SANA GUTHI AND THE NEWARS: Impacts of Modernization on Traditional Social Organizations

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DEDICATED TO ALL THE *NEWARS*

"Newa: Jhi Newa: he Jui"

We Newars, will always be Newars

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ABSTRACT

This thesis entitled "SANA GUTHI AND THE NEWARS: Impacts of Modernization on Traditional Social Organization" tends to highlight on the traditional social organization being practiced by the Newar people of Kathmandu valley of Nepal since the ancient times. Newar people are regarded as the indigenous population of Nepal inhabiting the Kathmandu valley since the pre-historic times. For the study, a locality named Panga of Kirtipur city has been chosen which is inhabited mainly by the Jyapu castes of Newar people who are traditionally agriculturists according to the caste division formed during the 14th century.

Guthi, the traditional social organization, can be classified into various categories according to their functionalities among which, Sana Guthi is regarded most popular and the important one. Among the various functions performed by the Sana Guthi, death rituals are regarded extremely important from religious as well as social point of view. During death, numerous religious rituals have to be conducted properly by the family as well as Sana Guthi in order to ensure the soul to rest in peace. Not only death rituals, various religious festivals also have to be conducted by the Sana Guthi. In this study, two of such festivals conducted by Shree Bhairabnath Ta: Guthi of Panga have been studied in details.

The study has been conducted in relation to modernization; for which the changes that have occurred or occurring these days have also been observed closely. Impacts of modernization are leading to the change of such rituals. Not only rituals, modernization is leading the whole society towards a new dimension. So, basically this study aims to identify the impacts of modernization on Newar Communities and such traditional social organizations being practiced by them.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Focus of the Study

This study aims to focus on the *Newar* indigenous community. Similar to other indigenous communities of Southern Asia, this community has not gained much of international focus like those of Europe, America and Australia; but still has its own distinct identity and way of life. In this study, various characteristics of that particular community, in terms of culture and tradition, are tried to be elaborated along with the consequences of changes brought due to modernization. Specifically, a kind of traditional social organization is focused for the study which is termed as *Guthi*. The functioning of such organization has been tried to be elaborated along with the importance of such organizations among the *Newar* communities. Additionally, ritual performances of those organizations are also dealt in detail. Finally, the modernization factors causing the change in such rituals and the organization, including the people themselves, are being discussed.

1.2 Background for the Study

The term "indigenous" has been widely used recently in International Political discourse, Human Rights and Anthropology. If the numbers of indigenous peoples across the world is taken into account, it is quite surprising. Indigenous peoples are spread across the globe from Arctic to the South Pacific. At a rough estimate, some 370 million indigenous populations are found spread over 70 countries (UN Factsheet). But it is important how to identify who are indigenous and who are not. Thus, we have to look into standard definition. United Nations, according to working definitions of Martinez Cobo, defines:

> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system. (United Nations, 2009)

Many anthropological scholars believe that some of the most talked about indigenous peoples are the Indians of America, The Sami of Northern Europe (Norway, Sweden,

Finland and Russia), the Inuits of Canada, The Aborigines and Torres state Islanders of Australia and Maori of New Zealand (Factsheet no. 9, Rev 1). Other indigenous peoples of World are not getting much exposure and recognition in the Global Arena, especially those of the developing countries of Africa and Asia. There are numerous indigenous communities surviving in the southern part of Asia (India, Bangladesh, Nepal etc) which are way behind in the race of recognition and achieving their indigenous rights. In Nepal alone, there are 59 categories of Indigenous peoples, some of which are still living their nomadic lives struggling for their basic rights, while some are standing strong on their cultural values and distinctive identity.

Regardless of the present situation of the indigenous peoples, if we take a look at the past ages, all over the World, Indigenous peoples have a long history of domination, discrimination and colonization; deprived from their basic rights of being human beings; and have been the subject to massive violence, 'outright massacres', 'ethnic cleansing' and 'pervasive humiliation' (Eide, 2006: 157). Since then, they were fighting continuously for their rights and for their identity. Even in such extreme conditions, they have been, to a large extent, able to protect their tradition, religion, culture and their distinctiveness from other peoples. In case of Nepal, though the country never faced colonization and discrimination from other outsiders, the indigenous communities suffered from internal colonization in the name of "National unification drive" (Bhattachan, 2008: 1). But, despite such invasion and attempts for assimilation to the strong majority cultures, most of the Nepalese Indigenous Communities were able to maintain their identity and preserve their cultural values and traditions. Among them, the first name approaches is of *Newar* Community.

"Newah jhi Newah He Jui" – We *Newar*s will always be *Newar*s (Maharjan, 2002: 67; Shakya and Bajracharya, 2008: 44). This is the main theme on which the *Newar* people are having belief, uniting and preserving their traditional culture. Though they have maintained their traditional values and beliefs throughout those difficult situations, however, are assimilating knowingly or unknowingly to other cultures. Over the years, numerous factors of modernization have caused changes to their way of living. Nevertheless, the traditional social organization "*Guthi*", one of the integral elements of

Newar society, is taken as a symbolic representation of their ethnic indigenous identity. In the current situation; as the matter of fact; degenerating trends have been witnessed regarding such organizations and has been overshadowed by factors of modernization. The influence of "Western Culture" is high in developing countries like Nepal. In addition, the dominant Indian Culture and similar culture of mainstream population are also influencing heavily on indigenous populations like the *Newar*.

1.3 Research Question and Objectives of the Study

The whole thesis revolves around the *Guthi* system of the *Newar* people and modernization. Thus, it attempts to explore the influence of modernization on such traditional social organizations. The research tends to highlight on the role of the *Guthi* system among the *Newar* communities and has the main research question **"How do the factors of modernization make impacts on the Traditional Social Organization *Guthi*?"**

Based on the main research question, there are certain specific objectives set for the study:

- To observe *Newar* Society in Detail
- To observe the *Sana Guthi* system in details and its functioning
- To observe the rituals conducted by the *Sana Guthi*
- To find out the factors of modernization and how they are making impacts on the Society and ultimately on *Sana Guthi*

1.4 Theoretical Discussions

In this section, I have tried to focus on the concepts of tradition and modernity. Additionally, modernization in relation to traditional culture has been tried to be discussed.

1.4.1 Conceptualizing Tradition and Modernity

Tradition, literally meaning 'something handed over' in Latin, seems to have an equivalent meaning of 'inheritance' in the slowly changing societies (Graburn, 2000: 6). Yet, concept of tradition has not been confined to this meaning only, rather has been used as a

relational concept for different sets of phenomena like occupation, culture, knowledge, handicraft, rights etc (Bjerkli, 1996: 3-4). For instance, much of concepts like traditional knowledge, food, dance, culture, music, organization etc are widely used in everyday life. However, the concept of tradition can be defined as, "a category that individuals and societies ascribe to expressions, beliefs and behaviors in the present to add value for the future (Barfield, 1997: 140).

Regarding modernity, Anthony Giddens (1998: 94) describes modernity as a shorthand term for modern society or industrial civilization. According to him,

> "Portrayed in more detail, it is associated with (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as open to transformation, by human intervention; (2) a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy. Largely as a result of these characteristics, modernity is vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order. It is a society—more technically, a complex of institutions—which, unlike any preceding culture, lives in the future, rather than the past" (Giddens, 1998: 94).

While referring to modernity, Reinhard Bendix (1967: 292) stated that, the common sense of 'modern' encompasses the whole era since the 18th century when the new inventions provided the technical basis for the industrialization of the societies. According to him, *"the economic transformation of England coincided with the movement of independence in the American colonies and the creation of nation-state in French revolution. Accordingly, the word 'modern' also evokes associations with the democratization of societies, especially the destruction of inherited privilege and the declaration of equal rights of citizenship."* The traditional societies have certain elements in common like the social structure marked by inequalities based on kinship ties, hereditary privilege and established authority along with the emphasis on a hierarchy of inherited positions. Modernization seems to be the process of destruction of such features, emphasizing on the rise of consequent equality (ibid: 293).

1.4.2 Tradition vs. Modernity

In a linear theory of social change, "Tradition" and "Modernity" are used as the polar opposites (Gusfield, 1967: 351). Traditional values and its institutions are presented as problems in the efforts of a human society towards progress. During the European period of enlightenment, tradition was considered as opposite to modernity and obstacle to social progress. With the rise of social evolutionary theory in the mid-nineteenth century, the concepts of tradition and traditional society were used as a baseline against which to understand social change and modern society (Graburn, 2000: 7).

On the other hand, according to Gusfield (1967: 352-57), the assumption that tradition is unchanged past which acts as an obstacle on the way of modernity is not true in the sense that it is not static and has been open to change even before the rise of modernity and with the purposeful planned change. Tradition and modernity can exist side by side harmoniously to the extent that one may support and reinforce the other (ibid). Similarly, Bjerkli (1996: 13) also states, *"this idea of tradition also emerges as a reflection on modernity in a modern perspective and as a variable in explanations of the modern"*, implying that tradition must not be seen as something opposite and inharmonious to modernity.

The idea 'west-modern versus rest-tradition' is historically emerged roughly during the period of the sixteenth century and onwards after the disintegration of feudalism in Europe (Hall, 2002: 57). The 'west' means a society which is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular and modern, while the rest are the opposite ones. This idea is much more applicable to Asian perspective, especially South Asian Countries, where modernization is symbolized as Westernization (Shrestha, 2003: 3-4). However, this concept is not clear and it is not wise to implement westernization as synonymous to modernization. Westernization means that *"a certain indigenous cultural element of traditional East is replaced by penetrating western element, and the functional role of the former is taken over by the latter"*, while, modernization just means to remold the cultural system into a new mode by gradual or sudden change (Naofusa, 1983). Thus, in

that sense, westernization can be meant as modernization, but modernization cannot just be meant by westernization, rather can be termed just as a part of modernization.

1.4.3 Traditional culture and modernization

Traditional culture, in broader terms, indicates all human activities like religion, philosophy, moral standards, society, history, rituals, music, dance, literature, art etc that reflect their cultural and social identity and that have been preserved, learned and transmitted orally, by imitation or by any other means in a given community or group over a long period of time (Naofusa, 1983; UNESCO, 1989). It tends to define traditional culture, in general, as a part of culture that represents the past and used in the changing modern world at present.

According to a report developed by the Chinese Ministry of Culture for the 7th Annual Ministerial Meeting (AMM) of the International Network on Cultural Policy (INCP) (2004), the developed countries seem to understand traditional culture from the perspective of cultural heritage and ancient arts. However, developing countries use existing customs, religion and language to understand traditional culture. The same report suggests; giving an example of Mauritius; that traditional culture or cultural traditions have two levels; first one being the culture from their ancestors; while the second one being the traditions born following the arrival and subsequent settlement of immigrants from China, India, Africa and Europe since the 19th century. Here, it tends to define traditions (in terms of culture) as something that are also acquired from the outsiders. Further, the report suggests the relationship between traditional culture and modernization as relative. All non-modern or even non-contemporary things can be traditional. "Modern" is referred as industrialization, urbanization and market economy as well as the related ethical and political systems. Therefore, those relatively marginalized matters in modern society can all be generally included in the category of traditional culture. All in all, what can be extracted is, traditional culture has been classified into tangible and the intangible ones. Different cultural heritages of historical importance can also be termed as a part of traditional culture which falls into tangible category; whereas different traditional living styles, religion, rituals, language etc can be termed as the intangible ones (ibid).

Now, talking about modernization, mostly it is connected with science and technology which is making human life easier and efficient. Even if modernization is necessary to improve human life, it will be indispensable for Eastern nations to maintain their traditional cultures too. Traditional cultures need neither to reject modernization nor to be absorbed in the streams of modernization. Instead, these two have to be harmonized and complemented by each other (Naofusa, 1983).

That was one thought, but there are other views as well, which argue that the impacts of modernization act negatively in terms of traditional culture; especially, in terms of group identity. Modernization can produce countervailing effects on cultural orientation, eroding orientation to some aspects of traditional culture. Traditional culture denotes language, customs, religion, and rituals which are the distinct factors that determine the identity of any group. Especially in the context of Indigenous groups, these are the vital factors that enable them to be different from other groups. The life style, conduct and thought, expression of feelings and their materialization which have been assimilated by a nation or people for a long time is called traditional culture. The behavioral characteristics, songs, music, musical instruments, plays, festivals, important occasions, processions that reflect the life and spirit of any people are elements of culture (Bajracharya, 1998: 2). Thus, it can be said that traditional culture is one of the core elements of any traditional society which acts as its identity. And, when modernization plays its role over traditional cultures of such communities, then definitely it will affect on the distinct identity of them. Though, modernization has made the human life easier and efficient, it can act negatively in case of traditional culture resulting into cultural loss. There are numerous examples where in the name of modernization, a lot of traditional societies had to suffer with the loss of their traditional culture and eventually losing their ethnic identity. Bhattachan (2008: 18-20) has argued for above statement in case of Nepal, stating that, in the name of modernization, the traditional societies of Nepal had to suffer numerous times which started from the so called 'territorial unification' resulting into loss of their independence and gradually losing their rights to land, water, forests, mines, rivers and pastures. Eventually, that resulted into loss of their language, religion, traditional culture and indigenous knowledge system.

1.4.4 Focus on the Case

The *Newar* society can be termed as one of the traditional societies having typical traditional characteristics. Traditional culture of *Newar* people is equipped with an additional element of their traditional social organization *Guthi*; that has become an integral part of the *Newar* lives; and thus a part of the tradition. That's why it is said that *"A Newar is born in Guthi, lives his life in Guthi, and dies in Guthi".* [1]

While it is related to the tradition, obviously, the other side of the coin has to be discussed along with. Modernity, as the polar opposite of the tradition (Gusfield, 1967: 351), in a way can be conceptualized as the loss of tradition (Anttonen *in* Bjerkli, 1996: 12). In fact, these two concepts of tradition and modernity are interdependent; one should be used to define the other. Even it is said that the concept of tradition emerges with the emergence of the concept of modernity. Without defining modernity, how does one can define tradition? Thus, in *Guthi* also, the tradition is followed up by the modernity making impacts by gradually changing and minimizing its significance over the lives of those indigenous peoples. In present context, it has become a compulsion to identify these impacts of modernization on such key factor that plays important role on the society of *Newar* people.

On one hand, *Guthi* is regarded as the tool for preserving and practicing traditional culture, while on the other hand, it can also be regarded as the traditional knowledge that the indigenous community possesses; the indigenous traditional knowledge that is being used to maintain social hierarchy, structure and social harmony and have been transferred from generation to successive generations. The necessity of the indigenous knowledge and the fundamental rights to it has been also advocated for the cultural survival of the particular indigenous community (Mauro and Hardison, 2000: 1263). Keeping in mind of this necessity, the detailed study of this particular indigenous knowledge behind this traditional social organization and its functioning is required.

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[1] A folk saying, anonymous

All in all, it can be said that even if modernization process is proved beneficial to other parts of human life, it has been something that acts negatively for traditional cultures. In case of *Newar* communities, *Guthi* organizations are the tools for conducting their traditional and religious rituals, which if comes under the shadow of modernization; there is huge possibility of change and even loss of such rituals. This may eventually lead these societies to lose their distinct identity.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into seven chapters in total. First chapter is about the introduction of the thesis illustrating its objectives and research question, along with the theoretical discussions based on the topic of the study. Second chapter includes the methodological approaches that were implemented for the data collection and also including fieldwork experiences and challenges met during the period. Chapter three introduces *Newar* people and their society; including their history and origin, their caste system, settlement patterns, their cultural aspects and religious rituals and that of life passage. Chapter four is about the traditional social organization of the *Newar* people (*Guthi*) which illustrates its nature, types and functioning. It also highlights on a special kind of *Guthi*, *Sana Guthi*, which is regarded as the most important one for the *Newar* people. Chapter five deals with the death rituals of the *Newar* society performed by the *Sana Guthi*, which visualizes the rituals, followed by the discussion of the changes brought up in the rituals due to the factors of modernization. Chapter six discusses some other rituals and festivals where *Sana Guthi* is involved and the modernization impacts on those. And finally, chapter seven summarizes the whole thesis and concludes on overall impact of different modernization factors upon the rituals, *Guthi* and the Society as well. It also tries to highlight on how modernization should be conceptualized in order to promote traditional culture.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This segment focuses on the methodology that is used for the conduction of the study. The various data collection tools and techniques implemented for the study, the details about the study area and fieldwork experiences are tried to be discussed.

2.1 The Approach

This ethnographic study was conducted on the basis of qualitative approach. The fieldwork was conducted from May 22 to August 02, 2009. During the period, one of the core areas of *Newar* Societies was visited and observed. During the fieldwork, in-depth interviews were conducted to the members of the *Guthi*. In addition, few of the *Guthi* rituals conducted were also observed and important literatures were also gathered. This study follows descriptive research design, by which the *Newar* society is tried to observe through the structure and functions of their social organization and described accordingly.

2.2 Area of Study

Kathmandu Valley is the cultural and political hub of Nepal, central point of the economy and the place where the *Newar* people belong to. They are the original inhabitants of the Valley comprising four major cities Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Kirtipur. In the past, these 4 major cities were autonomously ruled by the *Newar* kings until the process of national unification drive by the King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha Kingdom in 18th century (Bhattachan, 2008).

