

# Mythic of Newar Arts, Literature, Tales, Oral Histories and Rituals in Patan and Kirtipur: Cultural Study

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## Abstract

Mythic realities in Newar arts and cultural representations of the socio-cultural activities noted in the folklores, tales, practices and performances in Patan and Kirtipur are mysteries. Ritual activities like Lakhe Dances, Jatras and other rituals are related with the historical events, facts and imaginary-mysterious beliefs. Myth is an excavating tool for meaning making of the artistic, cultural and historical sayings noted in the tales that can catch out the themes observing the coverage of crafts in applying the artistic and literary techniques. Newar Arts, Newa Dance, Dhime Dance, Lakhe Dance and other magical activities and rituals of Patan and Kirtipur are culturally connected with mythic realities of folklores. The cultural study helps to study the arts, culture and literature and myth making in creating the meanings through library and internet-based resources and it is also prepared on the basis of field visit reports and therefore this study applies both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Objective of this article is to expose the mythical images and it analyzes present events in field-based method studying the human emotions, feelings and their cultural practices. It also investigates on the subjects of religious activities, socio-cultural practices and cultural representations of the past reality and present changes in a different way. This article presents a brief sketch of a new perspective on cultural orientation to mythical world as myth and mystery reflecting on the past activities and creating the meanings in the present. Cultural study is one of the tools to excavate Patan and Kirtipur's history and so in this article Stuart Hall's ideas are applicable.

**Keywords:** *Mythic realities, folklores, cultural history, arts and literature, Jatra, puja-path*

## Introduction

Socio-cultural representations of the Newar arts in folklores, legendary myths, literature and architectural craftsmanship in the carved and documented testimonies have close meanings that disclose the "secrecies of the historical practices and those collected documents provide us the knowledge reflecting back to the pre-historical periods" (Maharjan, S. 23). 'Culture and Literature' work relationally as a bridge to preserve the naturally and nationally practiced things. Literary representations in arts, culture and literature concern with the social practices to investigate on the causes and consequences of the socio-cultural confusions in the documentation works of historical developments and it is also prepared on the basis of Satya Mohan Joshi's *Legends of Lalitpur and Related Tales* and field-based study made around the Krishna Mandir in Patan and Adinath Temple premises in Chovar, Kirtipur. In addition to the temple premises activities, Newar *Jatras, puja/path* and other ritual activities there are also studied in their homes and outsides in religious ceremonies to know about the cultural norms and values.

Self-administered questionnaires are put to the devotees worshipping in and around Krishna Mandir in Patan and Adinath Temple in Chovar about their "cultural practices from their ancestor's time up to now" (Maharjan, D. 43). This study helps to understand the symbolic meanings of artistic crafts and *tantric* forces that people trust upon.

Krishna Mandir in Patan is very important religious-cultural temples for Newars in Kathmandu Valley (Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur) and it is also important for other religious groups of the different parts of the geography whereas the people come for worshipping. Every morning, people go there and worship the gods and goddesses placing the flowers and offering/sounding *Namaste/Bhagawan saranam* singing the

gongs and ringing the bells. Devotees keep on fasting, worship the gods and goddesses, sing the hymns and pray in different ways. They believe that they can fulfill their dreams and desires by worshipping there. There are lots of scenes and written documents in the temple and around the temple premises for the researchers in addition to the oral histories.



Source: Snapshots taken by this researcher in front of Krishna Mandir from different positions on Falgun 14, 2079.





Source: Snapshots taken by this researcher, observing the ritual activities near by the Krishna-Mandir in Patan.

Researcher observing arts, architectural craftsmanship and historical-cultural connectivity of them tried to understand the meanings and symbolic representations of the carved pictures and paintings. The study tries to connect the religious convictions of historical truth and myth making about Krishna Mandir and Adinath Temple. Like Krishna Mandir in Patan, Adinath Temple in Chovar Height is other important religious-cultural temple for Kirtipur Newars and other religious groups whereas the people come for worshipping from different places of Kirtipur and Sanepa, Lalitpur. Every morning, people go there and worship the gods and goddesses placing the flowers and offering/sounding *Namaste/Bhagawan saranam* etc. Religious devotees, in addition to their daily ritual activities, especially in the month of Kartik keep on fasting, worship the gods and goddesses, sing the hymns and pray in different ways. They believe that they can fulfill their dreams and desires by worshipping there. There are lots of scenes and written documents in the temple and around the temple premises for the researchers in addition to the oral stories.



Source: Snapshots taken by the researcher in and around Adinath Temple in Chovar.

Devotees and other religious people love going to Adhinath Temple to worship there and to know about its mythic realities. In top of the temples there are *Gajurs* with bronze and copper structured *toran* lowered down from the main temple. *Gajurs* in the temple are center for attraction to the tourists and religious people. Cultural-religious groups are aware of their

socio-cultural values, their impact in the society, and utilization of the time and nowadays they are scrutinizing their activities.

