring divinities, ancestors, and traditional customs, these rites strengthen the links of community and spirituality that characterize Newari society. Additionally, the act of dining together at a traditional Newari feast promotes community pride and unity among attendees, overcoming social barriers. The traditional Newari feast represents the virtues of hospitality, generosity, and cultural preservation that are fundamental to Newari culture, whether it is being held to celebrate marriages, religious festivals, or cultural events. These gatherings are frequently hosted in traditional locations in Bhaktapur, including as streets, open spaces, and *Dyochhen* (God's house). Among various types of meals, *Samay Baji* (a Newari cuisine) is so famous in Newar and non-Newar community. While there are no specific seasons for serving *Samay Baji*, it is predominantly enjoyed during auspicious occasions, family gatherings and festivals. “It is believed that the different foods in *Samay Baji* represents good luck, prosperity, fortune, health, and longevity” (Pandey, 2018, p. 10). Similarly, the tradition of *Jhwo Bhoje*



brings together family, relatives, and neighbors in a communal setting. The importance of food to the Newars is also expressed in the Nepali proverb “Parbate bigroyo moujle, Newar bigroyo bhojle. This means, in essence: the Parbate (Nepali-speaker) is ruined by his sex appetite and the Newar by his food appetite” (Nepali, 2015, p. 343). The proverb suggests that the Newars' devotion to lavish feasts strains on household finances, reflecting the tension between cultural pride and financial burden. “Of all the Nepali people, Newars observe the greatest number of festivals and feasts. They spend a great amount of money and food on such occasions, the food consisting of buffalo meat, beaten rice, vegetables, pickles, curd and large quantities of beer and spirit” (Bista, 1980, p. 26). The Newars view that throwing extravagant feasts as a way to strengthen familial bonds, build social capital, and satisfy ritual duties including making offerings to ancestors or deities. Bista's observation highlights the Newars' commitment to feasts and festivals, which are essential manifestations of their ritualistic tradition, social cohesiveness, and cultural identity. The traditional alcoholic beverages and particular delicacies showcase ritual significance and culinary depth of the feast. But this extravagant spending raises questions regarding economic sustainability.

Research Gap

The cultural heritages of Bhaktapur, such as its architecture, craftsmanship, music, dance, and visual arts, have been extensively studied, but little is known about *Jhwo Bhoje* relating to Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). The rich, embodied knowledge systems seen in *Jhwo Bhoje*, which combine ecological sustainability, ritualistic symbolism, and social bonding, are largely overlooked in existing research, which focusses primarily on the material and aesthetic components of Newari culture. In-depth research on how *Jhwo Bhoje* embodies indigenous epistemologies—such as the sustainable use of local resources, spiritual ties to nature, and resistance to globalized cultural homogenization—is conspicuously lacking. A crucial knowledge and preservation gap exist because academic research has not yet examined potentiality of *Jhwo Bhoje* as an area for decolonial praxis and its incorporation into frameworks for education and policy to protect its intangible heritage.

Methodology

This study employs an ethnographic research design to explore the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) embedded in the Newari communal feast, *Jhwo Bhoje*, in Bhaktapur. Ethnography, as a qualitative research approach, suits for investigating the cultural, social, and ecological dimensions of *Jhwo Bhoje*, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of “the shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting” within the Newari community (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 50). The methodology integrates three data collection methods: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participant observation, complemented by a review of secondary materials. These methods collectively address the research question: *How does Jhwo Bhoje use local knowledge to maintain ecological and cultural traditions in Bhaktapur?*



Data Collection Methods

Participant Observation

Fieldwork was conducted from March to September 2024, encompassing participant observation at six *Jhwo Bhoye* events in Bhaktapur to explore its role in sustaining Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Observations occurred during three major lifecycle events (two weddings and one Bratabandha ceremony), selected for their cultural significance and frequent association with *Jhwo Bhoye*. Events were held in traditional settings, including open space in Jenla, and two *Dyochhen* (god's houses) chosen for their role as communal and ritual spaces. These locations were purposively selected to capture the ecological and cultural dimensions of the feast. The researcher actively participated in feast preparation (e.g., cooking, arranging materials), serving, and consumption, while observing rituals, social interactions, and sustainable practices. Observations were documented through detailed handwritten field notes, capturing interactions, material use, and ritual sequences, supplemented by photographs taken with community consent to record spatial arrangements and artifacts. This immersive approach provided rich, contextual data on how *Jhwo Bhoye* embodies ecological sustainability and cultural continuity, complementing interview and FGD findings.