This valley hosts an UNESCO World Heritage Sites composed of seven different Monument Zones which display the full range of historic and artistic achievements for which the Kathmandu Valley is world famous. The seven include the Durbar Squares of *Hanuman Dhoka* (Kathmandu), Lalitpur and Bhaktapur, the Buddhist stupas of

Swayambhu and *Bauddhanath* and the Hindu temples of *PashupatiNath* and *Changu Narayan*. [2]
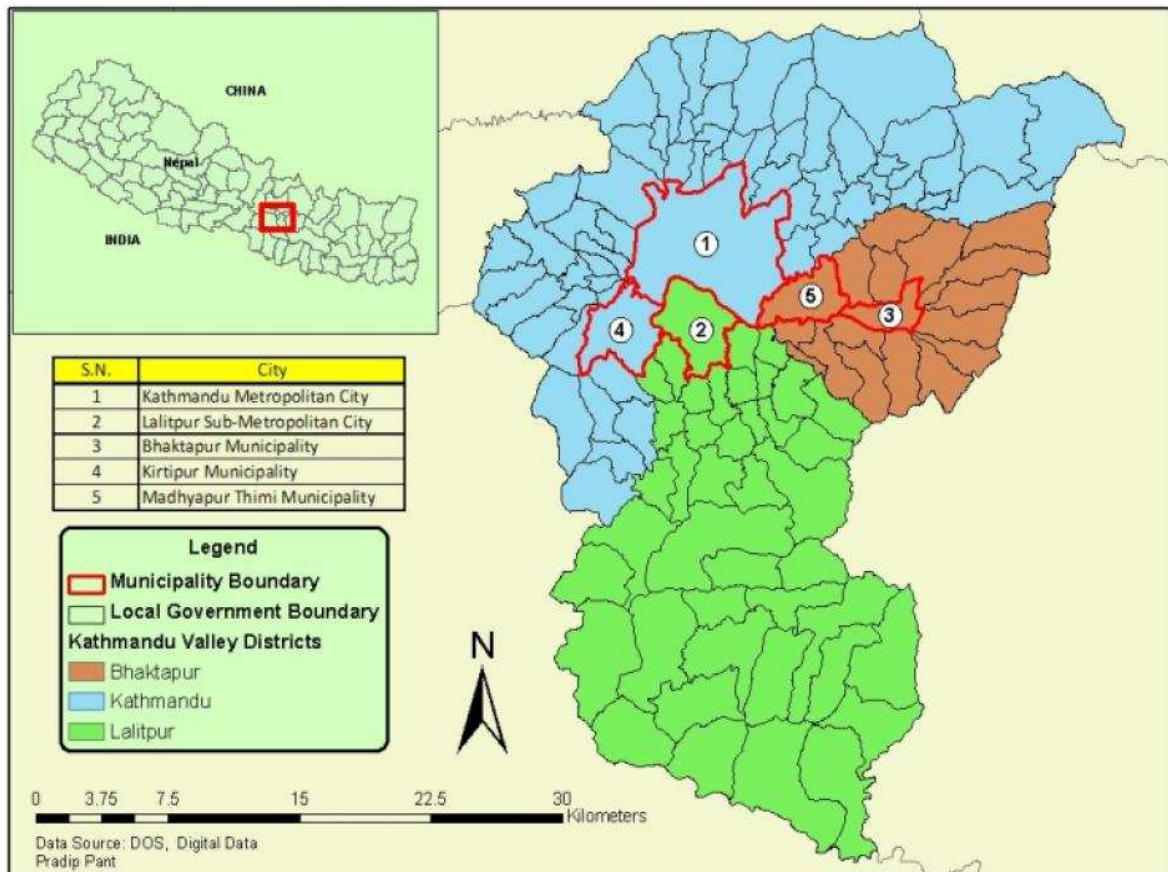
Fig 1. illustration of Kathmandu Valley with its 5 municipalities
Source:
http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/resources/seminars/Urbanization_Seminar/Kathmandu_Valley_Districts_and_Local_Governments_Map.pdf *accessed on* September 19, 2010

The study area chosen for the fieldwork was one of the ancient cities of Kathmandu Valley i.e. Kirtipur. It is termed as the city of Glory which is illustrated by the name itself; "Kirti" means Glory and "Pur" means city; so literally meaning "the Glorious City"; and locally known as "Kipoo" among the *Newars*. It comprises a population of 40,835 (21,686 males and 19149 females) with 9,487 households, majorities of them being the *Newars* and the rest – people from the mainstream society (Nepal in Figures, 2008). As the National education center "Tribhuvan University" is located in this area, people from

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[2] Based on UNESCO world heritage list abstracted from
http://whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=31&id_site=121

across the country come to this place for higher studies. Furthermore, the rate of immigration for business purpose is increasing day by day due to its demanding market values. Hence, various cultures from all over the country mix in this place and that's why it is one of the vulnerable areas for the impacts on the *Newari* culture.

Within the city of *Kirtipur*, there are various settlements, some being typical *Newari* ones where as some being the localities of *Brahmins* and *Chhetris*, and there are few newer settlements having mixture of all. Among those settlements, *Panga* is one of the typical *Newari* settlements of Kirtipur, which is also believed to be one of the oldest.
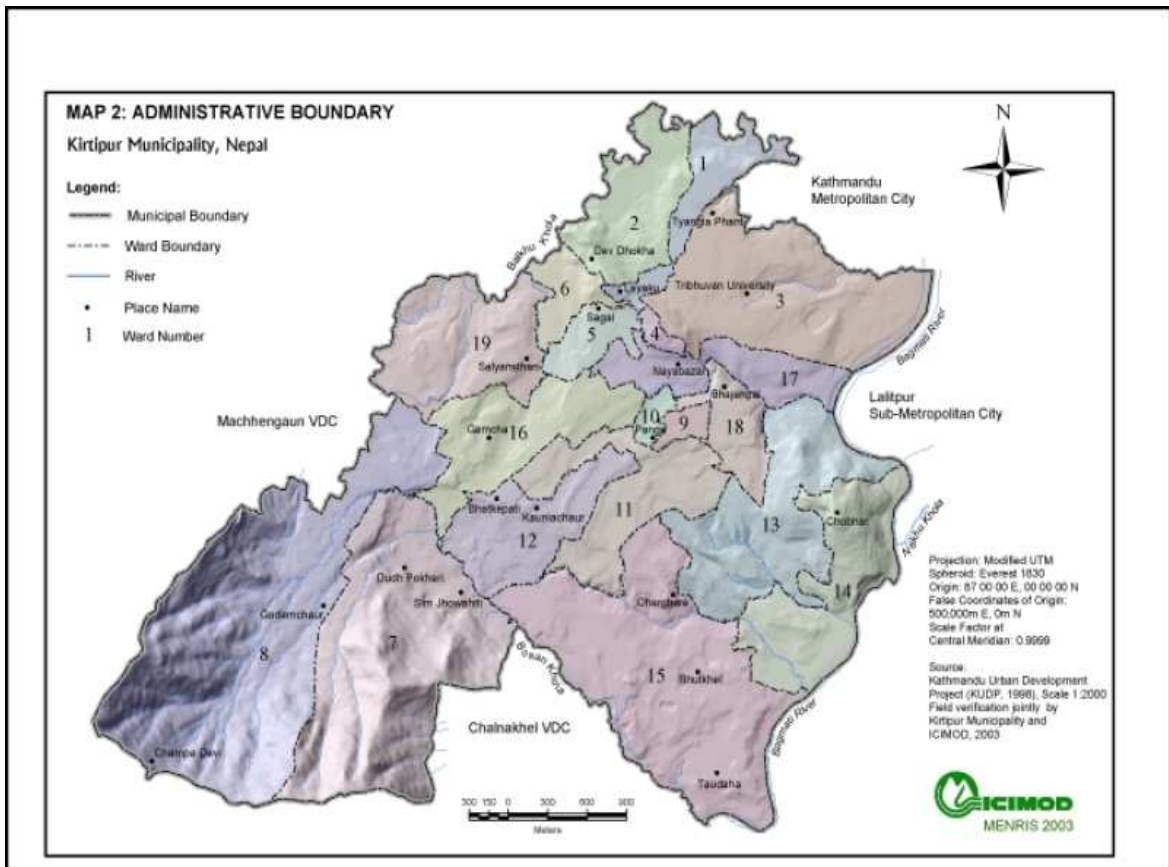
Fig 2: Administrative map of Kirtipur Municipality

Source:
http://www.fao.org/geonetwork/srv/en/graphover.show?id=33780&fname=kirt_admin_bd.png&access=public *accessed on* October 10, 2010

2.2.1 *Panga* - Locality at a glance

Panga; being the ancient name *Shankhapur*; covers ward no. 9, 10 and 11 including some parts of wards 12 and 18, out of a total of 19 different wards of the municipality. The shape of this settlement is identical with the head of an elephant[3], whereas some argue that it is identical with a shell which is termed as *Shankha* in *Newari* language, and thus the name *Shankhapur* was given. It can be described as the typical *Newari* settlement having the majority of *Newar* population, 90 % to be precise, along with very few people from *Chhetri* caste (immigrants from other localities)[4]. In most of the settlements, various caste groups within the *Newar* community are found. But in case of *Panga*, most of the people are from *Jyapu*[5] caste, the negligible amount of people from *Shrestha*[6], *Nya*[7] and *Kusle*[8] castes. None of the higher castes like *Bajracharya* (Buddhist priest), *Rajopadhyaya* (Hindu priest), *Shakya* (Goldsmith) etc. are found; which defines the uniqueness of this settlement. Even in the majority caste of *Jyapu*, only *Maharjan* and *Dangol* are found out of various sub-castes of *Jyapu* caste group.

While dividing the locality according to their traditional social organization *Guthi* (particularly *Sana Guthi*, which has territorial boundary), there are 6 different *Guthi* organizations in *Panga*. The first and biggest one being *Shree Bhairabnath Ta: Guthi*, which has a total of 520 *Guthiyaars* that means 520 households are included in this *Guthi*. Second one is known as *Chi: Guthi* (or *Sikuchhe Guthi*) which has a total of 300 *Guthiyaars*. Third one is known as *Pukhusi Guthi* having 200 *Guthiyaars*. Fourth one is the *Guthi* of *Shrestha* caste, having 26 *Guthiyaars*. Remaining two belong to the lower caste groups *Nya* and *Kusle* having negligible number of *Guthiyaars*. Since, one household can be affiliated to only one *Sana Guthi*, hence, it can be calculated that, the locality of *Panga* consists of about 1050 to 1070 households.

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[3] [3] based on http://www.rekel.nl/water/nepal_workshop/panga.htm *accessed on* October 19, 2010

[5] *Jyapu* castes are *Newar* people who are classified as the farmers according to their traditional occupations
[6] Higher *Newari* caste , traditionally merchants
[7] Lower caste, traditionally butchers
[8] Lower caste, also known as jogi

2.2.2 *Shree Bhairabnath Ta: Guthi* at a glance

The specific *Guthi* chosen for the study was *Shree Bhairabnath Ta: Guthi,* being practiced by the *Jyapu* castes of *Newar* Community. The sub-castes found under this *Guthi* are *Maharjan* and *Dangol*. This *Guthi* consists of 520 households with 23 family ancestor branches, 8 *Thakali*[9] and one working committee including 9 people; one as the president and called *Naya*[10] and the rest being active members *Bahidaar*[11]. The rest of the members of the *Guthi* are the *Guthiyaar*[12]. It is believed that this *Guthi* has been in practice since the establishment of settlement during ancient times for which no evidences are found. But the written history of this *Guthi* is found dated on 1844 AD[13].

2.3 Nature and Sources of Data

"Primary data is as near to the truth that we can get about things and events" (Walliman, 2006). Definitely, observing a certain thing/event or asking about it directly to the targeted groups gets on nearer to the fact than reading what others have written. Secondary sources of data also have their own significances as they provide opportunity to compare the information from different sources and analyze different interpretations on the same phenomenon or event (ibid). Both primary as well as secondary data sources have virtually a balanced role to play for this study. Various data collection tools and techniques were implied in order to collect primary as well as secondary data.

2.4 Data Collection tools and techniques

To fulfill the demands generated by the research objective, qualitative methodology was implemented. What a *Guthi* system is, what is the knowledge behind its functioning and what are the significances of it; how modernization is making impacts on the *Guthi* system and on the *Newar* Society; what are the key factors that are acting as the tools for those impacts - These sorts of queries were the focal points and attempted to be answered. And for that, it relied on the certain qualitative approaches identified by

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[9] The Leaders of the *Guthi* on the Basis of age – generally, 8 eldest persons of the *Guthi* are chosen as the thakalis

[10] "Naya" means the President of the working committee

[11] "Bahidaar" means the active members of the *Guthi* in the working committee

[12] "*Guthiyaar*" are the ordinary members of the *Guthi*

[13] As responded by the member of working committee of that *Guthi*

Bryman (2004: 267-68) like informal in-depth interviews, participant observation and focus group discussions as primary sources along with the analysis of texts and documents as secondary sources.

2.4.1 **Interviews:** In-depth interviews were prioritized on the basis of the topic guide prepared before leaving for the fieldwork. The respondents were categorized into three groups; first ones were informants from the Working Committee and other responsible persons of the *Guthi* like *Naya*, *Bahidaar* and *Thakali*. Second category included the *Guthiyaars,* who were above 45 and the last category included the youngsters from the age of 17 to 28. To the first group of respondents, specific questions related to the *Guthi*, its functioning and the activities and participation on the rituals and festivals were asked. While, to the other two groups, general questions on their perspectives on those festivals and rituals were asked. During the fieldwork, 21 in-depth interviews were conducted.

2.4.2 **Participant observation:** *Guthi* has an active part to play in death rituals of *Newar* Society which was tried to observe closely. Another *Guthi* ritual observed was the annual worshipping of the "Lord Bishnu"[14] conducted by "Shree Bhairabnath Ta: *Guthi*". But due to time frame, some important rituals were missed out as those rituals were scheduled for the months of September, October, November and December. However, information on one of the most important festival for the locality, *Bishnudevi-Balkumari Jatra*, was gathered through in-depth interviews.

2.4.3 **Group Discussion:** An informal discussion was conducted among young adults of the locality which included the *Newars* and non-*Newars* as well. It included the topics such as the influence of *Newari* culture among other cultures and vice versa, comparison between the *Newar* society and the mainstreaming society, and the modernization factors affecting the individual cultures.

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[14] Lord Bishnu is one of the Hindu Gods

2.4.4 Secondary Data Sources: Five editions of the Journal "Journal of *Newar* Studies" (published annually in the United States) were accessed which is an important source for scientific works on the *Newars*. In addition, numerous books and articles written by the national anthropologists and scholars, along with some literatures written by International Scholars were beneficial for the study. Among those international literatures, the major ones were "Contested Hierarchies" by David N. Gellner and Declan Quigley (1995), "*Newar* Society" by Gerrard Toffin (2007), "The Ritual Composition of Sankhu" by Bal Gopal Shrestha (2002), "The *Newars*" by Gopal Singh Nepali (1965), "People of Nepal" by Dor Bahadur Bista (1967) and "Festivals of Nepal" by Mary M. Anderson (2005). Other documents were collected from the University Library of Tribhuvan University and online databases, where some study reports on *Newar* societies and the *Guthi* were found. The statistical data required for the study was obtained from the population census of 2001 and "Nepal in Figures" published by the Government based on population census 2001(the data later than that does not exist).

2.5 Obstacles and challenges in data collection

This fieldwork was undertaken under numerous challenges and obstacles among which, political instability was one of the major obstacles and challenges for the fieldwork. Nepal, being a young republic country, it still has various unsolved political issues and the clash among the political parties, which was creating numerous strikes and awful situations. A 15 day long strike was the most affecting one, due to which planned focus group discussion was cancelled. However, an informal group discussion was conducted.

Another major obstacle was the time frame of the fieldwork. As the *Guthi* rituals are performed round the year, and the fieldwork duration was of about two and a half months. Thus, it was not possible to observe all of the *Guthi* rituals closely, however, few of them were observed, and the rest were collected as information during the interviews and from the secondary sources as well.

Not only the time frame, but also the season was a major challenge as the duration for fieldwork was the busy season for the *Jyapu Newar* Castes. It was the season for rice plantation and all people were in the fields almost every day, and that's why it was difficult for interviewing the people. Most of the interviews were taken either in the morning before they left for the field or in the evening after their return from field.

Only one funeral procession occurred during the fieldwork which was observed on the funeral site only; not in the house of the deceased, though the information was gathered properly during the interviews. In addition, I had some misconceptions about the rituals which were proved wrong during the fieldwork. Likewise, I had an initial assumption that there would be written procedures for the rituals and festivals conducted by the *Guthi*. But, my initial assumptions were proved wrong. These sorts of knowledge of ritual activities are transferred orally; no such procedures were written ever.

Another challenge faced was the translation problems as the interviews were taken either in Nepali or in *Newari*. Certain terminologies are not available in English and also, if tried to translate the sentences literally, whole meaning of the sentence produced becomes different than the intended one.

2.6 Myself as a Researcher - being an Insider, acting as an Outsider

As I, myself, belong to the *Jyapu* caste of *Newar* community, I have experienced the rituals and observed the festivals quite closely since my childhood. Even numerous times, I have actively participated on such rituals and festivals. But, it was never so important for me to know those rituals as it is now. This study has helped me to know about my community, my locality and my culture and traditions deeply. Certainly, there were some advantages of being an insider. The area of my fieldwork was not new for me. The people, the settings, the traditions and culture; all were familiar to me. Thus, communicating to the people and choosing the right people for interviews was very easy for me. In addition, the respondents were also quite comfortable with me answering my queries.

Being an insider also provided me some disadvantages. In spite of such favorable conditions, I also had some difficulties. I experienced that the respondents tried to skip

information thinking that I know all those information and it is not necessary for them to describe in details. Moreover, in some cases, it was found that the elderly people had a kind of assumption that the youngsters, like me, should have knowledge about those rituals and festivals. That's why they raised questions against my questions as if such knowledge is inborn. Even I can remember one interview with a 94 years old person who is the second eldest person of the *Guthi*. During the interview, when I asked about the conduction of death rituals, he was furiously asking me what I was doing during the death of my grandfather and grandmother. Moreover, he was angry on my father for not teaching and showing the rituals conducted. According to him, *"if Newar people don't show the rituals and other cultures to their children, how will they learn our culture and how will they maintain it when their time comes to be responsible."*

CHAPTER III: THE *NEWARS* – SOCIETY AND CULTURE

3.1 Nepal – A Country of Diversity

Nepal; despite of being one of the smallest countries in the world map (total area being 147,181 Sq Km) and one of the poorest countries according to modern development indicators; is a nation enriched with huge geographical diversity, bio-diversity and socio-cultural diversity (Shrestha and Gupta, 1993: 3). Socio-cultural diversity is characterized by diversity in caste, religion, ethnicity, language and culture. The total population of Nepal is 22,736,934; divided into a total of 100 ethnic groups (Population Census, 2001); among which 59 are the indigenous groups and termed as *"Adivasi Janajati"*. Those 59 Indigenous nationalities are further classified into sub-categories according to their present situations. 10 of them are regarded as endangered groups, 12 as highly marginalized, 20 as marginalized, 15 as disadvantaged and 2 as the advanced ones[15]. According to the Indigenous Nationalities Act 2002, "Indigenous Nationality" refers to those ethnic groups or communities, who have their own mother language, traditional rites and customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or unwritten history (HMG-N, 2002:170). According to article 1 (1.b) of the ILO Convention 169,

> "Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present State boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions." (ILO Convention 169)

This is pretty much applicable to Nepal as it is said that the Natives took asylum in Nepal from India after 11th century, who later on controlled the political economy of the country (Gurung H., 2000: 1).