Talking about Patan and Kirtipur's arts, culture, literature and the cultural history, they were populated since the rule of Gopal bamsi. Early residential of Kirtipur and Patan were Shrestha, Maharjan, Shakya, Nakarmi, Dulal, Kapali and they have some similarities and some differences in cultural arts, performances, activities etc. Kirtipur and Patan people have close attachment with the people living in other parts of the valley. Some of them were in attraction of Chanakya philosophy and Buddhism, too. Majority of the people from then society in Kirtipur and Patan follow Hinduism and craftsmanship also are based on the philosophy as Prayagman pradhan writes:

Kirtipur and Patan's attachment history is older than PashupatiNath's history. Talking about PashupatiNath, cow farmers (*gopal*) of Kirtipur used to say that there was a cow named Bahuni with them which used to go there regularly and put on milk there. People eagerly wanted to know that why the cow goes there regularly. After a long they found that there was a place of religious value and named as Pashupati and built the PashupatiNath temple. There is a residential area in Kirtipur named Sagal whereas Sa means cow and Gal or Ga means the place to keep the cows. King Dhana Bajra started people keeping in the community in Sagal. There is a water collection centre named 'Gopal Pokhari' where King Dhana Bajra used to teach and convince people. Cow farmers used to sit together and discuss about different things there. (*Kirtipurko*, 2)

Talking about Patan and Kirtipur's religious and socio-cultural history, in addition to Newars there are residential from Dulal, Kapali, Nakarmi communities, too who perform the cultural activities together with them. Patan and Kirtipur has a long history for rituals, cultural programs, political and socio-political study as writes Pradhan, ". . . there was a big stone below the *Chhithu Dhowaja* whereas Gorkha Captain Kalupandey was kept over the stone and chopped down there. Newars of Kirtipur spit there on the place upto now as a symbol of enmity" (*Kirtipurko*, 33). Many Newars do not believe on the saying that Kalu Pandey is a national hero who worked for the unification of Nepal and they say that he is a criminal who fought against innocent people and even cut their nose, too. It is better to investigate the historical clues and go through the historical records to find out the truth what is said and what is the bitter reality.

The differences between men and women construct two antithetical polar as superior men and inferior women among Newars in Patan and Kirtipur. This scheme includes dichotomies between rational/emotional, assertive/ passive, strong/weak, or public/private. These are strategic oppositions, which place ". . . men in the superior position of a hierarchy and women in the inferior position, as the second sex" (Best and Kellner, 1991). Wherever women are subordinated, and ". . . they seem to have recognized and protested that situation in some form" (Lerner, 1993). There is very little consent to be found, for example, in the fact that Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptain courtesan produced a widely influential model of the oriental women ". . . she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history" (Said, 2001). Women felt excluded economically, socially and politically in the past as written in Joshi's *Legends of Lalitpur and Related*

Tales but now days, there is a greater change because of an impact of literature.

Satya Mohan Joshi's *Legends of Lalitpur and Related Tales* depicts the arts, literature and cultural practices in the form of festivals and the Newari cultural activities- performances that represent visual images through the art, poetics and politics in their cultural representations. Folk literature around the world has helped in preserving the centuries old tales till the date and it is thought that culture would not have been represented in the folklore stories if there were not representative tales. Cultural practices in the legendary myths would have been lost long ago if there were no tales. Folk literature has immense contribution in keeping the glorious and dreadful past alive with the mixture of fact and fiction. This article explores how the folklores of Newar people representing their culture through their *Jatra* and *Naach*. Joshi's *Legends of Lalitpur and Related Tales* shows how the true folk legend is one of the keys to the people's beliefs, customs and ways of thinking. The *Jatra* and *Naach* as the performing arts influence on orature and folk literature. The Newars of Kathmandu valley possess many typical legends related to folk culture with their wealth of significance, meaning and sheer fascination which explore the historical and cultural significance of *Jatra* and *Naach* in representing the art and aesthetics which have been portrayed and also been inspired from many oral and written narratives about cultures.

*Kartik Naach* and *Bhoto Jatra* being based on Joshi's *Legends of Lalitpur and Related Tales* and *Lalitpur's Unique Heritage of Dance, Drama and Music and The Mysterious Jacket of Red Matchendra Nath*. *Kartik Naach* is based on myth and folklore which is performed in the side of Patan's Krishna Mandir, this *Naach* is like drama form which it is performed for more than a week based upon the legends, deities, myth and folktales. Another important festival celebrated by Newars is *Bhoto Jatra* which is exemplary festival that proves how the folklore has taken the form of major *Jatra*. This kind of performance is lively representation of the history and shows the power politics of then and now society. However, these cultural activities have created social well-being.