Focus Group Discussions

To complement interviews and capture collective perspectives, two FGDs were conducted with 8–10 participants each, totaling 18 participants. The first FGD included Newar women involved in feast preparation, selected for their critical role in preserving IKS and promoting cultural practices. The second FGD comprised youth (aged 18–30), chosen to explore their engagement with *Jhwo Bhoye* amidst modern influences like buffet-style dining. Participants were purposively recruited through community networks during *Jhwo Bhoye* events, ensuring familiarity with the feast. Each FGD, lasting 60 minutes, was held in a *Dyochhen*, a culturally significant community space, to foster open dialogue. Discussions were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed, and anonymized to protect confidentiality.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The study employed purposive sampling to select three community members for semi-structured interviews: a Newar elder (aged 70), a feast organizer (aged 50), and a younger participant (aged 25). These individuals were chosen based on specific criteria to ensure diverse perspectives relevant to the research question. Newar Elder was selected for their extensive experience and historical knowledge of Newari traditions, the elder provided deep insights into the spiritual, cultural, and ecological significance of *Jhwo Bhoye*. Feast Organizer was chosen for their active role in coordinating *Jhwo Bhoye* events, this participant offered practical insights into the logistical and ecological practices, such as the use of biodegradable materials, and the challenges of maintaining traditional practices amidst modern economic pressures. Younger Participant was selected to represent the younger generation's views, this participant illuminated the impact of modernization and urbanization on the continuity of *Jhwo Bhoye*. No



additional interviews were conducted, as the ethnographic approach prioritized in-depth, qualitative insights from key informants over a larger sample size.

Results and Discussion

***Jhwo Bhoje*: Tradition, Sustainability, and Modern Influences**

Jhwo Bhoje is a traditional Newar communal feast that is usually organized to celebrate festivals, lifecycle events, or community gatherings. These feasts are based on cultural and religious traditions and prioritize community bonding, shared contributions, and affordability. Food is cooked collectively, with participants typically bringing their own ingredients or dishes, making it a low-cost and inclusive way to celebrate. The emphasis is on cooperation rather than ostentation. In contrast, having parties at lavish party palaces—modern facilities outfitted with luxurious amenities such as catering, design, and entertainment—has become a popular practice in urban regions, including the Newar community. Hosting costly parties can cause financial stress, particularly in the farming community, as they strive to meet social standards.

During my field observation of *Jhwo Bhoje* festivities in Bhaktapur in April 2024, I noticed the intricate interplay of cultural and ecological practices that constitute the feast. In an open place in Jenla, where I grew up playing various childhood activities, community members worked together to prepare dishes using locally available items such as beaten rice and seasonal vegetables. The usage of biodegradable *sukul* (mats) and *lapte* (plates) demonstrated the Newari's commitment to sustainability, as participants meticulously reduced food waste. The sequential serving of meals, accompanied by deity-honoring ceremonies, produced a sense of communal unity and spiritual connection, however, only 105 younger aged 18-30 of the 535 guests attended the *Jhwo Bhoje*, and many of them seemed disinterested, indicating a rising inclination towards modern buffet-style dinners rather than traditional feasts, which is probably influenced by urban lifestyles and current social trends.

Cultural Significance of *Jhwo Bhoje*

The indigenous knowledge ingrained in *Jhwo Bhoje* demonstrates as a storehouse of culturally valuable and sustainable activities. By using seasonal, locally available ingredients and minimizing waste, the feast promotes environmental sustainability. However, the persistence of these customs is threatened by urbanization and modernization as younger generations embrace modern trend. Integrating IKS into educational and policy frameworks helps to preserve *Jhwo Bhoje* and akin traditions. It conveys meanings through its material aspects (*sukul* and *lapte*), spatial organization, sequential food service, and accompanying ceremonies. The *sukul*, a long hay-woven carpet, is a key sign at the feast. Denotatively, it is a guest seating area that can accommodate up to 20-25 people in one row. Connotatively, it represents communal unity and equality, as all participants sit cross-legged in a common place, transcending social barriers. The act of sitting cross-legged emphasizes modesty and attention, generating a shared ritual experience. *Jhwo Bhoje* serves cuisine in a sequential order, beginning with *baji* (beaten rice) and progressing to meats, vegetables, legumes, soups, and liquors such as *thwo* (rice beer) and *aila* (wine). Traditional drinks like *aila* and *thwo* are served