3.2 The *Newars* – An Indigenous community of Nepal

Among the indigenous nationalities in the country, *Newars* are regarded as one of the strongest in terms of their culture and traditions. The group is regarded as one of the most

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[15] According to www.nfdin.gov.np, accessed on August 1, 2008; The list is available on Appendix 1

culturally rich and religious groups of Nepal. The name of the country itself is believed to be derived from the *Newar* as the word "*Newar*" is etymologically identical with "Nepal" (Shrestha, 1998: 1; Vaidya, 1993: 17). Originally known to be Buddhists, *Newar* people have increasingly become syncretic, and at present, almost all of the *Newar* people practice both Buddhism as well as Hinduism simultaneously. "The race of *Newars* is a mixed race, derived from Indian or Tibetan Stocks, and their religion naturally presents a corresponding mixture of the Indian and Tibetan creeds" (Adam, 1936: 535). They are prominent in business, agriculture and craftsmanship; having a population of 1,245,232; which is 5.48% of the total population (Population Census, 2001). *Newar* people have their own language, called *Nepal Bhasha* (language), which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family and have their own script called *Ranjana Lipi* (Shrestha, 1998: 1; Furer-Haimendorf, 1956: 15). According to Gellner (1995: 5), "The *Newar* Language seems to have been spoken by the inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley as far as the records go".

3.3 The History of *Newars* in Kathmandu Valley

The history of Kathmandu Valley and the *Newar* people are closely related. *Newar* people are believed to have their settlement in the Nepal valley [16] since the prehistoric times (Furer-Haimendorf, 1956:15; Bista, 1976: 16). Gellner (1995) has also termed *Newars* as the "traditional inhabitants" of the Kathmandu valley and spread all over the country in course of time.

Regarding the history of Kathmandu Valley, the first documented history is found in the form of an inscription in a stone pillar inside the periphery of *Changu Narayan*[17] Temple located about 10 km northeast of Kathmandu city. The inscription was established by the *Lichhavi* King *Mandev* in 464 AD (Riccardi, 1989: 611). Though the documented history is very limited prior to 464 AD, there is a folklore saying that it was a huge lake during the ancient times. According to *Swayambhu Purana*[18], *Boddhisattva Manjushree*[19] cut the hill

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[16] Kathmandu Valley was previously termed as Nepal Valley, later on the name of the valley itself became the name of the country

[17] *Changu Narayan* temple is one of the biggest Hindu temples of Kathmandu Valley which is located in the ancient city of Bhaktapur and the temple consists of a main statue of Lord *Bishnu* along with various other gods and goddesses.

[18] *Swawambhu Purana* is a Buddhist scripture about the origin and development of the Kathmandu valley. Though the composers of this scripture are anonymous, it is believed to be created by *Newar* Buddhists in

situated at the south-east part of the valley with his holy sword and drained the water away (Bajracharya, 2004; Dahal, 1999: 27). While in Hinduism, it is believed that it was Lord *Bishnu*[20] who drained the water from the valley (Gurung, 2000: 24). Interestingly, the geological evidences provide support to this folklore by stating this valley having the ancient lakebed and thus the soil of the valley is highly fertile till now (ibid: 24).

After the drainage of water from the valley, the first ones to settle there were the *GopalBanshi* (Cow-herders). They were believed to have migrated from southern part of India and ruled in Kathmandu Valley from about 1500 BC to 1000 BC. A total of 8 *GopalBanshi* kings ruled in the valley, of which first was *Dharmakar* while the last was *Bhumigupta*. During the *GopalBanshi* reign, the people expanded and settled in the places like *Kirtipur, Balambu, Thankot, Tistung, Palung* etc. These *GopalBanshi* people were known as *Nep* community, which itself became the name of the valley - Nepalaya (*Nep + Al*aya; *Alaya* meaning the residence in Sanskrit) and later on transformed to Nepal only. During the time course, these people were named *Nepa:* and then transformed to *Newa:* later on. Hence, it is believed that this *GopalBanshi Nep* community are the ancestors to present *Newars* of Kathmandu Valley. After *GopalBanshi* rulers, *MahispaalBanshi* (buffalo-herders) ruled the valley for about 100 years. Then the immigrants took over the rule who were known as *Kiranti*; who arrived in Nepal valley from the north-east (Tibet) around 7th century BC. The *Kirats* ruled in Valley for about 1225 years having about 29 to 32 rulers during their reign (Dahal, 1999: 27-37). The *Lichhavis* who were immigrants from the Northern part of India, known as *Baishali*, defeated the *Kirantis* and established their kingdom in the valley. The period of 300-879 AD documents the presence of *Lichhavi* (Gurung, 2000: 25). Later in 12th century, the *Malla* Dynasty ruled in the Valley. It is believed that the *Malla* kings who ruled the valley were the local *Newars* who first settled in the valley as *GopalBanshi Nep* community. In Sanskrit, *Malla* means a skill on one-on-one wrestling, which was taken by the first King

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order to integrate the teachings of the Mahayana *Newar* Buddhism. The exact date of composition is also anonymous, but the way of *Sanskrit* texts written suggests the composition date around 14th century (according to the Center of Buddhist studies).

[19] *Boddhisattva Manjushree* was the follower of Lord *Buddha*, also sometimes called as one of the incarnations of lord *Buddha*

[20] Lord Bishnu is among the 3 main gods of Hinduism, along with Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva. Lord Bishnu is believed to be responsible for the prosperity and well-being of the living beings of the world.

Aridev of *Malla Dynasty* as a caste and hence became *Ari Malla* (Dahal, 1999: 128). Initially, Nepal Valley was a single independent nation ruled by the *Malla* Kings, but during the period of King *Yakshya Malla*, it was divided into 3 different independent nation states among his sons. Thus, *Kantipur* (now Kathmandu), *Lalitpur* and *Bhaktapur* became independent nation states along with various other dependent states like *Thimi, Banepa, Kirtipur, Sankhu, Balambu, Thankot* etc. *Malla* period is regarded as the "Golden Age" of the valley, as the arts, architecture, culture and also trade was flourishing during this period (ibid: 144). The *Malla* Kings ruled the Valley till 18th century when it was conquered by the *Gorkha*[21] Kingdom in 1825 BS[22]. *Gorkha* Kingdom was the neighboring kingdom established in 1559 AD by *Drabya Shah*, an ancestor to King *Prithvi Narayan Shah* who led the national unification process starting from *Gorkha* to various neighboring small kingdoms and later on Kathmandu valley as well. To conquer the valley, he first attacked *Kirtipur* in 1814 BS and in 1821 BS for the second time, but in both attempts he failed. Later in 1822 BS, he succeeded to conquer *Kirtipur*, due to which local *Newars* of *Kirtipur* had to suffer from massive violence. Even it is said that he ordered his army to cut off the noses of the local warriors of *Kirtipur*. He conquered *Kantipur* and *Lalitpur* in 1825 BS and *Bhaktapur* in 1826 BS (ibid: 295-304).

Unlike the cases of the neighboring countries, in case of Nepal, though the country never faced colonization and discrimination from outsiders, the indigenous communities suffered from internal colonization in the name of "National Unification Drive" (Bhattachan, 2008: 1). King *Prithvi Narayan Shah* (1779-1831 BS) was the one who led the unification drive to form the Nepal as it stands now. To a certain extent, after *Gorkha* invasion in Kathmandu Valley, culture and tradition of the *Newar* people were continued to be supported along with the royal support to their festivals and rituals. However, numerous *Newar* inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley who fought against the Gorkha invaders suffered a great deal by facing capital punishments, forced exiles and physical tortures (Shrestha, 1998: 2).

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[21] Gorkha was the independent nation from where the unification drive started; King Prithvi Narayan Shah was the initiator. Till now, Gorkha Army are popular for their bravery and even in British Army, Nepalese people are recruited under the battalion of British-Gurkha, whose main responsibility is the security of Queen Elizabeth.

[22] BS stands for Bikram Sambat; Nepal's own calendar year which is approax. 57 years ahead of AD.

Regarding the language that the *Newar* people used since their origin, no evidences are found. However, the first *Newar* language inscriptions were found in the ancient manuscript of *Nidan* dated 901 AD, and the second one on a stone tablet dated 1173 AD which is still located in the courtyard of *Bajrayogini* temple at *Sankhu* in Kathmandu (Bhattarai, 2006: 10). But, as those *GopalBanshi Nep* community; who became *Newars* later on; were moved from Southern part of India, it is believed that the ancient language of them must have been *Sanskrit* (Dahal, 1999: 29).

3.4 Modernization Process in General

Nepal's strength has always been in the indigenous qualities of its various ethnic groups. But it has been under the influence of other cultures which have suppressed its strength. Modernization process in Nepal starts with the story of territorial unification of the country. It is said that after the state building process in 1769 BS, the modern Nepal (*Adhunik Nepal)* was formed. Historians have given "Modernization" *(Adhunikiraran)* as the synonym for territorial unification led by King *Prithvi Narayan Shah* (Bhattachan, 2008: 19).

After the unification, different closed ethnic groups living their life with their own traditions were exposed to the outside world. The process of migration of various people from different places was initiated. Most of the localities became multi-ethnic ones. The effects of modernization can mostly be observed in the central part of the country; in its capital Kathmandu. In the past, Kathmandu city was a typical *Newar* city with the dominancy of *Newar* people in every sector. The most commonly spoken language in the city streets was *Newari*; overall, the city retained its traditional *Newari* characteristics. After the unification, the city was established as the capital of the country due to which it became a center for trade and commerce and thus, numerous people from all over the country with different cultures started to immigrate in search of work and business. The year 2000 AD however, according to Gurung (2000: 29); shows a completely different picture; the *Newars* were confined to small areas like *Asan Tole*, and few craft shops in the *Hanuman Dhoka* and New Road area.[23] Traders and businessmen from the Indian

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[23] These are the core areas of the markets of Kathmandu since the ancient times

subcontinent and immigrants from various corners of the country have taken up much of the *Newari* domain of business and traditional city of Kathmandu. Today, the scenario has changed drastically; we hear more Nepali and Hindi in Kathmandu rather than typical *Newari* language. In addition, people of younger generations are tilted towards new cultures and living styles; specially the western ones; forgetting their culture, language, values and beliefs. Examples can be drawn from the growing interests towards western music, western dances and musical instruments; instead of keeping their native music, dance etc. alive and preserved.

Moreover, English and the mainstream Nepali language have been dominant over indigenous languages; a *Newar* child doesn't know his own native language but learns English from the age of 3. Education system has also played a vital role as the language used for education in schools and colleges are either English or Nepali. So, the only place remained for a *Newar* child to learn his native language is home, which unfortunately is also declining these days, as parents don't want their children to speak *Newari*; mostly feeling that it will hamper them learn official schooling languages Nepali and English.

Furthermore, in this era of competition, most of the people are busy in their own works, allowing them very little time to think about their tradition and culture. There are numerous other factors affecting the society to maintain its traditional culture such as emigration of the *Newars* to different countries for education and work, inter-caste marriages resulting into mixing of cultures etc.

3.5 Settlement Patterns of *Newar* Society

The *Newar* settlements; whether it's a city, or town or village; have distinctive urban patterns portrayed by tight clusters of densely packed and attached multi-storey brick-built houses with numerous narrow streets within (Furer-Haimendorf, 1956: 16). Not only cities and towns, even villages have streets, squares, shopping areas, temples and communal buildings such as *Sattal, Pati*[24]*,* which is not normally found in village

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[24] *Sattal* and *Pati* are the resting places for the travelers. In *sattal*, travelers can stay overnight whereas in *pati*, travelers rest for some moments only.

settlements of other communities in Nepal. It is common among the *Newars* to build houses together sharing a single wall between two houses (Shrestha, 2002: 35).

The most important feature of any *Newar* settlement is the structure which is ritually organized and is termed as *Mandala*; introduced during the *Malla* Dynasty. Whether it is a city or a small town or a village, it is organized according to the *Mandala* model[25]. According to Gellner (1992: 190) and Toffin (1996: 66), *Mandala* is actually the arrangement of deities conceived in the sets of four, eight or sixty-four; which is laid out along the axes of the cardinal points around a center; and this symbol is used by the priests for complex rituals to represent the gods. Usually in a *Newar* settlement, eight shrines of mother goddesses form a circle outside of the settlement and 8 shrines form inner circle, while the central area is marked by 4 shrines of deities (Zanen, 1986: 148-50). During the *Malla* period, *Mandala* design was used to design the architecture of the settlements of villages and towns (Gurung, 2000: 31). *Mandala* symbol can be analyzed into 3 basic elements interconnected to each other, namely: boundness, hierarchy and the importance of the center (Shephard, 1985: 121). Definitely, the center part of any settlement is much more important in a *Newar* Society. In some cities, the central point of the settlement used to be the palaces of the kings regarding them as the power of the society, whereas in most of the cases the central point is occupied by certain temples of various Gods and Goddesses. And, the houses are concentrated in the surrounding places of the central point. Specific castes are usually grouped together in all *Newar* settlements (Shrestha, 2002: 35). Higher ranked castes are found nearer to the central point of the temples forming the inner ring of the settlement, where as the lower caste form the outer ring. The higher caste a person belongs to, the closer he lives to the central point (Gurung, 2000: 30-31).

3.6 Hierarchical Caste System: Society Formation

The *Newar* society is regarded extremely complicated due to the divisions of castes and sub-castes; and are ranked hierarchically according to the traditional occupation of the castes. The present ranking of castes is based on a division of the *Newar* population into

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[25] The mandala model is illustrated in appendix 3.

64 occupational castes which was introduced to the society by the *Malla* king *Jayasthiti Malla* (1382 – 1395 AD) (Vaidya Shrestha, 1991: 180-90; Furer-Haimendorf, 1956: 17). The hierarchical caste system is also supported by Hinduism; having four broad *Jat*[26] system namely: *Brahmin* (the priests), *Kshatriya* (the warriors), *Vaishya* (the merchants) and *Sudra* (the laborers) (Prabhavananda and Isherwood, 1944: 85). It is believed that God *Bramha* is the creator of this Universe and the caste hierarchy as well. By creating *Brahmin* from his mouth, *Kshatriya* from thigh, *Vaishya* from his arms and *Sudra* from his feet, he created hierarchy on which *Brahmins* lie on the top, followed by *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Sudras* (Dutta, 1931: 4 in Shrestha, 2002: 23). Following the *Jat* system of Hinduism, the *Newar* society was further sub-classified into 64 different caste groups according to their traditional occupations and also, 13 castes were validated as the *Tagadhari* (who can wear holy cord). In Hinduism, *Brahmin* and *Kshatriya* are the ones who are known as *Tagadhari*. In *Newar* Society, only the priests fall under this category. (Shrestha, 2001: 3) But it is extremely difficult to shape up the *Newar* castes into the Hindu Caste system. In *Newar* society, there are two categories of Brahmin caste; one being the Buddhist priests and the other being Hindu priests; thus the system is given the notion of double-headed caste hierarchy by Gellner (1995: 13).

While focusing on the *Newar* caste hierarchy based on traditional occupation, some examples can be drawn. Like, *Bajracharya* are the Buddhist priests, *Rajopadhyay* are the Hindu priests, *Uray* merchant castes like *Tuladhar* and *Kansakar*, *Joshi* (astrologers), *Shakya* (Goldsmiths), *Manandhar* (oil-pressers), *Jyapu* (Farmers), *Nakarmi* (Blacksmiths), *Kapali* (Tailors), *Vyanjankar* (cooks), *Dhobi* (Washmen), *Napit* (Barbers), *Khadgi* (Butchers), *Pode* (Sweepers), *Chitrakar* (Painters) etc. Among such division of castes, few lowest ranked ones are regarded as the untouchables and prohibited in higher caste societies. (Chattopadhyay, 1980: 117) *(The hierarchical caste system is mentioned in the appendix 2)*

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[26] Literally means caste

3.7 *Jyapu* Caste – The Urban Peasants

Among various caste groups existing in the *Newar* society, the focused group for the conduction of this study is the *Jyapu* caste. The main reason behind the selection of this group is the high importance of traditional social organization in this caste group comparing to the others. In the *Newar* society, *Jyapu* caste is termed as the middle class caste who are basically the peasants; being agriculture as their prime traditional occupation. In *Newar* language, *Jya* means work and *Pu* means comprehensiveness, which shows that *Jyapu* literally means the comprehensive workers and doesn't mean a person, rather means an occupation (Shrestha, 2001: 5). In *Jyapu* caste also, there are numerous sub-castes like *Maharjan, Dangol, Singh, Koju, Saiju, Suwal, Kumhal, Bataju, Makaju, Bhaila* and *Dhwaju*. (Sharma, 1976: 30) Most of the festivals are closely related with the peasant's life. For example, *Gaijatra* (cow festival) is conducted in the time after the rice plantation season and similarly, the festivals of *Bijaya Dashami* and *Deepawali* are conducted after the harvesting season. *Guthi* organizations seem to be most active in this caste group of *Newars*. The study focuses specially on this caste group and all the observations made are the activities of *Guthi* from this caste group, including all the respondents from this group.

3.8 Cultural Aspects of the *Newars*

"Now a days the term Nepalese has a far wider significance, indeed almost a changed meaning, but when we speak of Nepalese civilization, we can only mean Newar civilization"

- David Snellgrove[27]

In terms of culture and traditions, *Newar* people regard themselves as the most strong and rich group of the country. Traditional physical infrastructure, arts and architecture is one of the most significant achievements of the *Newar* people. In addition, the traditional dresses, cuisines, music, dances and language are the cultural elements, which enhance the *Newar* society to build their distinctive identity among the others. Such cultural elements are described briefly as follows:

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[27] Accessed from web: http://www.*Guthi*.org, 29th January, 2009

3.8.1 *Newari* Language (*Nepal Bhasha*):

Newar people have their own language termed as *Nepal Bhasha* which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family (Lie, 1999: 30; Shrestha, 1998: 1; Furer-Haimendorf, 1956: 15). Although it is stated that 5.5% of total population of the country are *Newars*, only 3.39% speak *Newari* language (Bhattarai, 2006: 15). Even among those who speak *Newari* language, only negligible amount of population can write and understand the *Newari* Script *Ranjana Lipi*. The reason behind is, *Ranjana Lipi* is quite different to the *Devanagari Lipi* of Nepali language and the script is not included in curriculum of school education; except few institutions which carry out special courses for teaching this script.