Various researches regarding the folklore, *Naach* and *Jatra* have been conducted previously. The rich cultural heritages of Newars have shaped the identity of its people. However, it has to be noted that the age itself 'creates' cultural heritages in the shaping of cultural identity that does is represented in the tales. M. M sadowski writes "The magical power of past does not lie only in the intrinsic beauty of what is being preserved, or survival of an age when towns were made by artisans, but above all in the identity they confer" ("Urban cultural heritage. . ." 141). The Newari culture which is rich in folklore have depicted their tales into artistic form of *Jatra* and *Naach*. Their identity has been reconstructed and represented through their culture over the time.

*Kartik Naach* is the live exemplary of Medieval drama as U.B. sijapati writes, "The medieval drama of the Malla period is a deprivation of the Sanskrit drama. So, basically its structure is similar. Its roots are deeply seated in the antiquities of Sanskrit theatre, or literature. Medieval Nepalese theatre boasts of a rich heritage, unaffected by any foreign influence" (*Katti pyakha: A case study* 41). Patan homes to Krishna Mandir is one of the masterpieces of the Hindu architecture inside the temple we can find the Avataars of Lord bishnu, Narshima is one among the

ten. During the month of Kartik, *Kartik Naach* is performed which shows the musical and dramatic performance of different deities and *Narshimha*. This *Naach* is performed in Dabali next to Krishna mandir. He further states "This drama is based on the ancient Literature *Harivamsa Purana*. It has two aspects religious or classical and *loka* or folk" (*Katti pyakha: A case study* 8).

Folklores, dances and music are connected with one another. Khyah folklore has a connection with several religious and cultural activities like Gufa Tradition. Being connected with each other these kinds of cultural and religious activities cannot be understood in isolation. Pradeep rai writes that "Therefore the world of spirits or ghosts is not one of wonder but of familiarity. The world of humans is only one of the multiple parallel worlds that work together to continue the process of Khyah and people. To the Newars, if one aspect of the knot is removed, the integrity of societal traditions is threatened, and all other aspects are weakened" (*Khyah the newari ghost* np). The interrelatedness and exchange of characters can be seen; one character of folklore can be seen in another folklore as well.

*Jatras* are other vibrant auspicious celebration of Newar community which is the mixer of religion and entertainment. The *Jatras* are performed so this is based on myth and folklore, the traditional music, dance, attire, feast, craftsmanship all the things are showcased in *Jatra*. The *Machindranath Jatra* of Patan for example is associated with many folktales. *Bhoto jatra* can be taken as the example, which is the last day of month-long festival. Many other folktales have been associated with the Machindranath regarding its nomadic aspects. Prem k. khatry writes:

The god moves back and forth between the two shrines, the only god in Nepal to have two dwellings at his disposal. When the sun goes to the northern hemisphere the god travels to north, when the sun goes to the southern hemisphere he goes to south, Bungamati. The god's movement according to the sun is important and symbolic. The sun causes the season to change from one to next and provides water, warmth and other elements of life. ("Rain for the drought: . . ." 100)

This article marks a point of departure from the existing researches which concerns with the cultural, ethical, morale and contextual dimension of the folklore *Jatra* and *Naach*. The previous researchers have not dealt with the issues of representation including power, language, knowledge and truth. The new thing that I am going to deal in this paper will be the influence of folklore in art and literature of Newars. Regarding folklore John storey view that "The collecting of, and the theorizing about, the culture of folks occurs in two historical periods. The first period when the objects of collection were "ballad" and "folk tales"" (*Inventing popular culture* 2). The second period (when the objects of collection and the study was the "folk songs". These ballads, folk tales and folk songs were prominent in Newar society and we will discuss how they were represented.

*Jatra* and *Naach* were started by King or let's say the authoritative person without the power they were unable to represent folklore in drama or festival. "The Kati Pyakhan was first introduced about 350 years ago by King Siddhi narsingh malla and later on his sons King Srinivas malla and grandson King Yog narendra malla added more plays" (Joshi 80). In



addition to the tales, this paper is based on direct observation and the interview questionnaires' method and photographs as the primary source. This paper also uses various citation from the news articles and journals for bringing out the fact.

### Theory and methods

This study centers on qualitative and quantitative methods of mythic realities on the arts, culture, literature and the history of Patan and Kirtipur Newar people. Literary application on social practices is working as a kind of transforming tool that makes a change in the society as well as in an individual's life raising the major question on the ritual practices of the society. Every step for the social and socio-cultural changes takes places and time as it happens in Kirtipur and Patan. Defining the cultural studies, Stuart hall in *The west and the rest: discourse and power* writes, "Cultural Studies is an approach to studying culture that lies at the intersection between the social sciences, most notably sociology and the humanities. As a non-disciplinary study, cultural study draws ideas from diverse fields and academic traditions"(63). Stuart hall's principle in cultural studies is important for decoding cultural oppression whereas American pop culture represents experiences of power.