in unique vessels such as *sallicha* (earthen cups) and *antee* (brass pitchers). These beverages are generally served by women in Newar community. Newar cultural practices have ensured influential position to Newar women even in patriarchal society. They play crucial role in preserving and promoting indigenous knowledge in Bhaktapur. “Indigenous knowledge remains essential to women's empowerment in Bhaktapur Municipality, particularly in the fields of community leadership, agriculture, crafts, and health” (Phelu, 2025, p.14). Newar women are health conscious and they know essence of sequential order of food items in *Jhwo Bhoje* as well. The order of food serving ensures a balanced meal and conveys a holistic approach to health, with each dish representing nutritional and cultural significance. The women's FGD stressed the importance of women in maintaining traditions, with participants agreeing, “Serving *aila* in *sallicha* cups is our way of passing down culture to the next generation” (Women's FGD, 2024). The discussion reflects a collective effort to sustain cultural knowledge.

Moreover, the sequential service mirrors the Newari lifecycle, emphasizing balance and harmony between one's health and environment. Generally, the Bhaktapur Newars serve *Jhwo Bhoje* food items in four phases locally called as “*nhapangu sara*,” “*nisara*,” “*swosara*,” and “*pyasara*” as dishes served in first, second, third, and fourth in sequence respectively (Bijukchhen et al., 2020, p. 21). However, the dishes served in these phases differ from one community to another even in Bhaktapur Newar community. An elder participant aged 70 emphasized the spiritual and communal significance of *Jhwo Bhoje*, highlighting its role in connecting generations and strengthening community cohesion:

Jhwo Bhoje is not just about eating; it's our way of honoring our ancestors and deities. Sitting on the *sukul* together, we share stories and pass down traditions to the young ones. The food, like *baji* and *thwo*, carries our history—each dish has a meaning, a balance for health and spirit. *Jhwo Bhoje* brings everyone together—rich, poor, old, young. When we sit in a row, we're equal. It's a time to strengthen our bonds, to show hospitality, and to keep our Newari identity alive. (J. Bohaju, personal communication, March 15, 2024)

This perspective underscores the ritualistic and intergenerational dimensions of *Jhwo Bhoje*, aligning with Newari cosmology that integrates spiritual and social harmony. It also reinforces the social function of *Jhwo Bhoje* as a practice that transcends social barriers, fostering unity and cultural pride.

Ecological Practices in *Jhwo Bhoje*

Jhwo Bhoje embodies ecological sustainability through its use of seasonal, locally sourced ingredients and biodegradable materials like *sukul* (hay-woven carpets) and *lapte* (leaf-woven plates). In essence, it is a useful, environmentally beneficial item. It connotes purity and connectedness to nature because the leaves are sourced locally and returned to the land after usage. *Sukul* and *lapte* represent the Newari attitude of living in harmony with the nature. These practices align with agro-ecological cycles, minimizing waste and supporting sustainable resource management. It demonstrates how the Newars serve feasts for more than just taste and



pleasure. “It is amazing that how the Newah people at that time were so wise to combine different food group and the way of cooking to match with present scientific knowledge on nutritional value and health awareness” (Rajbhandari, 2005, p. 48). A feast organizer aged 50 highlighted the ecological wisdom embedded in the feast’s practices, particularly the use of biodegradable materials and discussed the challenges of preserving *Jhwo Bhoye* in the face of economic pressures:

We use *lapte* made from *sal* leaves and *sukul* from hay because they come from nature and return to it. Our elders taught us to avoid waste—every ingredient, like seasonal vegetables, is chosen to respect the land’s cycles. Preparing *Jhwo Bhoye* takes time and effort—collecting ingredients and other arrangements. Some families now prefer party palaces to save time. But those places lack our rituals, our heart. (H. Kaju, personal communication, April 2, 2024)

This excerpt reflects the sustainable practices inherent in *Jhwo Bhoye*, demonstrating an indigenous understanding of resource management that aligns with global sustainability goals. It also highlights the practical challenges of maintaining *Jhwo Bhoye*, underscoring the need for strategies to preserve this intangible heritage amidst modern economic and social pressures.

Indigenous knowledge systems frequently rely on sustainable methods that ensure the long-term welfare of natural resources. Indigenous groups have a deep awareness of their specific habitats since they have long relied on them for survival. Indigenous knowledge usually adopts an integrated approach to the environment by recognizing the connections among humans, plants, animals, water, and land. “Indigenous knowledge reflects the dynamic way in which the residents of an area have come to understand themselves in relationship to their natural environment and how they organize that folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs, and history to enhance their lives” (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999, p. 3). Indigenous wisdom is closely linked to the spirituality of land, water, and other natural components in many indigenous societies. They view the land, water, plants, animals, and other natural elements as sacred entities that are interrelated with their social, cultural, and spiritual existence rather than as resources to be used.