3.8.2 *Newari* Cuisines:

The *Newari* cuisines are popular all across the country, and thus has become one significant part of their cultural life. Hundreds of varieties of food exist in *Newari* culture, most of which are also symbolic representatives to the rituals and myths and prepared according to the occasions. For example, there is one festival named *Yomari Punhi*, in which *Yomari*[28] is prepared with rice flour and a special kind of sugar *(Chaku)* inside it in different shapes; and is cooked by steaming (Tuladhar, 1999: 60). In this example, we can observe that the name of food itself becomes the name of the festival. Similarly, there is another festival named *Ghya-Chaku-Salun* based on the name of food. Here, *Ghya* means butter and *Chaku* is a special kind of sugar, which is served in this festival. As *Salun* stands for first day of the month and *Ghya-Chaku* is eaten on this very day, the name of the festival is termed as *Ghya-Chaku Salun*. There are numerous other dishes that are prepared according to the occasions and festivals (Rajbhandari, 2004: 44). Another important factor about the *Newari* cuisines is the hygiene that it maintains and the food courses are maintained according to the human digestion and health consciousness (ibid: 45). For example, in typical *Newari* feast, after serving varieties of food items as main course, boiled *mee*[29] is served at the end which is helpful for digestion. According to Rajbhandari (ibid: 48), *"It is amazing that how the Newar people at that time were so wise to combine different food groups, and the way of cooking to match with present scientific*

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[28] Yomari is a kind of food prepared by putting a special kind of sugar inside the rice flour.
[29] *Mee; Methi* in Nepali; is a kind of seed which is soaked in water and boiled with some spices. There is no particular term for this in English.

knowledge on nutritional value and health awareness. I definitely think that our forefathers were not far behind than present nutritionists."

3.8.3 Traditional music, dance and costumes:

Traditional *Newari* music and dances are also famous all over the country. Again, the traditional dances are also related with the rituals and religion. Various kinds of traditional dances are performed according to the occasions. Most of the dances are related with the gods and goddesses of Hinduism. A very famous *Lakhe* dance is performed everyday from the festival of *Gathe Mangal* (festival to get rid of Evil Spirits) to the *Krishna Janmastami* (Birth of Lord Krishna). Another traditional dance, known as *Gathu Pyakha*, is performed once in 12 years. Only the *Gathus (Mali)*[30] are allowed to participate in this dance, in which 13 participants act as different gods and goddesses. There are several other traditional dances performed in different *Newar* societies.

Traditional music and the instruments can also be categorized according to the rituals and festivals. Some instruments are mandatory for some special rituals. For example, *Ka: Baja*[31] and *Nya: Baja*[32] are important for performing the death rituals; in which these instruments lead the funeral procession. The most popular category of traditional musical instrument is *Basuri Baja* and *Dhime Baja*[33] which is important for most of the festivals. *Basuri Baja* is also played during wedding ceremonies, but it is optional for such occasions.

3.8.4 Religion and Social Organizations:

The uniqueness of having faith in Buddhism and Hinduism simultaneously can be regarded as important cultural aspect of *Newars*. The presence of idol of Lord Buddha in most of the Hindu shrines and presence of idols of Hindu gods and goddesses in the Buddhist monasteries provide strong evidence of such belief. In addition, the festivals related with Buddhism are also celebrated by the *Newars* as they do for Hindu festivals. Another important aspect of the *Newari* Culture is the socio-religious organizations that *Newar* societies possess, which binds the society together. A *Newar* person is bound to

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[30] Gathu (Mali), are a kind of *Newar* caste whose traditional occupation is gardening.
[31] A type of musical instrument used in festivals and funeral procession too.
[32] A type of musical instrument played only by butchers and used for funeral procession
[33] Basuri is the flute and Dhime is a kind of drum; both of them are played on festivals and marriages too.

the social organization by birth. The social organization is termed as "*Guthi*" and it has various types according to its functionality. Basically, *Guthi* is a socio-religious organization of the *Newar* people and moreover it is an integral part of *Newar* culture, which has added a character for their identification as a distinct group. Even it is said that without understanding the *Guthi* system, the caste and familial organization of the *Newars* cannot be fully understood. (Bista, 1976: 26) The detailed understanding on the *Guthi* system will be visualized in the following chapter.

3.8.5 Festivals and Rituals:

Festivals and the rituals are also important aspects of the *Newari* culture. Different festivals and rituals related to Hinduism and Buddhism are celebrated by the *Newar* people. Throughout the year, *Newar* people have numerous festivals and rituals. In each festival, feast has to be served to the relatives. Each and every settlement has its own special *Jatra* (festival) and annual worshipping ritual of the temple centrally situated in that particular settlement. For example, in *Panga*, the temple of God *HariShankar Narayan* lies as the central point; of which annual worshipping is conducted in July. Similarly, Jatra is conducted for *Goddesses BalKumari and BidhnuDevi* in November-December. There is a saying, *"Chhetri bigryo moj le, Newar bigryo Bhoj le"*, which means that the *Chhetris* (mainstream population) are ruined by relaxation, while the *Newars* are ruined by feasts and festivals. In almost every occasion, feast has to be served, even in all of the life passage rituals.

The rituals are also important for the distinct cultural identity of *Newar* people, among which, life passage rituals are the significant ones, which distinguishes them from other indigenous nationalities of Nepal. Each life passage ritual has to be celebrated by worshipping of the various Gods and Goddesses and feasts are mandatory in every occasion.

3.9 Life Passage Rituals of the *Newars*

Life is a series of celebrations for *Newars*. From birth till death, even after death, numerous rituals have to be followed. There are five broad stages in a *Newar* person's life; namely birth, puberty, marriage, Jankoo and death; which are discussed below:

3.9.1 Birth:

In *Newar* community, birth rituals starts from the following day of a child's birth. The first ritual conducted is termed as *Byankegu* which is carried out on 4th or 6th or 10th or 11th day of birth, but this ritual should not be conducted on Mondays and Wednesdays (Rajbhandari, 2008:16; Toffin, 1975: 47). Birth pollution applies to the relative families from birth till the date of this ritual. Thus, this ritual is regarded as the purification from birth pollution. Feast has to be served on this day. The next ritual followed is termed as *Naa Chhuigu* (*Nwaran*[34] in Nepali), conducted on 12th day. On that day, on the basis of exact time and date of child's birth, the position of planets and the sun in the sky at the time of birth are identified according to which, the *Jyotish*[35] inspects the child's star sign and gives the name to child based on the stars (Rajbhandari, 2008: 16-22) but the name is kept secret and another name is given. It is believed that the name given according to star sign should not be revealed publicly (Toffin, 1975: 50). And, this occasion is celebrated as a feast by gathering of the family and relatives. Next ritual in a child's life is the celebration of rice-feeding, which occurs in 7 months of birth for a male child and 5 months for a female one. It is called *Jankoo* or *AnnaPraashan* that usually takes place in a temple of Lord *Ganesh*[36]. On that occasion, a child is fed first grains of rice mixed with cow's milk using a silver spoon (Rajbhandari, 2008: 32). Then the child is offered a silver coin, a piece of fruit and a pen and family members observe, which one the child picks up or touches, as a sign of direction the child's life will take. A silver coin represents the desire for prosperity, a pen represents the desire for education and a piece of fruit represents the desire for materialistic pleasures (Shakya, 2009).

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[34] Nwaran is the 1st ceremony in a child's life in which he/she is named on the basis of the star signs. It is strict that the name should not be publicized.

[35] Jyotish is the *Newar* astrologer.

[36] In Hindu mythology, Ganesh is the son of Lord Shiva. His main attributes are elephant head, his pot belly, and a rat upon which he rides. He is regarded as protector of locality and worshipped first among the Hindu Gods. Before starting any work or event, he is worshipped for its success.

Strangely, the first birthday of a child is not celebrated by the *Newars*; however, the second one calls for a big celebration for the family. It is called *Nirha Punhi* which has to be celebrated by arranging huge worshipping ritual and feast. Third one is also not celebrated and fourth one *Pyarha Punhi* is celebrated in the same manner as the second one. Then after, every birthday is celebrated normally with worshipping rituals and ceremonies. The reasons are unknown for not celebrating the first and third birthday, but it's the *Newar* tradition which is being handed down from generations to generations. (Shakya, 2009; Rajbhandari, 2008: 36-40)

3.9.2 Puberty Rites:

For a *Newar* female child, the next big day is her marriage with the fruit of bel tree (of the species Aegle marmelos), known as *Bel Bibaha (Eehi* in *Newari)* which usually occurs from the age of 5 to 11. This ritual should be conducted before the first menstrual period, usually at the odd age like 5, 7, 9 and 11. Proper marriage ritual is followed, just the difference is the groom; the groom is a fruit instead of a person. The *bel* fruit is believed to be an incarnation of Lord *Bishnu*. The belief is that since a man can be unfaithful, a girl's first marriage should be the one in which unfaithfulness cannot occur. Another belief is that since a girl is married to the fruit, she is not considered as widow even if her husband dies after marriage (Shakya, 2009; Rajbhandari, 2008: 78).

Bel Bibaha is followed by another puberty ritual named *Barah Tayegu* or in other terms *Surya Darshan*, in which a girl is kept inside a dark room; called *Gufa*[37]; for 6 or 12 days that's why this ritual occurs in groups. This ceremony also has to be followed before a girl gets her first menstrual period. During this entire ritual, she is not allowed to see a person of opposite sex; even her father or other relatives. However, she is allowed to meet female relatives and friends. The main idea behind this ritual is to make a girl educated about puberty, adulthood and sex education. During this period, the girls can talk freely among them and their elders can teach them about menstruation and adulthood (Rajbhandari, 2000: 84). This ritual is also regarded as the second marriage of a girl, and

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[37] Gufa literally means a dark cave

this time groom is the Sun. The Sun is considered an incarnation of *Lord Bramha*[38]. Keeping a girl inside a dark room for 12 days is regarded as the symbol for purification and on the last day of ritual, it is ensured that the first male she faces is the Sun when she is taken out from the room; after which this ritual is named *Surya Darshan* (Shakya, 2009).

In case of males, there is no provision of multiple marriages; however, the adulthood in his life is symbolized by a ritual called *Kayata Puja*. This particular ritual is observed differently among the Hindu and Buddhist *Newars*. According to Buddhism, a boy has to observe life as a monk for 4 days. Usually this ritual is conducted in groups and the beginning of it is marked by a worshipping ritual conducted by the *Guthi*. On the second day, as the boy's paternal aunt stands by with a silver plate, a barber shaves the boy's hair, allowing some strands to fall onto the plate she is holding. For her services throughout the ceremonies, it is tradition for the *Guthi* to present the aunt with clothes and gold. Other rituals follow where each boy participating in the ritual is given a monk's name, followed up by being dressed up in traditional orange robes, as worn by actual Buddhist monks. After this, the young monk is made to take steps on lotus leaves, signifying the first steps taken by the Buddha. The young boys, along with others of similar age from the community, parade around the neighborhood, formally announcing the beginning of their life as a monk. At the end of the four days, the young monk is allowed the choice of continuing to live the life of a monk or returning to normal domestic life. It might come as a surprise that there are an appreciable number of boys who choose the life of a monk and move away from home to live in a *Bihar*[39]. Before returning to domestic life, the boys take part in one last ritual where another *puja*[40] is done and the strands of hair collected by the aunt are released at a holy river such as *Bagmati*[41] for people living in the valley as an apology to the Buddha for ending the life of a monk and getting back to domestic life (ibid). This ritual is also celebrated by inviting the relatives and the whole society to the typical *Newari* feast.

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[38] Lord Brahma is one of the three main Gods of Hinduism, who is regarded as the creator of the Universe
[39] Buddhist Monasteries
[40] Worshipping ritual
[41] Bagmati is a holy river which starts from the Himalayas and runs through the Kathmandu Valley, meeting the temple of Pashupatinath, which is the most worshipped temple among all the Hindus.

Unlike Buddhism, this ritual is carried out in a single day in Hinduism. According to Hinduism also, a barber has to shave off the boy's head, but prior to that, his maternal uncle has to touch the boy's head with gold and silver, then hand over the shaver to barber. While the boy's head is being shaved, his paternal aunt has to collect the strands of hair in a silver plate, which she has to dispose in the river along with curd and beaten rice. Then the boy is given a stick in which small packets of rice and beaten rice are tied along with the skin of deer. Additionally, he is given a bow and arrow. After carrying those stuffs, he asks for alms to all the relatives and pretends to leave for jungle quitting the materialistic life. In the meantime, his maternal uncle has to stop him from doing so and bring him back home. This ritual is followed by a feast for all the relatives.

Puberty rites are mandatory for all male and female children to be eligible for the next ritual of marriage. The rituals of *Bel Bibaha* and *Barah Tayegu* are mandatory for the females. Likewise, the ritual of *Kayata Puja* is compulsory for the male children. In *Newar* society, if a person gets married without involving in such puberty rites, he/she is not considered eligible for the social life.

3.9.3 Marriage:

Marriage in *Newar* society is conducted according to a typical Hindu manner; mostly being the arranged ones by the facilitator *Lamhi*[42]. The *Newar* marriages seldom end up in divorce and seem truly blessed, owed in part to a largely religious faith of the people involved and the feeling that the institution of marriage is a holy bond, the breaking of which would be a sin. The horoscopes of both male and female which is prepared during the birth are taken to an astrologer who checks both horoscopes to see the compatibility, upon which the marriage depends. If the horoscopes match, then only marriage can be conducted. But, this trend is somewhat diminishing these days among the new generations (Bajracharya, 1959: 418). *Newar* marriages are extravagant affairs in the entire community as extended family members turn up to be a part of the celebrations (Rajbhandari, 2008: 110).

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[42] Marriage facilitators are the ones who get paid for arranging the relationships. They are believed to be blessed for their work.

A *Newar* woman is married earlier with *Bel* fruit (incarnation of Lord Bishnu) in her puberty ritual. Thus, it is a belief that, in theory, she is allowed to leave her husband as many times as she wishes; considering her first marriage to be the real one. Even in case of her husband's death, she doesn't become a widow, as her real husband is immortal (ibid).

3.9.4 Jankoo:

A *Newar* is believed to start a new life, that of a living God, at the age of 77 years 7 months and 7 days. The *Jankoo* ceremony; performed earlier in their lives at the age of five or seven months; is performed again for the aged men and women and is called *Bhim Rathaarohan*, marking their second birth. This ceremony is repeated again in which the person is worshipped and called *Chandra Rathaarohan*. Another ritual of Jankoo is performed when a person gets to the age of 88 years 8 months and 8 days, which is named as *Dev Rathaarohan*. Similarly, the age of 99 years 9 months and 9 days is marked by another *Jankoo* ceremony and called *Divya Rathaarohan*. If a person lives up to the age of 108 years 8 months and 8 days, it should be celebrated and called *MahaDivya Rathaarohan*. In all these rituals, the person is worshipped and celebrated as a procession carrying him in a chariot across the locality (ibid: 158-206).

3.9.5 Death:

When a *Newar* person dies, a series of rituals have to be followed. The funeral system includes various religious rituals which are extended to the next day of funeral. From the funeral system to the rituals of marking 7 days (*Nhyanuma*), 9 days (*Gunu*), 12 days (*Ghasu*), 45 days (*Latya*), 6 months (*Khula*), 1 year (*Dakila*) and 2 years (*Nirha*). Feast has to be served from the thirteen days ritual, to the relatives and the society. In death rituals, *Guthi* has an active role to play for the cremation of the dead body. The detailed discussion about the death rituals and the role of *Guthi* on such rituals are discussed on chapter five.

CHAPTER IV: *GUTHI* – AN INTEGRAL PART OF *NEWAR* SOCIETY

This chapter highlights on *Guthi* institutions which are regarded as the traditional social organizations of the *Newar* people. *Guthi* is regarded as one of the most important elements of *Newar* people, which controls most of their social interactions, religious and ritualistic activities; and with which they have to associate in different ways during their whole life periods (Gurung, 2000: 92). This chapter discusses about the meaning and origin of *Guthi* along with the illustration of its various types on the basis of its functioning and objectives. Afterwards, it focuses on the particular type *Sana Guthi*, which is the main targeted *Guthi* for the conduction of this study.

4.1 Meaning and its origin

The term "*Guthi*" was derived from the Sanskrit word "Gosthi", and literally means gathering of people (Regmi, 1978; Toffin, 2007: 290). Basically, *Guthi* is a form of social organization and moreover, a traditional cultural practice. In basic sense, *Guthi* is a group of people united for a common objective, created to enhance the standard of living of people due to realization of the need to live together and work together for a common purpose. Most importantly, *Guthi* was inspired by the religious spirit giving prominent importance to the religion. *Guthi* was initiated with the motive of maintaining the social structure among the *Newar* people. Many rituals are related to the life stages from pre-natal, birth, rice feeding, childhood, puberty, marriage, seniority, and death. To follow up such rituals, maintain tradition, preserve culture, and conduct the religious festivals, *Guthi* is believed to be formed (Bajracharya, 1998: 3; Bajracharya, 2008: 1).

The history of *Guthi* is as old as the history of *Newar* civilization, however, the mentioning of the term dates back to 464 AD, in the inscription found in *Changu Narayan* Temple of Bhaktapur, which is regarded as the first written evidence of Nepalese history. Out of 200 stone tablet inscriptions of *Lichhavi* period found, 50 inscriptions included the mentioning of *Guthi* (Tondon, 2009: 6). It is believed that *Guthi* systems were flourished well in *Lichhavi* periods and gained maturity in *Malla* periods (Sharma, 2004: 64-6; Gautam, 2008: 32). Initially, *Guthi* systems were established by the Kings for certain common

purposes like cleaning of certain areas and temples, conducting worshipping of those temples. Those kinds of *Guthi* were known as *Raj Guthi*. Later on, people started to form private *Guthi* organizations (called *Niji Guthi* or *Duniya Guthi*) in order to carry out the social and religious functions (Regmi, 1976: 58-60). Those *Guthi* organizations were varied according to the purpose for which they were established. Whatever the objectives of the private-run *Guthi* system is, the main point is the tradition that is passed from generations to their successive generations helping in maintaining the social structure and uniting the people in the community, keeping "we feeling" alive along with the religious faiths and beliefs. Thus, due to its importance in the lives of the *Newar* people, it is regarded as one of the most important and significant element of the *Newari* culture.