Cultural studies at the University of birmingham, England came strongly in 1963 with the views to study all the social and socio-cultural activities. British academician Herbert richard hoggart born 24 September 1918 started studying the society and social-activities from cultural perspective. His views are different from Marx's ideology and class relations and Raymond william's who followed the theoretical path of Roland barthes, George lukas and Michael foucault. Merriam-webster, America's most-trusted online dictionary 2002 writes, "Semiotics is the study of signs and cultural studies that approaches all cultures" (54). Hemingway focuses on the function of language and meaning produced differently in linearity and syntactic relations. Therefore, cultural study studies about multiple aspects of the society and socio-cultural activities.

On the basis of above studies key concepts of cultural studies are representation, materialism, non-reductionism, articulation, power exercise, popular culture, text and reader's subjectivity and identity with an interpretation of the field drawing on theories and practices from a range of Humanities and social sciences disciplines that seeks to investigate the ways in which cultures produce and are produced. *American Cultural Studies: Introduction to Routledge* published in February 4, 2016 writes, "Cultural Studies is exploring the central themes in Modern American Cultural Studies and it is discussing how these themes can be interpreted in American culture" (78). In relation to the arts, literature, culture and society-based activities and history women, ethnic people, *janjati* etc. are the unburied proofs to study and analyze the arts, literature and the cultural connectivity.

Like Krishna mandir and Adinath temple, Goddess temple and Jalvinayak temple in Patan are well known religious places nearby the Patan durbar whereas the people continue religious activities in honor and they have great trust on gods and goddess. Special hymns and other activities continue on every Tuesday with belief to live the healthy and happy life for a long but they kill the innocent animals and birds in every Chaitra dashain, Vijaya dashami and other special days, especially on the night of Astami and the morning of Nawami.

The days are known as the night of *Kalratri* and Ramnawami. Some of the glimpses of *puja* there in Jalvinayak-Goddesses temple are captured below.



Source: Snapshots taken by the researcher there inside and outside of the Jalvinayak-Goddess temple in Patan.

The above-mentioned activities of the people there in the temple premises and side by the "*Kots* and *Kali* expose not only the religious activities but also the human atrocities on earth and animal" (Gautam, M. 27). People enjoy *bali* of the animal, hunt the birds, concretize the land, destroy the forest-cut down the trees and expose their atrocity on earth and animal and so multiple methods and materials are applied as theoretical-methodical applications. Cultural performances have special cultural connections in mythical reflections with the views and sights as Mars fishwick writes, ". . . the mind trains the eye" (*Seven pillars of popular culture*, 14). Cultural performances in this sense are the part of arts and literature that provides the content for cultural studies which interlink with social and socio-cultural activities. "Cultural activities are mysterious and they should be studied from mythical perspective for the investigation of social and socio-cultural meanings in relation to the art, culture and literature of the Newars" (Storey, J. 32). Tudals are structured differently and carved erotically. Plates and other utensils are attached on the wall. Majority of the Newars go to the temple almost every morning, observe the tudals, roofs and other artistic things, pray standing in front of the temple, do rituals with *puja-path* and get blessed with holy water.

### Result of the study

Folklores, tales and craftsmanship related with the rituals of Newars in Patan and Kirtipur have symbolic meanings. Performances in *Jatras*, *puja/path* and other ritual activities in their homes and outsides in religious places follow traditional methods in various communities as written in Joshi's *Legends of Latlipur and Related Tales* but there are some changes in educated communities of Patan and Kirtipur. Researcher studied about the causes and consequences of environmental and cultural impacts that helped in crafting rituals and socio-cultural activities to find out the changes that brought. Study of Newari activities from birthday to name keeping, bel-marriage, *gufa* system, *jatra* and funeral ceremonies process of Patan and Kirtipur Newars are really rich in continuing the arts and craftsmanship that is the subject based result of the study.

## Conclusions

Cultural activities connected with the legendary tales and myth making of arts, crafts and literature in the Newar community people are mysterious and it is important to investigate the mythic realities through cultural perspectives. This article centers on norms and values of the arts, culture and literature of the society. Talking about Patan and Kirtipur Newar's cultural activities from Lichhavi, Malla and Shah Dynasties up to now are changing in different ways as the tales and other referential documents show but they are still mysterious in cultural practices and so mythical clues are to be applied to expose the Newar arts, crafts, literature and culture. Mythical knowledge helps to study the society and socio-cultural mysteries. Mythical aspect is key element to study about a society, social norms and values and socio-cultural activities of the people, places and things in connection to the cultural study. This researcher studied the mysterious problems occurred among the people in Newar community in Patan and Kirtipur from multidimensionality and tried to carry out the possible answers with mythic references.

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