Modern Challenges to *Jhwo Bhoye*

However, the persistence of these customs is threatened by urbanization and modernization as younger generations embrace modern trend. On the one hand, the growing influence of westernization and modernization has had a significant impact on cultural practices in Bhaktapur, particularly among the younger generation, who are more interested in foreign culinary trends such as buffet-style dining than traditional Newari feasts like *Jhwo Bhoye*. On the other hand, the desire for Western-style dining, motivated by convenience and the difficulties of organizing labor-intensive traditional feasts, jeopardizes the survival of these cultural practices. The difficulty of preparing *Jhwo Bhoye*, which needs significant time, manpower, and resources for preparation, cooking, and serving, discourages indigenous practice, particularly in the setting of modern nuclear family systems. The youth FGD revealed tensions between traditional practices and modern influences, with participants debating the



practicality of *Jhwo Bhoye* in contemporary contexts. While some expressed a desire to preserve *Jhwo Bhoye*, others admitted, “Party palaces have music, lights, variety of modern dishes, and easy catering—it’s more fun than spending hours cooking for *Jhwo Bhoye*” (Youth FGD, 2024). This debate reflects the challenge of maintaining cultural traditions amidst urbanization and modernization. If this trend continues, the declination of *Jhwo Bhoye* and similar traditions could lead to the gradual disappearance of these practices, undermining the cultural identity of the Newari community in Bhaktapur. The shift toward foreign culinary practices highlights the urgent need to address the preservation of these traditions to maintain Bhaktapur’s rich cultural legacy. The younger participant aged 25 expressed concerns about the impact of modernization on *Jhwo Bhoye* continuity:

I love *Jhwo Bhoye*, but it’s hard to organize now. Young people like me are busy, and buffet-style parties are easier. Many of my friends find it old-fashioned, and they’d rather host parties at restaurants. I worry we’re losing the meaning of sitting together, sharing *aila* from *sallicha*—it’s not just food, it’s our identity. (L. Duwal, personal communication, May 10, 2024)

This statement illustrates the tension between traditional practices and modern influences, highlighting the threat of cultural erosion due to urbanization and shifting lifestyles.

Colonization ruined many indigenous cultures around the world, and Eurocentric culture continues to mistreat them to this day. To oppose this repressive system and restore power to poor groups, measures must be undertaken. Capitalist Western societies has resulted in excessive manufacture of goods and the depletion of many natural resources. The need of maintaining ecosystem balance has been overlooked in today's society, where merely material prosperity is valued above all else. Indigenous wisdom can provide new ideas on how to interact with the land and life. Indigenous knowledge contributes greatly to societal growth by offering a unique perspective that values community, sustainability, and a deep understanding of the natural environment. Indigenous knowledge systems frequently emphasize biodiversity conservation, ecological health, and the sustainable use of natural resources. Indigenous knowledge fosters a sense of belonging by contributing to the preservation of cultural identities and traditions. Numerous ancient healing practices and remedies are being adopted into contemporary healthcare, and they can supplement conventional therapy, particularly in communities with limited access to modern medical care.

Triangulation in this study involves integrating data from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participant observation to ensure a robust understanding of *Jhwo Bhoye's* role in Newari Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). By cross-verifying findings across these methods, the research enhances validity and reliability. Interviews provided deep individual insights into cultural, spiritual, and ecological aspects, FGDs captured collective perspectives from women and youth, and participant observation offered contextual data on rituals and sustainable practices. This multi-method approach confirms *Jhwo Bhoye's* significance in sustaining cultural identity and ecological balance while highlighting threats from modernization, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of its IKS embodiment.



Recommendation: Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Local Curriculum

The incorporation of local curricula and indigenous knowledge into formal education systems is crucial for promoting culturally relevant education that links students' learning to their social and cultural contexts. The concept of local curriculum is deeply rooted in educational decentralization, aiming to address local needs and incorporate community-specific knowledge into school education. "Local curriculum is the detailed educational framework which is prepared in the local level to deliver the local level knowledge, skills and experiences to the children" (Bhetuwal, 2015, p. 142). At present in Nepal, the local governments have been authorized to develop and implement the local curriculum in the basic level of education system, however, it is highlighted that "scarcity of human resource and financial constraints are the major hindrances for the construction and implementation" of local curriculum in Nepal's primary schools (Bhetuwal, 2015, p. 150). In contrast, Bhaktapur Municipality demonstrates a successful way of overcoming these obstacles through its proactive development and implementation of a local curriculum entitled *Khwopako Pahichan*.