4.2 Composition and functioning of *Guthi*

Every *Newar* town or village, and every *Newar* caste has its own *Guthi* institution which controls most of their social interactions and works. Moreover, every *Newar* is bound with various *Guthi* institutions, some inherited by birth and some gained membership voluntarily. Some of the *Guthi* are compulsory whereas some are purely optional (Toffin, 2007: 291). Whatever the type of *Guthi* is, the composition is the same. Only the eldest male, who is a leader of the family, can be member of the *Guthi*. A leader of the family is the one who represents his family in a *Guthi*. This is because of the patriarchal nature of the *Newar* society. The term used for a member in any *Guthi* is *Guthiyaar*. The eldest among those *Guthiyaars* is termed as *Thakali*. Each and every decision of the particular *Guthi* is made by the *Thakali*, as he is believed to be the most experienced one. In some *Guthi* institutions, a group of 8 eldest persons are chosen for the decision making, and termed as *Chyamha*[43] *Thakali*; eldest one being *Thakali*, next to him being *Noku* (second eldest), then *swoku* (third), *pyaku* (fourth), *nyaku* (fifth), *khuku* (sixth), *nhyaku* (seventh) and *chyaku* (eighth). Besides this, a group of 9 *Guthi*yaars are chosen annually or in 2 years as the working committee who are responsible for all the activities conducted by the *Guthi*.[44] One of the *Guthiyaars* is also appointed and is called *Pala*, whose responsibility is to manage the *Guthi* and acts as a caretaker of the main God of the *Guthi*

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[43] Chyamha means eight in *Newari* language.
[44] Based on field survey 2009

for the period of one year. After that, another *Guthi*yaar is chosen as *Pala* and the God is handed over, organizing a feast for all the *Guthiyaars* (Shrestha, 2002: 162).

Regarding the economic aspects of the *Guthi*, it is run by the incomes of land (if any) and collective contribution of the members. If the *Guthi* has land property, then it is rented to certain individuals (usually from the same *Guthi*) and the revenue collected is reserved in budget and used for *Guthi* activities and rituals. But, after the land reform act of Government in 1964, the tenants were benefited as it gave more power to them and the rent they have to pay was minimized to a great extent. Additionally, most lands owned by the *Guthi* were either privatized by the tenants or seized by the Government itself (ibid: 32; also mentioned in 161). After the introduction of land reform act, very few *Guthi* institutions were left with land properties to depend on for the budget. In other cases, the money required for functioning of the *Guthi* is collected from the *Guthiyaars*. All the members have to pay fees as specified by the working committee. Additionally, absence of the members in the *Guthi* rituals and meetings also result into some fines, which also goes on to the budget. It's the responsibility of working committee to manage and fix the budget for each activity of the *Guthi* round the year (Suwal, 1997: 6-7).[45]

4.3 Gender roles in *Guthi*

As *Newar* Society is one of the strongest patriarchal societies, women have very passive role to play in *Guthi* organizations. Females belong to the *Guthi* that their family belongs to, though they cannot be member of the *Guthi* at any cost; rather only male member of the family can be *Guthiyaar*; and he represents the entire family in *Guthi*. An unmarried *Newar* woman belongs to the *Guthi* in which her father is member, but after marriage, she will be automatically integrated to the *Guthi* in which her husband has membership. In some families, there may be the case that there are no male representatives or male members are under the age of 18. In such cases, the family belongs to *Guthi*, but there will be no *Guthiyaar* from that family. However, all the services provided to other families of the *Guthi* are provided to that family also.

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[45] Also Based on field survey 2009

(Gurung, 2000: 96) has given a notion of "men's club" to the *Guthi* institutions, which suggests the male dominancy in *Guthi*. In certain rituals women are also allowed to participate. But, for the conduction of *Guthi* functions, the women participation is not allowed at all. Preparing food is mainly the tasks of women in *Newar* society, however in *Guthi* feasts; women are not allowed to cook and not even allowed to be present during the feast and during *Guthi* discussions (ibid).

4.4 Classification of *Guthi*

The activities of *Guthi* solely depend upon the motive with which it has been established, however, the formation and fundamental working principle behind all types of *Guthi* are same. Mainly, there are two types of *Guthi*; one is *Raj Guthi* (state run) and the other is *Niji Guthi* (private run). The *Guthi* established by the King and Royal family specifying some lands is known as *Raj Guthi;* while the *Guthi* established and maintained by the ordinary public with their own collective sources is known as *Niji* or *Duniya Guthi*; not having government intervention at all (Regmi, 1976: 58-60).

All state run (*Raj Guthi*) *Guthi* organizations are registered under the government organization called *Guthi Sansthan*, which is responsible for accounts of those *Guthi* organizations, including their income, expenditure and their activities as well. These types of *Guthi* organizations were basically formed by the Kings and royal family members for the maintenance and protection of socio-religious sites. Currently, there are 2080 registered state run *Guthi* organizations in total, which includes various religious sites such as 717 temples, 647 resting places (*sattai, pati* etc), 192 gardens and 159 ponds (Gautam, 2008: 31). Regarding private run (Niji) *Guthi*s, they can be classified into numerous types depending upon their functionality and purpose of establishment, but main types of *Guthi* practiced, according to (Bajracharya, 2008: 6-10) are as follows:

4.4.1   *Religious Guthi:* Though the existence of all types of *Guthi* organization is based on the Religion, there are some special types of *Guthi* which fall under this category having objectives of worshipping of deities. Most of the temples of Gods and Goddesses have their own *Guthi*, which are responsible for regular

maintenance of the infrastructure of the temple and its surroundings. In addition, the worshipping rituals are conducted by the specified *Guthi*. Famous *Kumari*[46] *Guthi* falls under this category, which is responsible for the caretaking of Goddess *Kumari* and her living place and temple as well. *Kumari* Jatra is also conducted by that *Guthi*. *Jatra* is the terminology used for the spiritual ritual performed as a festival, which is the way of worshipping the Gods and Goddesses, in which the idol of certain god or goddess is carried out in a chariot and paraded across the specified city or village for procession. Some other examples are *Busada* (consecration and recitation) *Guthi*, *Dhalan* (observation) *Guthi*, *Panchadan* (Donating five elements) *Guthi*, *Salun Guthi* (worshipping a particular deity and arranging feast on every first day of month) etc. To every famous temple, one *Guthi* is assigned for taking care and maintenance. Multi-caste membership is allowed in such *Guthi* and membership to this type of *Guthi* is absolutely voluntary and optional.

4.4.2 *Service-oriented Guthi:* This type of *Guthi* is created for providing service to the society and culture. *Si Guthi* (for death rituals), *Sana Guthi*, *Latwankegu* (serving water on festivals), *Sithi* (celebrating a particular occasion - *Sithi Nakha:*) etc fall under this category (Suwal, 1997: 6). This type of *Guthi* is also related with the *Newari* festivals having responsibility of conducting festivals and *Jatra* of Gods and Goddesses. It also organizes the feasts for the members of the *Guthi* ensuring for the social gathering and maintaining social harmony in the community. This type of *Guthi* is inherited, compulsory and also, it has the territorial boundaries. Some *Guthi* organizations that fall under this category are multi-caste, but most of them are based on mono-caste membership.

4.4.3 *Communal Guthi:* The *Guthi* run by people of a certain caste falls under this category. *Degu (Diwali) Guthi*; for example; is basically formed with the motive of worshipping the clan deity; and conducts the religious activities such as

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[46] *Kumari* is the name of "Living Goddess". Every year worshipping ritual is conducted as festival in the core area of Kathmandu, which is the responsibility of *kumari Guthi*. Not only the *Newar*s, but all Hindu people worship *Kumari* as the only living goddess of the world.

installation of idol of god and construction of temples, *chaityas* and *Vihars* (Buddhist Monasteries). This type of *Guthi* relatively consists of smaller number of members, basically consisting of a single Kinship line, thus membership is strictly mono-caste. This type of *Guthi* holds strict rules and regulations. Membership to this *Guthi* is strictly inherited and compulsory.

4.4.4   *Entertainment oriented Guthi:* The *Guthi* giving prominence to entertainment along with the religious feeling fall under this category. It is mainly related with the promoting of traditional music, musical instruments, traditional and religious dance, and cultural dressings. *Nasa Guthi* and *Lasata Guthi* are the common examples. In this type of *Guthi*, *NasaDyah*, who is regarded as a *Newar* God of dance and music, is worshipped and people are trained for the religious dances and the traditional music. The main objective of this *Guthi* is to keep the traditional music and dance alive for the religious purpose. Membership to this type of *Guthi* is absolutely voluntary and optional. There is no limitation of membership on caste basis; a person can join this *Guthi* as long as he is a *Newar*. Additionally, this type of *Guthi* has no territorial boundaries. According to Toffin (2007: 292), *Dyah Pyakha Guthi*[47] (secret dance societies) is the only exception, which is strictly inherited and limited to certain families, and the worshipping rituals are kept secret in this *Guthi*. The members have to perform the dances of various Gods and Goddesses and membership is usually passed on from father to son.

(Bajracharya, 2008: 6-10) [48]

4.5 *Sana Guthi* in focus

Sana Guthi is one of the most commonly practiced *Guthi* among the *Newars*. Though it falls under the category of service oriented *Guthi*; it is one unique *Guthi* that incorporates the functionalities of religious, service-oriented, communal as well as entertainment oriented *Guthi* (ibid: 11-14). Religious in the sense that it performs the worshipping of

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[47] *Dyah Pyakha* literally means dances of Various Hindu Gods and Goddesses.
[48] And, also mentioned by Mr. Nhuchhe Lal Maharjan (member of a *Guthi*) during personal communication dated on 5th March, 2009

deities; service-oriented as it incorporates the *Si Guthi* in practice which has involvement in the death rituals along with other services to the communities and also responsible for the religious *Jatra* rituals and festivals; communal as it is separately run by the certain caste and actively involves in the installation and maintenance of idols of gods in Temples and *Vihars* (Buddhist Monasteries); and entertainment oriented in the sense that it promotes *Newari* culture, traditional dance and dances of Gods and Goddesses, cultural dresses and the traditional customs in general. Most importantly, it focuses on social harmony and periodic traditional social gatherings offering feasts; regardless of the social status of each individual *Guthiyaar* (member of *Guthi*); maintaining equality in individual society and creating the feeling of togetherness. ***"Shree BhairabNath Ta: Guthi"***; one of the *Sana Guthi* practiced by the *Jyapu* castes located in Kirtipur; can be drawn as an example. [49] Further, more details about this particular *Guthi* will be discussed in the following chapters, as the main discussion about the modernization impacts will be illustrated on the basis of the examples from this *Guthi*.

Among all types of *Guthi*, *Sana Guthi* holds a crucial and prime importance in the *Newar* community because of its basic function of funeral procession. In *Newar* Society, since the corpse must not be touched by any member of the bereaved family, it is the responsibility of *Guthiyaars* of *Sana Guthi* to follow the funeral rituals and cremate the dead body (Nepali, 1965: 192). The word *Sana* in *Newar*i language literally means condolence or sympathy to the bereaved family in which a member has died. Each caste is spatially divided into local groups owing commitment to their respective *Sana Guthi*. The membership to such *Guthi* is strictly mono-caste, compulsory and inherited by birth (Shrestha, 2003: 45). A person can be affiliated to only one *Sana Guthi* at a time. Change of membership from one *Sana Guthi* to another one is very unlikely. But if a person, for instance, migrates far away from locality, his *Sana Guthi* cannot serve him as it has territorial boundaries. In such cases only, a person can change the affiliation from previous *Guthi* to the one which covers his current locality and which is based on the same caste. But it has to be done with mutual understanding between the working

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[49] Based on personal communication with Mr. Nhuchhe Lal Maharjan (Member of *Shree BhairabNath Ta: Guthi*) dated on 5th March, 2009

committees of both *Guthi* organizations, and a huge amount of charge has to be paid to both (Nepali, 1965: 192).

The composition of *Sana Guthi* is also same as other types of *Guthi*, having *Thakali* as the leader and a working committee responsible for every activity and ritual. A male leader of the family is regarded as the *Guthiyaar* for the particular *Sana Guthi*. Among all the *Guthiyaars*, a working committee is formed and given the responsibilities for a certain period. Besides that, there are various positions in Sana *Guthi*. A messenger (*Pala*) is appointed whose task is to communicate the instructions of Thakali to the *Guthiyaars*, to announce the *Guthiyaar's* death to the community, and also, he is regarded as the caretaker of the main God of *Guthi*. Similarly, 12 to 16 *Chirpa* are chosen whose main responsibility is to carry the chariots of Gods and Goddesses during the festivals (Furer-Haimendorf, 1956: 32).

The main purpose of establishment of *Sana Guthi* is to follow the funeral rituals properly. Additionally, the conduction of various worshipping rituals and regulation of various religious festivals are also done by the *Sana Guthi*. Besides that, it also performs socio-religious services like cleaning the communal areas, maintenance of religious sites, installation of idols of various Gods and Goddesses. Some are also involved in maintaining irrigation canals and roads in the area. In some cases, the financial co-operatives are also found incorporated in *Sana Guthi* with the motive of providing financial assistance to its members. It also conducts regular feasts for the *Guthiyaars* which helps peoples of the society to gather together periodically and share each other's ideas and allow them platform to discuss about the matters regarding *Guthi* works (Gurung, 2000: 97). By performing these activities, *Sana Guthi* is being able to keep the traditions and culture alive along with maintaining social harmony. However, there are some opposing factors which are forcing such *Guthi* to change in terms of its functionality. There are several modernization factors which are playing lead roles for such changes; changes in the society and *Guthi* institutions as well. While taking a close look at those changes, some are found significant for the well being of the society where as some are found negative leading into loss of culture and traditions. Further detailed discussion on these changes will be carried out in the following chapters.

CHAPTER V: HANDLING THE DEATH

This chapter discusses on the prime objective of *Sana Guthi*. Death rituals are considered as one of the most important life passage rituals according to religion. In order to ensure that the departed soul rests in peace, a series of rituals have to be conducted during the death and after death as well, are described in this chapter. The description is mainly based on the response from the community people. Apart from the responses, a funeral procession was also observed, but unfortunately, only latter half of the procession could be observed. Along with the rituals, the activities and duties performed by Sana *Guthi* are also tried to be elaborated. In addition, the changes occurring and the impacts of modernization are also analyzed.

5.1 Philosophy of death

Mortality of every living being on this Earth is the universal truth. Likewise, every human being born has to die one day. In Hinduism, it is a belief that a human body is constructed of five elements i.e. water, air, soil, fire and sky; which has to be disposed after death in such a way that it regains into those five forms (Rajbhandari, 2008: 208).

Regarding death, Hinduism focuses on the theory of transmigration of soul and the law of *karma*[50] (Nepali, 1965: 124; Anderson, 2005: 25). According to Hinduism, soul is immortal. It takes birth as a human; lives the destined period of life and quits the world after that period to take up another task assigned by the God (Gutschow and Michaels, 2005: 204). But before that, it has to reach in front of the court of *Yama*[51] for analysis of his *Karma* during the previous life period. On that basis, according to Law of Karma, either the soul is rewarded in heaven or punished in hell or assigned a re-birth. But, the path to court of *Yama* is considered very difficult for which the soul has to be helped by the living relatives by performing the rituals properly. In case of *Newar*s, they believe that even the soul of the deceased needs the material comforts like food, clothes etc. while travelling through

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[50] *Karma* is a Sanskrit word which literally means work. Here, it means the good things and bad things (sin) committed by the person.
[51] Yama is the Hindu God who is regarded as King of Hell. He is the one who decides whether the soul should be sent to heaven or hell.

the path to the court of *Yama*. That's why the family of deceased offer such materialistic stuffs like clothes to wear, bed to sleep, stick to ease travel etc. to the priest (Nepali, 1965: 125). Additionally, food is offered to the deceased in every ritual.

Hindu philosophy distinguishes the death as natural and unnatural. If a person has died of old age or due to long drawn sickness, then the death is considered natural; whereas death due to accident or certain epidemic is considered unnatural. Unnatural death is believed to be resulted from the fury of evil spirits or ghosts; or by witchcraft and black magic. People who have died unnaturally are bound to face the difficult transitional phase of turning into ghosts or spirits before going to the court of *Yama* whereas the ones with natural death have the easier pathway to Court of *Yama* (ibid).

5.2 Death rituals

The dead body of a *Newar* person is burnt in fire, and for that, numerous rituals has to be followed to ensure that the soul of the deceased rests in peace and the life after death is eased. In case of *Newars*, *Sana Guthi* plays vital role during the cremation of the dead body. The family of the deceased needs help during the cremation of the dead body and to follow the rituals properly, for which the members of *Guthi* are required.

According to *Newar*i culture, when it is known that a person is in the last stage, he is shifted to the ground floor (*Chheli*). A special priest *Ghate Vaidya*[52] is called upon for worshipping and the dying person is asked to cite and remember *Narayan* (Lord Bishnu) so that his death becomes easier. It is believed that the moment soul leaving the body is the most difficult part of life and during that period, if a person remembers god, then it will be easier for salvation. In the mean time, family members put water on dying person's mouth from a special vessel called *Karuwa.* From another vessel called *Kola*, a continuous stream of water is poured over the feet of dying man. This ritual is called *Bramhanaal.* In that vessel, three silver coins are kept, which has to be done by the chief mourner *(Mitaima)*. A chief mourner is the one who offers fire to the person after death. If a male person has died, the eldest son will be the chief mourner and if the person is

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[52] *Ghate Vaidya* is a special kind of priest who is appointed for worshipping in funeral processions only. No other worshipping rituals are conducted by such kind of priests.

female, then the youngest son. If the person doesn't have any son, then brother will be the chief mourner, otherwise father. In some cases, if no male relatives are available, then the responsibility is conducted by one of the *Guthiyaars*. But no female relatives are allowed to be chief mourners. After death, the remaining water from *Kola* during *bramhanaal* ritual is spread around the house and those 3 silver coins are kept by the *Ghate Vaidya* and in return, he provides sandalwood and camphor required for the cremation. It is the duty of *Ghate Vaidya* to announce the death of a person. These days, the ritual of *Bramhanaal* is not performed and the tradition of calling *Ghate Vaidya* is also not in practice.

After the declaration of death, the body is kept on the floor with head pointing towards north. Five lamps made of clay *(Diyo)* are placed around the body, one near to head, two on either sides of the body and two near to the knees. Those lamps are filled with *Ghee* (butter) and burnt. Then, the information about the death is conveyed to *Pala*[53] of the deceased person's *Guthi* whose responsibility is to go to community and inform all the *Guthiyaars* about the death which is called *Sana Haa Wanegu*. After getting the information, *Guthiyaars* arrive at the house of the deceased for necessary arrangements for cremation. They have to arrange nine bundles of wheat straw *(chhwali)*, a fire pot made of clay *(Bhaaja)*, cow dung cakes, a little paddy husk of rice, a pair of iron chains and a *Karuwa* filled with water. Most of the stuffs are pre-stored in the *Guthi* so that it becomes easily available when required.

Additionally, *Guthiyaars* have to arrange bamboos to make a bier to carry the dead body, which is prepared in a rectangular shape with four handles at the corners. It is called *Kota* and before putting the corpse on *Kota* , a ritual known as *thalay Kulay* is performed in which, the dead body is cleaned with water and vermilion powder *(Sinha)* is applied on the forehead. His horoscope *(Jaata)* is tied on the forehead. A person is born without clothes, thus it's a belief that he has to leave the world on the same state as he came. That's why all the clothes of dead body is taken off and covered with a white piece of cloth. If a person died is male, vermilion powder on forehead of his wife, which is the

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[53] *Pala* is a position in *Guthi* for which a person from *Guthi* is chosen every year.

symbol of marriage, is wiped out and the bangles worn by her are taken out and placed on the dead body.

Then after, married daughters of the family have to bring a piece of cotton and place over the body. This ritual is known as *Phanga Tayekegu*. During this ritual, they have to cry loudly so that the soul can hear the condolence provided to him. However, the ritual of *Phanga Tayekegu* was mentioned in earlier research of Gopal Singh Nepali (1965: 128), these days, it is not performed by the *Newar* people; except in *Lalitpur.* Thus, it can be assumed that this ritual has vanished along with the time. Then, the corpse is tied with red loin cloth (which has to be provided by the *Guthi*) and stitched up, which is called *Dukayegu-Pikayegu*. A separate group of *Guthiyaars* are created namely *Gonta*, whose responsibility is to carry the corpse and place it on the *Kota.* But before that, corpse is wrapped with the special kind of umbrella made of dried leaves which is used by the *Newars* during rice plantation. Then the corpse is shifted from *Chheli* to the courtyard of house. Before taking the body for funeral procession, food is offered to the corpse which is called *Pinda Bigu*.

Finally, the corpse is ready for funeral procession. But before that, an aged woman has to conduct a ritual called *chhwasa waa wanegu*, in which she carries the mat and pillow of the deceased to the *chhwasa* (cross-road near house) and leaves those stuffs. After her return, the procession starts. During the procession, while taking the corpse to the cremation site *(Depa)*, an order has to be maintained. The funeral follows on a queue, the frontline being the musicians playing a special kind of musical instrument sets called *Kaa Baja* and *Nya Baja*.[54] It is followed by one *Guthiyaar* who carries the *Bhaaja* in which wheat straw and dried cow dung cake is burnt along the way. The person is followed by the female members who walk bare-feet, crying loudly and spreading the mixture of paddy grains, rice and coins as an offering for the evil spirits on the way to make the path secure. This ritual is known as *Po Hola Wanegu*. Only daughters and sisters are allowed to perform this ritual, while the daughter-in-laws are not even allowed to attend the funeral. Those female members are followed by four *Guthiyaars* carrying the *Kota* in which the

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[54] Both are the special instruments used by *Newar*s only. *Kaa baja* is important in every rituals and festivals where as Nya Baja is played mostly in funeral and can only be played by *Nya* who are butchers by caste.

corpse is placed. The corpse is followed by the male members of the family, which is led by the chief mourner. They have to walk bare-feet and wrap themselves with the white shawl to show the condolence to the deceased. Last in the queue are the remaining *Guthiyaars*, carrying wheat straw which is required to burn the corpse. The funeral follows a route fixed for such purpose and has to halt at the first cross road outside the settlement where three sun-dried bricks have to be placed with a belief that the soul has to make a house to live in another world.

In the mean time, the cremation site *(Depa)* is prepared by the *Guthiyaars*. The pyre has to be built up by 9 pieces of long wood and 9 pieces of short wood, thus making 3 layers. Usually for each *Guthi*, there is a predefined cremation site. The cremation site is usually based on the bank of river, but in some places, it is found near to the temple of local deity. When the funeral arrives on the site, the corpse is taken out from the bier and kept on the pyre. The corpse is placed in such a way that the head points towards north. Then the ritual of *La Twankegu* is followed, in which, first, all the female mourners drip water on the mouth of the corpse after revolving for 3 times, scattering the mixture of paddy grains, rice and coins. After that, the female mourners return back from the cremation site. Then this ritual is conducted by the male mourners, serially from the youngest to the oldest and lastly, by the chief mourner. Finally the torch *(Mipula)*[55] made of bamboo is handed to the chief mourner. He lights the torch on the flame burning on the *Bhaaja* carried by one of the *Guthiyaars* all the way from home. After revolving around the corpse for 3 times, the chief mourner, then sets fire on the corpse by placing the *Mipula* under the head of corpse. But before that, the corpse (except the head) must be covered with the wheat straw carried by the *Guthiyaars* during the procession. Then, all the mourners go to river for bath except the *Guthiyaars* who have to wait till the corpse is converted to ashes. While returning back, before entering the house, all the mourners; male and female both; need to be purified as it is a belief that the mourners are haunted by the evil spirits during funeral. For purification, a ritual named *Bali Piya Chhwegu* has to be conducted. In this ritual, the eldest lady from the family stands in front of the house carrying a tray containing ginger, mustard seeds, salt and beaten rice along with an iron

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[55] A *mipula* is made of small pieces of bamboos in which Chandan (a kind of wood used for worshipping rituals) is also kept in few amount.

key or an iron sickle.[56] A fire-pot made of clay is also kept at the side with mustard seeds. As the mourners return back, they stand in a row. The lady gives a little amount of those materials to each of the mourners which they have to pretend to eat. Then the lady takes a handful of beaten rice and touches the mourner's head to feet, and then throws it in the name of the mourner. After that, the mourner sterilizes his face with the smoke of the mustard from the fire-pot and touches the iron key or sickle and passes it to the next mourner in the row. Then only he can enter the house. This applies for all of the mourners. After all mourners have entered the house, they are served with *Sisu-Palu* which includes beaten rice, pieces of ginger, butter and salt.[57] An exception applies to the chief mourner who is not allowed to take *Sisu-Palu.* After the *Sisu-Palu* rites, all the mourners return back to their respective houses.

Death pollution[58] is applicable to all the relative families *(Fukee)*[59] for 12 days during which they are not allowed to eat meat items as well as any fried items. However, married daughters of the family have the pollution period for only 4 days. In the house of the deceased, cooking is prohibited for whole pollution period. Thus, food has to be served to the family by the *Fukee* members in turn. The food should contain boiled rice, pulses and pickles, other stuffs are strictly prohibited. But, these days, such a traditional practice is breaking down and cooking is resumed on the second day, however, cooking has to be done by *Fukee* members. On the day of cremation, all the *Fukee* members are not allowed to cook and eat until the messenger from *Guthi*, who has attended the funeral, conveys the information of completion of the funeral procession. The food which is cooked before the death has to be thrown and only after getting the message from that *Guthi* member, they are allowed to cook and eat.

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[56] Normally, an iron key is used. But, in case of the *Jyapu Newars* of *Kirtipur*, an iron sickle is used instead confirming to their dominant agricultural interest. An iron sickle (eecha in *Newari*) is used frequently by the *Jyapu Newars* for cutting grass in the fields.
[57] To other hindu communities, salt is prohibited for the mourners for 13 days. But in case of *Newar*s, it is mandatory after returning from funeral.
[58] Death pollution is the term used for the people who are regarded unclean due to death of the relative person and have to follow certain restrictions because of the death.
[59] *Fukee* is the term applied to the agnatic relatives of the family.

5.3 Rituals after death

The series of rituals doesn't end here. Next day, early in the morning before sunrise, few male mourners, along with the chief mourner, have to go to the cremation site again. They are accompanied by a group of *Guthiyaars*. From the remains (ashes and bones) of the deceased, they have to prepare one statue. Two small seeds of *Ritha* (Sapindus Mukorossi) are used in the statue to represent the eyes and a conch shell for the mouth. Five heaps of boiled rice and beaten rice are used to form the body – legs, hands and head. Three pots of clay containing liquor, milk and beer made of rice are also taken along, which are poured on each of those heaps. Then, all those heaps of beaten rice and boiled rice are collected in a basket (*Khamhu* in *Newari,* which is used by the *Newar* males in agriculture as well as daily use for carrying stuffs) separately. Along with these, the last remains of ashes and bones are also collected for the final disposal in the river. The responsibility of disposing those remains is given to a certain number of *Sana Guthi members*.[60] Usually, those remains have to be separately kept and should be disposed in different holy places of the valley. Remains of the scalp should be disposed in *Gokarna*, one shoulder joint to the *Sankhamool* and the other in *Tekdwan* and two knee caps in *Lakha Tirtha* and *Bhacha-Khusi* respectively.[61] But these days, as *Bagmati* River flows through all those places, all the ashes and remains are disposed at once in the *Bagmati* River. After disposal, the *Khamhu* is brought back and hung outside the house. On the same day, all the relatives, friends and *Sana Guthi* members visit the family of deceased to offer condolence, in which females and males have to sit separately in the house. It is also a kind of ritual and named as *Bichaa Phayegu*.

On the fourth day after death, married daughters visit the house of deceased to perform a ritual called *Locha*. For conducting that ritual, they have to bring a basket of beaten rice, green vegetables, boiled beans, curd and liquor with them. Before entering the house, they need to wash their hands and face after which they enter the house crying loudly calling the deceased person with her relation to the deceased. The food brought by married daughters is taken by the female *Fukee* members in a feast named *Locha Bhwe*.

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[60] This responsibility is assigned to a group of 6 *Guthiyaars* yearly. For the particular year, it's the duty of those 6 *Guthiyaars* to dispose the last remains of the deceased.

[61] All those mentioned places have the temples and monasteries, thus regarded as holy places of the Hindus as well as Buddhists and all those places are situated on the bank of the *Bagmati* River.

Next ritual follows on the seventh day, which is called *Nhyanma Tayegu*. In this ritual, the eldest married daughter has to offer food[62] to a person from *Kusle*[63] caste in the name of the deceased. This offering occurs on the same place of the house where the deceased person was placed before death. On the same day's evening, food is offered to the deceased one by one, starting from the youngest to the oldest. After that, the chief mourner leaves for the cremation site again with a replica of wooden ladder, needle and a cooking furnace; which he leaves at the site and returns. After returning, then, he puts an iron nail on the main door. It's a belief that until this ritual, the soul of the deceased doesn't realize that he is dead and keeps returning back home from the cremation site. This ritual stops the spirit to enter the house.

On the tenth day, the ceremony of shaving heads occurs in which the chief mourner including other close relatives shave their heads. Only the chief mourner and other sons (if any) of the deceased have to shave their eye brows, mustache and beard as well. From that day, the sons are bound to wear only white clothes for whole year. If the deceased has a wife, then she also has to wear white clothes and also prohibited to use vermilion powder and any ornaments for the period of one year. But usually, a *Newar* widow is prohibited to wear red colored clothes for her entire lifetime.

On the twelfth day, the ritual of *Ghasu* takes place which symbolizes the complete purification for the family. Various worshipping rituals are conducted by a priest and are followed by a ceremonial feast. Formal invitation is not sent for the feast to anyone. But, all those relatives who have attended the funeral and the fourth day's ritual have to attend that feast. Along with other food, meat has to be served on this particular feast symbolizing the end of prohibition of eating meat. From the day of death, meat is prohibited for the family as well as *Fukee* members till the twelfth day. Next day is followed by the ritual of *Shraddha*[64] in which various worshipping rituals are performed in the name of deceased. *Shraddha* has to be performed in regular intervals – on 45th day of

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[62] The offered food should be in 7 shares, each containing boiled rice, pulse, oil, soya bean and milk.

[63] *Kusle* (in other words "Jogi") is one of the lower castes among the *Newar*s who are regarded unclean. Their traditional profession is tailoring, but they are also the priests of minor deities. They also play musical instruments at the festivals and other ceremonies. And also, they receive gifts and offerings on certain ceremonies from the higher castes.

[64] *Shraddha* refers to offering of food to the deceased along with worshipping rituals.

death (*Latya),* after 6 months (*Khula*), after one year (*Dakila*) and two years (*Nirha-tithi).* On all occasions a feast as to be served after conducting *Shraddha.* But after the second year, even if the *Shraddha* is conducted annually, feast is not served.

It is to be noted that *Guthi* has to play important role only up to the second day of death. After that, each and every ritual has to be performed by the family and its *Fukee* members. As *Sana Guthi* doesn't play any part after that, the rituals are not dealt here in detail.

5.4 Importance of *Sana Guthi* in Death rituals

Sana Guthi has an important role to play during the death both in terms of social and religious perspectives. It is a belief that in order to ensure easy life after death for the deceased, each and every religious ritual has to be performed correctly. All the materials required for the cremation of the corpse has to be arranged by the *Guthi*. For instance, the bamboos required for making a bier for the corpse, the wood required for preparing the cremation site and the huge amount of wheat straw required to burn the corpse have to be arranged and provided by the *Guthi*. Human resources needed for carrying those stuffs to the cremation site is also mobilized by the *Guthi*. In addition, the objects required for ritual performances like clay pots, iron chains, musical instruments (Kaa: Baja and Nya Baja) have to be arranged by the *Guthi* itself.

Additionally, *Guthi* itself has to perform some rituals as well. As the family and *Fukee* members of the deceased are considered polluted, they are not allowed to touch the corpse. Hence, it's the responsibility of *Guthiyaars*; who don't have kinship by blood; to prepare the corpse by cleaning it, removing clothes, and covering with white cloth, applying vermilion powder and tying the corpse in umbrella. It is also up to the *Guthiyaars* to prepare bier for the corpse and place it on that bier. During the funeral procession, *Guthiyaars* are required to carry the corpse from the house to the cremation site. Most importantly, the preparation of cremation site has to be done by the *Guthiyaars*. Building of a pyre with three layers of wood on the site is conducted by the *Guthiyaars*. Even after the final burning of the corpse by the chief mourner, they have to stay there to ensure

the completion of burning till it is reduced to ashes. Even the next day's ritual of disposing the last remains of ashes and bones to the defined holy places is also conducted by the *Guthiyaars* of the particular *Sana Guthi*.

Moreover, the financial and social support needed by the family of the deceased is also fulfilled by the *Guthi*. In some cases, provision of a special kind of *Guthi*; namely *Bichaa Guthi*; is found for the financial support to the family of deceased. But, in most of the cases, *Sana Guthi* takes up this responsibility. During the funeral procession, *Sana Guthi* has a system of attendance to ensure the participation of all the *Guthiyaars*. The *Guthiyaars* who are absent on the particular funeral are fined with some financial amount which goes to the fund of the *Guthi*.

5.5 Impacts of modernization

In this ever changing world, the rituals also are not the exceptions. Death rituals are also changing its shape along with the duties and responsibilities of the *Sana Guthi*. Modernization can be regarded as one of the factors for such kind of changes. Whether the changes are negative or positive, it cannot be distinguished.

In the current context, due to the modern medical facilities and treatments, there is one hope that a person can be saved till his last breath. Thus, most of the people are taken to hospitals during the critical situation. That's why most of the people spend their last stage and leave this world in hospitals. In such cases, the corpse is not brought home. Rather, it is directly taken to the cremation site. So, the rituals that have to be conducted at home during the last stage are not done at all. However, the ritual of cleaning the corpse and other rituals of making bier are conducted. Similarly, the ritual of *Phanga Tayekegu*, in which married daughters have to place a piece of cotton over the corpse, is nowadays vanished; however, some communities are still maintaining it. Likewise, the ritual of *BramhaNaal* and the tradition of calling *Ghate Vaidya* during the last stage is not in practice.

In *Newar* Society, the family members of the deceased have to visit various Hindu shrines and Buddhist monasteries during the whole year across the valley for *puja*; during which they have to offer 108 lights at each shrine in the name of the deceased. These rituals are performed in order to make sure that the deceased soul rests in peace. However, such rituals are diminishing in the current context. In their words, *"Life is so fast in this modern age. Nobody has enough time to visit all Shrine and monasteries, all are busy in their own daily activities. Numerous shrines have to be visited and it is almost impossible to manage time for that."* Thus, it seems that lack of time is the cause behind the degenerating trend of such performances.

Another change that can be observed is the lack of participation of the relatives as well as the *Guthiyaars* in the funeral procession. Migration of people to different places within the country as well as abroad is much higher these days, due to which the relatives become unable to attend the funeral procession. In case of the *Guthiyaars*, though they live in the same territory, it is not always possible for them to attend the funerals. And, the fine amount for not attending the funeral is much lower, which increases the tendency in people to pay fine instead of "*wasting their time*" in the funerals. Additionally, there is a tradition of burning the corpse in the predefined cremation site located near to the territorial boundary of the *Guthi*. But these days, if a person dies in hospital, people are not even taking the corpse to the predefined cremation site of the locality. Instead, they are conducting funerals in the sites nearby the hospital or taking to the *Aryaghat* [65] of *Pashupati Nath* [66]. Conducting funerals in other sites than the predefined ones reduces the necessity for conducting the second day death rituals as the cremation sites like *Aryaghat* are crowded and dead body has to be disposed soon after the completion of burning. Not only that, travelling to such places becomes lengthy and time consuming for the local *Guthiyaars*. According to one of the *Guthi*yaars, *"If the corpse is taken to Aryaghat, then it takes more than an hour to reach there and have to spend more money in transportation compare to the fine amount for being absent. So, I would rather prefer to stay home than attending funerals in such places."* This is another

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[65] Famous cremation site for all Hindus situated in the territory of *Pashupati Nath* temple
[66] Pashupati Nath is the biggest temple for all Hindus. It is the temple of Lord Shiva.

reason for the *Guthiyaars* to avoid the funeral participation. Due to lack of participation, proper conduction of the ritualistic activities becomes difficult.