Bhaktapur, with its rich history, cultural significance, and traditional practices, offers an ideal context for integrating indigenous knowledge into contemporary development strategies. Like many other municipalities in Nepal, Bhaktapur Municipality bases its local curriculum on national education standards set forth by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. Bhaktapur's diverse cultural, historical, and geographic background offers a chance to incorporate regional components into the curriculum in order to preserve and promote the indigenous knowledge, cultural heritage, and environmental sustainability of the community. For the first time in Nepal, Bhaktapur Municipality took the initiative to develop and implement a local curriculum. On 6 February, 2018, a five-member local curriculum development committee comprising Siddhiratna Sakya, Roshanraj Tuitui, and Rajendra Prasad Shrestha was established in the Bhaktapur Municipality under the chairmanship of Yogendraman Bijukchhen. The committee's mission was to develop a local curriculum for classes 1 and 6. Separate workshops and consultation sessions with the principals, teachers, parents, and local experts of various schools in Bhaktapur were arranged during the curriculum development. The local curriculum development committee has prepared the curriculum which has covered 11 different subjects like history, geography, caste, art and culture, skills and technology, healing techniques, local games, and tourism. A chapter on *Jhwo Bhoye* has been included in class eight of *Khwopako Pahichan* to impart indigenous knowledge and promote cultural identity of Bhaktapur.

Jhwo Bhoye's ecological and cultural value should be incorporated into formal education and community initiatives in order to maintain it as an essential part of Newari Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Implemented since 2018, the *Khwopako Pahichan* curriculum of the Bhaktapur Municipality serves as a model by incorporating *Jhwo Bhoye* in grade eight to teach students about cultural rituals (e.g., sequential food serving) and sustainable practices (e.g., use of biodegradable *sukul* and *lapte*). For instance, to teach pupils about indigenous cuisine and customs, schools should include practical exercises such as



preparing a simplified *Jhwo Bhoye* meal under the supervision of elders. The yearly *Jhwo Bhoye* celebration at Bagiswori Secondary School, which involves grade eight students and teachers, is a prime example of this strategy such approach should be replicated across Nepal. To overcome the issue of resource constraints, local governments could work with cultural institutions or apply for Ministry of Education subsidies to teach IKS pedagogy. Campaigns using media platforms like Instagram, Tiktok, reels showing how to prepare *Jhwo Bhoye*, or podcasts telling the stories of elders can engage young people and counteract the allure of buffet-style dining. Young people should participate in cooking workshops at yearly events like the Bhaktapur Festival, which in 2024 included *Jhwo Bhoye* exhibitions. A national IKS framework might be fostered by cross-regional studies that examine how *Jhwo Bhoye's* sustainable practices (such as biodegradable materials) might be applied to other indigenous feasts, such as the Tamang's Lhosar or the Tharu's Maghi. In the spirit of global sustainability goals, policy incentives like subsidies for *Jhwo Bhoye* activities held in the community could help ensure its continuity.

Conclusion

Jhwo Bhoye is a powerful example of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), tying together ecological sustainability, cultural identity, and community resilience. *Jhwo Bhoye* embodies a holistic Newari worldview that places a high value on social cohesion and harmony with nature through its use of seasonal, locally sourced ingredients, biodegradable materials and ritualistic practices honoring ancestors and deities. This study shows that the feast is more than just a culinary tradition; it is a living archive of indigenous knowledge that defies globalized cultural homogenization through and provides an example of sustainable living. However, it is seriously threatened by the invading forces of modern lifestyle and urbanization, especially the trend towards convenience-driven dining practices, especially among younger generations. It is essential to incorporate IKS into curriculum and policy frameworks in order to protect this intangible heritage. Future generations can connect their ecological and cultural history with current issues by incorporating *Jhwo Bhoye* traditions into formal schooling, which will help them develop a sense of identity and accountability. Additionally, sustainable way of *Jhwo Bhoye* prioritizes ecological balance and community-driven resource management and offer insightful guidance for global sustainability initiatives. Future studies need to look into practical ways to integrate IKS into contemporary systems, guaranteeing the continuation of such customs while enhancing their applicability in addressing cultural and environmental issues. In order to ensure a more sustainable and culturally rich future, *Jhwo Bhoye* emphasizes the constant power of indigenous knowledge to support ecosystems and communities. This serves as an appeal to action for its preservation and incorporation into broader societal structures.



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