There are few examples of females acting as the chief mourners. Unlike the male chief mourners, the females don't shave their heads and wear white clothes for the whole year, as wearing white clothes symbolize the death of their husbands. It can be symbolized as a change in tradition, as traditionally it was strictly prohibited for the females to do so and such ritual performed by females is not considered pure till now. Introduction of young members to the working committee allowed such changes in tradition despite arguments with the older ones. According to the young working committee members, *"In this modern age, male and female are equal in every sense. In the old age, people used to think that they will not be able to go to heaven after death if they don't have a son. Female children were deprived from education and other facilities as they were the ones who leave their parents after marriage. But, sons are the ones who take care of them when they grow older. That's why they used to prefer sons to daughters. But, the conditions are different these days; females are equally capable of taking care of their parents and are equal to males in every sense. So, why should they be deprived from such rituals? Thus, we have allowed females to be chief mourners if there are no male members in the family."* People are realizing the fact of gender equality and even the government is promoting it. There is a saying now a days, *"Chhora hos ya chhori, dubai Barabari"* (son or daughter, both are equal). It seems *Newar* people are also changing their traditional way of thinking regarding the equality of male and female. In this sense, the changes brought by modernization can be regarded positive and beneficial for the well being of society.

In this modern world, where fashion has its importance in the lives of people, the tradition of wearing white clothes for whole year and shaving of head, eyebrows, and mustache-beard is fading away. Some people, these days, even don't follow any of those rules. People; who have to go abroad or people who have such professions in which following those rules is not possible; they are not bound to follow such rules. Youngsters of this modern world, who are very much conscious about modern fashion, are not interested at all to follow such traditions. Regarding wearing white clothes and shaving

off the head, they raise questions like, *"Why should we suffer sacrificing our interests for those people who have already left the world?"* Thus, these days there is a growing trend of ending the pollution period (only for wearing white clothes) during the marking of 13th or 45th day. Even if the pollution period is not ended, it is very common these days to wear light colored clothes like off-white, cream and ash; instead of pure white.

Thus, it can be observed that the strict tradition is becoming flexible along with time. Rituals are also reshaping according to availability of resources and materials and also, lack of participation is forcing for such changes. Thoughts of the young generation, the way they think and do, are forcing the rituals to change. Additionally, *Guthi* system is also under the influence of modern thoughts of youngsters. Flexibility is provided to the *Guthiyaars* concerning their own individual daily lives which increased the tendency among them to remain absent during such funeral rituals and pay few amount of money instead. This tendency has resulted in less participation of the *Guthiyaars* due to which the human resources required for the rituals become inadequate.

CHAPTER VI: FESTIVALS AND RITUALS CONDUCTED BY *SANA GUTHI*

This chapter tries to illustrate some examples of the festivals and rituals conducted by the *Sana Guthi*. To be precise, two of the community festivals conducted by *Shree Bhairabnath Ta: Guthi* with support of other existing *Guthi* organizations are explained on the basis of observations and the responses from the interviewees. On the same basis, the changes and impacts of modernization are also discussed. Targeted respondents include the active members of *Guthi* as well as the *Newar* youth participants of the rituals.

6.1 *Newars* and the Festivals

The *Newars* are well known across the country for their numerous religious festivals, feasts and rituals round the year. It is even commonly said that these *Newars* have more number of festivals and ceremonies than the days in a year. In spite of centralizing themselves in Kathmandu Valley only, not only in Kathmandu, but where ever these *Newars* have migrated and settled across the country, they have managed to observe those festivals and feasts regularly (Shrestha, 2002: 38). Regarding the origins of such festivals, evidences show that those festivals had existed during the early periods of *Malla* dynasty and *Lichchhavi* Kingdom as well. Sharma (1997: 153) has mentioned about the existence of some festivals during the reigns of *jayasthiti Malla* (1382-95 AD) and *Yakshya Malla* (1428-82 AD).

Nepali (1965: 343-4) has categorized *Newari* festivals into two broad categories. Festivals based on locality and territorial boundary fall into one category whereas the other category includes Hindu calendar festivals which are usually confined to the family members and kin groups. The festivals which fall into the former category are regarded as the community festivals, in which, usually the participation is inter-caste and various *Guthi* organizations have to participate actively on those ones. Even in some of those festivals, *Guthi* has to play leading role. But, in the latter categorized festivals, *Guthi*;

except *Diwali Guthi* in some cases; has no role to play as they are limited to the family members and the kinship relatives.

6.2 *Bisnhnudevi – Balkumari Jatra*

It's the specialty of *Newar* people that each of the *Newar* settlement, whether it's a town or a village, has its own local deity (gods and goddesses). It is one of the most common features of all *Newar* settlements, that each of them has its annual festival and procession of the most important deity of that particular place (Shrestha, 2002: 38). Likewise, for the *Newar* settlement of *Panga, Bishnudevi* and *Balkumari* are two local female deities, for whom they have a combined annual festival. Goddess *BishnuDevi* is situated at the outer ring of the territory, where the cremation site *Depa* is located, whereas *Balkumari* is situated in the inner ring of the settlement. Both of these deities are regarded as sister-in-laws and the temples are regarded as the natal homes before marriage. There is a temple house; *Dya Chhen*[67]; in the central *chowk*[68]; which is regarded as the home to both these deities after marriage. *Balkumari* is regarded as the *Digu Dya:*[69] of the families that belong to *Shree Bhairabnath Ta: Guthi.* This particular festival (*jatra*) itself is a part of the big series of festivals which is called *Nhya Gaya Jatra* which means the festivals of seven villages. Seven different festivals based on seven different localities compose together to form this festival which includes *Indrayani-Ganesh Jatra* of *Kirtipur, Bhairab Jatra* of *Boshi Gaun, Bishnudevi Jatra* of *Satungal, Bishnudevi Jatra* of *Tinthana, Bishnudevi Jatra* of *Taukhel, Bhairav Jatra* of *Lwangkot* along with *Bishnudevi-BalKumari Jatra* of *Panga*. On this series, the first to be conducted is the *Jatra* of *Bishnudevi-Balkumari*, which is held on December (according to Nepalese calendar, it is on 8th of the bright half of *Mangsir*[70]).

The initialization of the *Bishnudevi-Balkumari Jatra* starts a week before the actual procession (*Jatra*) day. One thing to be noted here is; the festival is conducted with the combined efforts of 4 *Sana Guthi* organizations of the locality. Main is *Shree Bhairabnath*

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[67] Dya Chhen literally means house of the God
[68] A central part of locality with open space for gatherings and usually contains resting places
[69] *Digu Dha:* refers to the main God or goddess (clan deity) of the family.
[70] *Mangsir*, also known as *Marga*, is a month in Hindu calendar which lies in November-December.

Ta: Guthi (commonly called *Ta: Guthi* only)*,* and the supporting ones are *Sikuchhe Guthi* (also called *Chi: Guthi)*, *Pukhusi Guthi* and *Seshyo Guthi*.[71] Except *Seshyo Guthi*, all other *Guthi*s have *Jyapu Guthiyaars*; while *Seshyo Guthi* belongs to the people from *Shrestha* caste; which is ranked higher in the caste hierarchy. This is the uniqueness of the locality that various *Sana Guthi* organizations work together for a single festival, which is normally not found in other *Newar* settlements. It demonstrates the social harmony among the different castes living in a particular geographical territory.

Money is collected from all the existing *Sana Guthi* organizations; 50% from *Ta: Guthi*, 25% each from *Chi: Guthi* and *Pukhusi Guthi*; to buy a buffalo *(Manda Mecha:)* to be sacrificed for the festival. A butcher *(Nya)* brings few buffaloes to the *Guthi*, among which one will be selected by the *Thakali*[72] of the *Ta: Guthi* and then locked in the periphery of *Guthi* house for 4 days. Two days before the festival, the buffalo is taken, along with necessary worshipping materials, to the periphery of *Balkumari* temple and sacrificed in her name. In this ritual, slaughtering is conducted by the *Kusle*[73]. But, during this ritual, the head of buffalo is not separated; just the neck is cut a bit so that blood flows through the cut. There are altogether 13 stone statues of gods and goddesses in the inner periphery of the temple. They are namely - *Indrayani* (red colored), *Bhairab* (Blue colored), *Bramhayani* (Yellow colored), *Barahi* (Red colored), *Rudrayani* (White colored), *Kumari* (Red colored), *Chamuni Kali* (Blue colored), *Ganga* (Yellow colored), *Bishnudevi* (Green colored), *Kaali* (Black colored), *Ganesh* (White colored), *Singhini* (White colored) and *Byanghini* (White colored). Each of the gods and goddesses are offered handful of blood streaming out from the neck of buffalo except *Ganga;* she is offered milk instead. After this ritual, meat of sacrificed buffalo is processed and divided in 3 parts; half of the meat is taken by *Ta: Guthi* and the rest is divided between the other two. This division takes place in *Ta: Guthi*, where appointed *Guthiyaars* from other *Guthis* are offered *Chhoyla*[74]. Then, appointed *Guthiyaars* of *Ta: Guthi* have to take the meat to other two

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[71] Chi: *Guthi* is the small *Guthi*, Pukhusi *Guthi* is mainly for the migrated families and Seshyo *Guthi* is the *Guthi* of the families belonging to Shrestha castes. Shrestha caste is regarded superior to the *Jyapu* caste in hierarchy.

[72] Eldest person of the *Guthi*

[73] kusle is a lower caste, also known as Jugi or Kapali. A person from this caste becomes the caretaker of Dya Chhen.

[74] Chhoyla is a special *Newari* dish made of buffalo meat and spices

Guthis, where they are also offered *Chhoyla* in return. This ritual is called *Chhoyla Bu:*. During this ritual, heart of the buffalo is taken out and placed in a clay pot. On the Day of the festival, a representative from *Ta: Guthi* has to take that pot; along with worshipping materials, flowers and raw eggs; to a place named *Bakhu*[75] where all the chariots[76] from the remaining six villages are kept. In that place, worshipping is conducted after which the chariots are taken by the people to respective villages to prepare for the procession.

The following day of sacrificing ritual, after conducting *Puja*[77], the statues of *Bishnudevi* and *Balkumari*[78] are shifted from *Dya Chhen* (house of Goddesses) to the chariots placed in the *chowk*[79] by representatives of *Seshyo Guthi*. During this ritual, any member from other *Guthis* is not allowed to touch the statues. *Shresthas (Seshyo* in local terms), being the superior caste, it is an honor for them to conduct such ritual and *Jyapus* being ranked low in hierarchy, are not allowed to touch the statues. After this ritual, first, the chariot of *Balkumari* is taken to the periphery of its temple located in south-east inner periphery of the locality. Afterwards in the evening, the chariot of *Bishnudevi* is carried over to the periphery of its temple located in eastern border of the locality. A special group of 24 *Guthiyaars*; 12 from *Ta: Guthi* and 6 each from *Chi: Guthi* and *Pukhusi Guthi*; is assigned the responsibility of carrying the chariots and taking care of the statues and jewelries of those deities. At night, both the chariots are again taken from those temples to a place named *Dya Pacha:* (resting place of deities from where the *Jatra* procession starts), where the *Guthiyaars* have to stand by whole night making a fire in front of those chariots. Next morning, all the people from the locality as well as other localities come to worship those deities. Different musician groups from all the *Guthis* visit and worship those deities playing their traditional musical instrument sets like *Kaa: Baja*, *Basuri Baja*, *Dhime Baja* etc. After resting the chariots, when all the people have worshipped the deities, they are finally prepared for the procession. But, for the procession to be started,

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[75] Name of a place where chariots from remaining six localities are placed before procession
[76] A chariot usually refers to a carrier made of wood consisting 4 wheels, but in this case, the chariots without wheels are used.
[77] A term used for typical hindu and Buddhist worshipping ritual.
[78] The metal statues of *Balkumari* and *Bidhnudevi* ornamented with expensive jewelries are kept in *Dya Chhen* where as the replica stone statues are placed in their respective temples in ordinary days.
[79] Chowk refers to an empty place which is normally found in the middle of every *Newar* settlement specially designed for gatherings during such festivals.

a respectable person from the community; usually the governmental administrative chief of the area; has to worship the deities. This ritual is named as *Dware Puja.* After this ritual, the procession starts following a certain route in such a way that it touches each and every part of the locality. The procession includes the chariots of both deities along with all the musical groups and the *Guthiyaars*. The procession ends in the central *chowk* of the locality where *Dya Chhen* is located. Again, the deities are worshipped before they are finally taken out from the chariots and placed in the *Dya Chhen*. This festival is one of the biggest for the people of *Panga* and later on that day, each household organizes a typical *Newari* feast with numerous varieties of *Newari* cuisines for all the relatives and friends which is called *Nakha Tya:*. The *Balkumari-Bishnudevi Jatra* ends that day and the next day, festivals of the remaining six villages are conducted by their respective *Guthi* organizations.

The main reason behind this procession is the security of the people living in that particular locality. As these two deities are regarded as the caretakers of that particular locality, it is a belief that they should visit the locality once a year for blessing the place. The blessings would help people to live their life safely and securely without any natural disasters round the year.

6.3 *Harishankar Narayan Bosran*

Another important ritual conducted by *Shree Bhairabnath Ta: Guthi* is the annual worshipping of *Lord HariShankar Narayan*. The temple of *HariShankar Narayan* is located in the central *chowk* of *Panga* in front of *Dya Chhen* of the deities *Bishnudevi* and *Balkumari*. *HariShankar Narayan* is believed to be an incarnation of Lord *Bishnu* who is regarded responsible for the prosperity of the local people of *Panga*. Once a year, *puja* has to be done in order to honor the God for making the peoples' lives prosperous throughout the year and to request prosperity in the upcoming year as well.

A goat is required for sacrificing in the name of the God which is arranged by *Ta: Guthi*. The worshipping materials are also arranged by same *Guthi*. But, the worshipping rituals have to be conducted by the *Guthiyaars* of *Seshyo Guthi*. Here again, privilege of

worshipping is given to the higher caste people. For worshipping, a fireplace is prepared, sitting in front of which, a priest chants *mantras*[80] for 1-2 hours. During this period, the selected *Guthiyaars* from *Seshyo Guthi* sit in front of the fireplace and follow the instructions provided by the priest sitting opposite to them. The musicians play *Kaa: Baja* continuously until the *Puja* is concluded. In the mean time, *Guthiyaars* and other local people prepare goat for sacrifice and cook rice in a copper vessel nearby the temple.

As soon as the ritual is concluded, the goat is sprinkled with some water over its body. People wait until the goat shakes its body because it is believed that until the goat shakes its body, it cannot be sacrificed. As soon as it does so, the *Kusle* grabs the goat and cuts the goat's neck from throat. This way of sacrificing animal is uncommon in Hinduism. Unlike typical Hindu way, the sacrificing process is more similar to the Muslim community in which sacrifice is done by cutting the throat in the name of Allah. The reason behind this ritual cannot be figured out. Even the *Guthiyaars* also respond to such curiosity like *"it is our tradition which is being carried out since ancient times. Our fathers and fore-fathers used to do it in such manner. We have to follow same traditions."*

After this ritual, the intestine of goat is taken out and cleaned. Afterwards, air is filled in the intestine and wrapped on the copper vessel containing cooked rice along with the head of sacrificed goat. Then, along with musical groups playing traditional *Kaa: Baja*, procession starts to travel across all the streets of the locality which is followed by the *Guthiyaars*. On each temple of the locality, a small amount of rice is offered (*Prasad* in local terms) as the blessings of Lord *HariShankar Narayan*. There is a belief that if that rice is eaten, it will act as a medicine to stomach pains, thus, people having such problems also eat some grains of rice from the vessel. After offering rice in all the temples of the locality, the procession ends in front of the *HariShankar Narayan* temple.

6.4 Impacts of Modernization

Unlike the case of death rituals, the changes brought by modernization seem to be very less in case of such community festivals. One argument supporting for this may be the

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[80] Mantras are certain worshipping statements in Sanskrit which is a part of worshipping ritual.

nature of human being that seeks entertainment periodically. Thus, as these festivals conducted by the *Sana Guthis* are not only religious, but also entertainment oriented, the participation also seemed huge and active. Specially, these festivals are found most popular among the *Newar* Youth. And, it is obvious that wherever Youth are found interested, the participation becomes strong and active.

Another important factor for huge mass participation on such festivals is the fixed dates of those festivals. People know which days those festivals are going to be held. Thus, in spite of not being public holiday, people usually manage to stay away from other works and businesses on those particular days. Even, it is experienced that people far away from home; except who are staying abroad; are even managing time for such festivals as these are the opportunities for them to visit their native homes and relatives.

Regarding the rituals performed during those festivals, nothing has changed comparing to the past. Various interviews to the elder people of the community revealed the fact that they are experiencing the same traditions followed since their childhood till present date. Even it was realized that the traditions were being followed without knowing the proper reasons. Active members of *Guthi*s also share their pride on experiencing huge youth participation in such occasions. According to them, *"it is better for us and our communities that Newar Youths are excited about such festivals which provide them entertainment. While they are focused on entertainment, we can focus on the religious rituals and traditions. Side by side, they can see and experience what we are following now, and hopefully, they will do the same when they grow older. A lot of human resources are required for conduction of such festivals which need strong individuals, and that is provided by the Young generation"*. For example, the chariot of *Bishnudevi* weighs about 1000 kilograms and that of *Balkumari* weighs about 800 kilograms. Carrying such heavy chariots along the narrow pathways of the locality needs immense power, which is generally found on Youth rather than the aged people. So, youth participation is important which is fulfilled by the *Newar* Youths.

On the other hand, regarding the reason of youth active participation, one strong reason observed was entertainment. *"We can watch movies or play sports anytime we want. But*

we cannot observe this kind of entertainment whenever we feel like doing so. It comes once a year. So, we eagerly wait for such entertainment sources. We have to wait for it, but it will not wait for us." Even the parents seemed eager to allow their children to take leave from their colleges to observe such festivals. *"We want them to observe our traditional culture so that they can perform it well when they have to bear such responsibilities."*

While viewing from another perspective, hint of modernization impacts can be felt on the motive of participation among the people. It is clear that the motivation of participation is contrasting between the older generation and the young ones. It leaves one suspect that, if the youth are participating on those festivals and rituals seeking entertainment, then it may not be necessary for them to participate in the future for the same purpose. As, numerous modern entertainment sources are easily available for such purposes, there is huge possibility of youth losing attraction for such traditional entertainment sources. Internet, television, theatres, sports, games etc are easily accessible in the current context. Additionally, the elders pointed out some negative aspects of youth participation and suspect about their kids creating negative trends. According to them, *"What we don't like is the trend of drinking alcohol in such participation. We all drink alcohol, we are allowed by religion and caste as well. But we don't lose our control like these youngsters. We have recently faced various complications in such festivals. As the young people get drunk during festivals due to which it becomes very tough to control them. They have young blood which builds a tendency to fight with each other. Most of the time, they start fighting for carrying the chariots. Everybody wants to carry the chariots, which is not possible and on that reason they start fighting. It will be best if we can make them understand about the importance of such festivals in our society and the motive of creating social harmony through these festivals."*

While talking about youth participation, it is not only done by the male youth. Rather, female participation is also higher these days, but in different manner. Females are seen actively participating in such festivals as the musicians. In early ages, only males were allowed to play such traditional musical instruments, but the situation is different at present. Even, various *Guthi* organizations are initiating to train and involve females in

such musical groups who have to actively participate in such festivals. Hence, here also, evidences of change of tradition can be observed.

The most important factor is - whatever the reason of youth participation is; at least they will see the traditions and will know what to do and how to do when they have to bear such responsibilities. This is how tradition is passed from one generation to another. But, on the contrary, it cannot be denied that the present situation may change in the future. Until the young generation feels the importance of tradition and culture and till they observe the festivals and rituals just as the means of entertainment, there is every possibility of losing interest and participation in such events in the future. Thus, it can be concluded that in spite of active participation of the young generation, it cannot be confirmed that it will remain the same in the future as well, which might force such festivals and rituals to be changed and even to be vanished.

CHAPTER VII: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary

Newar Society, being one of the indigenous groups of Nepal, has its own distinct identity, culture and traditions. In this study, I have tried to highlight the characteristics of a typical *Newar* society including their history of origin, settlement patterns, life passage rituals, social hierarchy and caste system, and their traditions and culture. Furthermore, I have tried to focus on their religiously inspired traditional social organizations *Guthi* which is regarded as one of the core elements of their society.

Guthi, a socio-religious organization being practiced by *Newar* people since their ancient times, has been acting as a caretaker of the *Newar* traditions and culture. Various types of *Guthi* existed have their own objectives and functionalities. Of which, *Sana Guthi* is termed as the most important one, especially for the *Jyapu* castes who are the agriculturalist peasants of the group. It's the regular practices of *Guthi* system, which makes *Jyapu* castes strongest on their culture and traditions in comparison to other *Newar* castes. The functions of Sana *Guthi* are illustrated in this thesis on the basis of case study of *Shree Bhairabnath Ta: Guthi* practiced by the *Jyapu* castes of *Panga*.

Death is one irresistible phenomena of nature; a person born has to die for sure. Different communities have their own way of disposing the corpse which varies according to religion. For instance, in Hinduism, it is burnt in fire whereas in Muslim and Christian communities, it is buried. No matter how the corpse is disposed, the series of rituals has to be followed during the process. In *Newar* society, though the corpse is burnt according to Hindu religion, distinct series of rituals has to be followed which is pretty much different than other Hindu communities. Sana *Guthi* becomes important for carrying out such rituals properly. The belief of the soul being immortal and needs material comforts after life, makes the *Newar* people follow such rituals properly so that the soul of deceased doesn't have to face any problems after death. In the fifth chapter, all the rituals to be followed were discussed in details. However, it was also identified that

impacts of modernization are also high on such rituals. As a result, some rituals have changed their shape while some have already vanished.

Two of the festivals conducted by Sana *Guthi* were discussed in chapter six. Traditional societies have the provision of entertainment with the religious influence in it. The festivals of *Bishnudevi-Balkumari Jatra* and *Harishankar Narayan Bosran* have their own significances for the religious belief of the people and along with; they possess their own unique way of entertainment. And, it was found that participation also becomes higher in such entertainment oriented cultural elements. But in such participation also, the motives seemed to be contrasting between the youngsters and the elderly ones. The focus of youngsters in entertainment only; without knowledge on the themes; leaves doubt on their participation in the future.

7.2 Conclusion

This segment is further divided in three sub-segments - first one deals on different modernization factors which are considered responsible for changes in traditional cultures of the *Newar* Society; second one deals with impacts of such factors on the *Guthi*; and in the last part, I have tried to discuss on whether these modernization factors are beneficial for the society or not in terms of traditional culture and preservation.

7.2.1 Modernization factors and their impacts on *Newar* Society

The term "Modern Nepal" was introduced after the territorial unification of the country in the 18th century which was initiated by King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha Kingdom (Bhattachan, 2008: 19). Historians believe that after that landmark, modernization was introduced to the country. This historical movement initiated the exposure and mixture of different cultures, and for this, Kathmandu Valley acted as a melting pot. The indigenous *Newar* people inhabiting the valley were exposed to the mainstream peoples' culture and living styles. It can be said that the colonization process; 'national unification drive' in suitable terms; acted as the plantation for the process of modernization, allowing the cultures to be mixed with each other. Additionally, it also initiated on migration of people to different places other than their traditional localities.

But some historians believe that influence of other cultures have been initiated way before the territorial unification process. According to Bhattachan (2008: 19), in Kathmandu where Buddhism was the main religion, Hindu domination began with the restructuring of caste system by the King *Jaysthiti Malla* during 14th century. The King structured native *Newars* into 64 castes based on occupational division of labor with the advice of 5 Brahmin priests who were invited from India. However, these caste divisions were neither based on hierarchic Hindu Varna model nor on the ancient Hindu inscriptions. Thus, the caste system of *Newar* people is regarded extremely complicated. This division of castes indeed paved a way for intensification of the processes of "Hinduization" or "Sanskritization" of the indigenous nationalities (ibid). This influence of introducing new religion and language can also be regarded as the process of modernization for the native *Newars*, which was something different than what they were practicing traditionally over the years and which remolded the whole society into new dimensions. This obviously proves a point that traditional societies are not closed for transformation; rather they are open to changes. It also proves another point that western culture is not the only key to modernization; though it can be termed as a part of modernization.

However, westernization can be regarded as one of the most influencing factors of modernization. The influence of western culture is very high especially on the urban settlements. And, the *Newar* people; inhabiting the capital of the country; are one of the most vulnerable ones. We can see westernization on various attributes of culture like dance, music, cuisines. Western music is much more popular among the youngsters in compare to their native ones. *Newar* people seem to be enjoying various categories of western music like rock, pop, hip-hop, jazz etc rather than their folk ones. Regarding the musical instruments, traditional instruments are played only in some occasions while concerts with western music and instruments can be observed every now and then in the streets of Kathmandu (Shrestha, 1998: 10). In *Newar* marriage customs, traditional *Basuri Baja* is played during the procession of bride-groom going to the bride's house, which is now replaced by western band music. Similarly, *Newar* youth seem to be eager to learn western dances rather than their traditional ones. The food patterns are also changing these days, as traditional foods are being replaced by western fast food. Even in *Newar*

ceremonies, western Buffet dinner is replacing traditional feast of *Lapte Bhoj* (Maharjan, 2002: 67).

Impacts of Indian culture and the similar culture of mainstream society are also higher on *Newar* Society. Earlier, I have mentioned about the "Hinduization" and "sanskritization" which points out on the influence of such cultures. *Bahunbaad* and *Chhetribaad* (Brahminism and Chhetrism) are dominating every other culture. The official language is Nepali which is the mother tongue of mainstream society. Language is regarded as the most vital element of any society's culture. If language dies, it leads to gradual loss of cultural identity (ibid: 68; Tuladhar, 2004: 40). Same thing is happening in the *Newar* society. The statistics show that 5.48% population of the country, are the *Newars* whereas it also shows that only 3.63% population can speak *Newar*i language (Nepal in figures, 2008). That implies 1.85% of the Nepalese population are the *Newars*, who cannot speak *Newar*i language. And, it is an increasing phenomenon which may lead to extinction of this language in future.

Education, in a way, is also one of the major factors of modernization. The education system of Nepal has no place for *Newar*i language even for the natives. The official schooling language is also either Nepali or English. A *Newar* child learns Nepali and English from the age of 3, while he cannot learn his native language even at home. People have a perception that if a child is not taught such official languages at home, he might get problems in the future. So, these days, parents also seem to be eager to teach those languages at home as well and thus, a child doesn't learn his mother tongue even at home (Shrestha, 1998: 10). It's not that, no attempts were made to avoid such tendency. According to Shrestha (ibid), the first *Newar* medium school was established in 1991, but only a few *Newar* parents chose to send their children in that school where *Newar*i was the medium of instruction. He further added that, even the so called "*Newar* Leaders" who have been engaged in the *Newar* language and *Newar* movement also chose not to send their children to the first *Newar* medium school either. In addition, there is a much higher trend in *Newar* people to get their higher education abroad. Most likely destinations are either America or Australia or United Kingdom. During their stay in such countries, they get acquainted to western cultures and seek for the same after return.

Even, immigration to such countries is higher which makes them disconnected from their culture, which also leads to participation scarcity in the traditional rituals and festivals.

Media and Technology can be termed as most influencing factors for every society. Television, internet and communication are one of the significant achievements of science and technology. Hundreds of channels are available in medias like television and radio, through which people are getting exposure to western and Indian cultural elements. Indian channels such as Star Plus, Sony, colors etc telecast family drama serials which are more popular among the housewives. And, such serials have been influencing for the housewives to imitate on fashion. Traditional dressings are also one of the major cultural elements. Western and Indian Fashion are dominating over the *Newar*i traditional dressing. Except in few occasions, *Newar* people are reluctant to wear their traditional dresses; which is even diminishing these days (Maharjan, 2002: 67). Moreover, entertainment sources of this era like various video games, movies, sports are attracting youngsters allowing them very less time for their traditional ways of entertainment such as different festivals and occasions.

Recession in religious concern and interest; according to Toffin (2007: 313); can also be invoked as a modernization factor. The tendency of people to devote less time and money for rituals and being reluctant to attend their ritual duties and traditional obligations are higher among the *Newar* people. He further adds that religion is not rejected, but the constraints of modern life and salaried work have reduced the importance of religion. In addition, individualism has also played vital role in reluctant behavior on participation in such social gatherings (ibid; Bajracharya, 1998: 7).

Modernization, as defined to destruct the so called hierarchy among the people establishing equality among the people (Bendix, 1967: 292), has also acted as one of the influencing factors for the change. Especially in case of *Newars*, who have their rigid caste hierarchy, the caste system is extremely important to structure the society and conduct the religious rituals as well as life passage rituals. But, it is losing its "traditional cohesion", particularly among the low-caste people whose duties are important in various festivals and life passage rituals (Shrestha, 1998: 9). For example, the purification rituals during

death, requires the people from *Nau* (barber) caste to cut the nails, paint them and shave the head of the mourners. But, nowadays, most of people from this caste are unwilling to continue their task, as they have managed other income sources for their livelihood. Such discontinuation of traditional occupation of different castes are higher, especially for the people from low castes, as their occupations are regarded inferior both in terms of social and economic status.

7.2.2 Impacts of modernization on Traditional Social Organization - *Guthi*

In case of *Guthi*, modernization impacts are leading towards extinction of such traditional practices. Various modernization factors mentioned above are changing the perspectives of people towards *Guthi*. Such modernization factors are promoting on modern thought that have least importance for such traditional institutions. Specially, the *Guthi* organizations related with certain festivals and dance performances have recently disappeared (Toffin, 2007: 312). It is stated that only in the small town of *Sankhu*, 41 such *Guthi* organizations have closed down within few years (Shrestha, 2002: 161). However, among all types, *Sana Guthi* seems to be enduring till now because of its importance in death rituals. But almost in all cases, *Guthi* membership is no longer binding as before. *"In truth, global dissonance has developed between these institutions and modern society."* (Toffin, 2007: 313).

With the introduction of new young members in the working committee of Sana *Guthi*, changes in *Guthi* rituals were initiated. For example, in death rituals, females were not allowed to be chief mourners traditionally; which has been changed with the modern thoughts of gender equality. In fact, the traditional working principles are replaced by modern working principles. These *Guthi* organizations are reshaped accordingly with the motive to resemble to the modern clubs and organizations. Even, new associations have appeared which are totally different from *Guthi* organizations, even if their names make use of these older forms. *Jyapu MahaGuthi* and *Jyapu Samaj* are the live examples of such associations whose structures resemble that of democratic organizations, with branches assigned to diverse localities, whose leadership is in the hands of younger generations or the social activists instead of *Thakalis* (Toffin, 2007: 315)*. Along with such associations,

various youth clubs and womens' groups (*Aama Samuha*) are being established in local level, which are gradually replacing traditional *Guthi* organizations. Such increasing attraction on different other modern associations are forcing *Guthi* organizations to remain passive and eventually collapse due to lack of active participation.

Financial constraints have forced *Guthi* organizations to bypass some of their ritual elements and in some cases, even to cease performing their duties for which they were originally established. In the recent past, *Guthi* organizations used to have their own land property donated by the *Guthi*yaars for religious purpose. Those lands were given on rent to the tenants, through which financial revenues were collected by the *Guthi* organizations. But, the land reform act introduced by government in 1964 allowed the tenants to register such land properties that belonged to *Guthi* organizations in their names (Shrestha, 1998: 10; Shrestha, 2002: 32; Toffin, 2007: 314). This led *Guthi* organizations to financial crisis due to which numerous *Guthi* organizations couldn't survive. And, those which exist till now, also have to depend on the contributions from the *Guthiyaars*.

7.2.3 Modernization – problem or advantage?

Process of Modernization led the western societies for movement from 'traditional' to 'modern', which ultimately led them from "feudal, hierarchical, rural and agricultural" social forms to "capitalistic, class, urban and industrial" forms (Nash, 1979: 69). This transformation led those societies to easy and efficient human life and ultimately to development. The concepts of equality in society, democracy, economic growth, and industrial productions were well established which resulted through the modernization of the society giving the new dimensions to the society.

But at the same time, it led to gradual impacts on traditional cultures of the societies. Traditional societies are well known for their hierarchical social structure based on kinship ties and heredity privilege (Bendix, 1967: 293), which slowly started to shift towards the society based on equal rights. From the social point of view such changes may be positive, but in terms of traditional culture, such impacts of modernization can act negatively as it

may cause 'serious friction and tension with the traditional cultures' (Naofusa, 1983). The report developed by Chinese Ministry of Culture (INCP, 2004), tends to illustrate modernization in two perspectives, according to which it differentiates the understanding of modernization between the developed and developing countries. According to the report, *"Developed countries stressed that modernization had provided the conditions for the citizens to freely understand, accept, interpret and innovate various traditional cultures, thus arousing people's interest in traditional culture."* While, the perception is different for developing nations; according to the same report, *"The folk culture and aboriginal culture are facing the danger of being damaged and even disappearing. The cultural practice of ever-developing modernization, internationalization and globalization is posing an irredeemable danger for a culture to lose its identity"* (ibid).

It cannot be denied that Traditions do change and so do the cultures. In fact, it would be much better if it is said that according to time, people and their minds are being changed. And, as a result, traditions are flowing with the change. In fact, human society as a whole can be regarded as the ever-changing one. In the time span of thousands and thousands of years, human society gained this form of today facing the numerous series of transformations, like the nomadic hunter and gatherer life to settled villagers to agrarian and pastoral society and then to the industrialized society. The transformation to industrial society is basically related with the process of modernization.

Modernization plays a vital role in such changes. And, along with the people and their minds, in case of *Newars*, their traditional social organizations are also influenced by such changes. The process of modernization is something that a society cannot avoid. Moreover, modernization cannot be termed as something inharmonious to traditions. So, it is better for any society to find a way between these 'tradition' and 'modern' to harmonize them in proper manner for the well being of the society. But, one fact cannot be neglected that traditions are necessary in order to keep the society's cultural identity alive. So, it is necessary for people to realize the importance and find the ways of revitalizing their cultural elements. It is the responsibility of the older generations to create the awareness regarding their culture and rituals among the younger generations. After all, revitalization is also one of the productions of Modernization, as most of the

developed countries argue that, it is the modernization which provided the conditions for the citizens to understand various traditional cultures increasing people's interest in traditional culture.

Final words, at this point of study, based on what is observed and identified, it is quite clear that, the traditional culture is important for any community; especially in case of the indigenous ones; for maintaining their distinct identity. Thus, cultural preservation should be promoted within such societies. And, it is also true that modernization, to some extent, can be blamed for making impacts on traditional culture. But, modernization is also one of the undeniable and unavoidable elements for the society. Thus, such communities should harmonize 'tradition' and 'modernization' and should use the factors of modernization in the revitalization and protection of their traditional culture. Same should be applied in case of *Guthi* organizations of the *Newar*s. The importance of such traditional social organizations should be realized and modern ways of promoting and preserving such traditional elements should be implemented.

Glossary

Asan Tole: A typical and ancient Newar market place located in the center of Kathmandu

Bajrayogini: A Hindu Goddess

Bali Biyegu: A ritual for purifying the mourners before entering house.

Balkumari: Another Hindu Goddess

Barah Tayegu: Literally means locking for 12 days

Basuri: Flute

Bel Bibaha: Marriage with the "bel" fruit

Bhaaja: A clay pot

Bhairabnath Ta: Guthi: The main Sana Guthi of Panga

Bhim Rathaarohan: A celebration in which a person is carried in a chariot for marking 77 yrs 7 months and 7 days

Bichaa Phayegu: Receiving condolence offered by relatives and friends

Bihar: Buddhist Monastery

Bijaya Dashami: Biggest festival of Hindus, also known as Durga Puja

Boddhisattva Manjushree: A follower of Lord Buddha (one of the reincarnations of Lord Buddha)

Brahma/Bramha: Hindu God who created Universe

Brahmin: Superior Caste in Hinduism

Bramhanaal: A ritual in which continuous stream of water is flown through feet of the dying person

Chheli: Ground floor

Chhetri (Kshatriya): Hindu Caste; Warriors

Chhoyla: A Newari cuisine made of buffalo meat and spices

Chhwali: Wheat straw

Chhwasa Waa Wanegu: Putting the mat and pillow of deceased to the cross road

Chi: Guthi: Small Sana Guthi of Panga

Chowk: Central open space of a particular locality prepared for gathering and community events

Degu Dyah/Digu Dya: Clan deity

Depa: Cremation site, usually located on the bank of river of nearby temple

DevRathaarohan: A celebration in which a person is carried in a chariot for marking 88 yrs 8 months and 8 days

Dhime: A kind of musical instrument

Diyo: A kind of small lamp made of clay

Dukayegu Pikayegu: A ritual in which the Guthiyaars tie the corpse with loin cloth and stitch up

Duniya: literally means public

Dware Puja: Worshipping conducted by the administrative head of the locality

Dya Chhen: house of the God

Dya Pacha:: resting place for gods, here name of a place where the chariots are rested for public worship

Dyah (Dya) pyakha: dance of gods and goddesses

Fukee: agnatic families of the deceased having common ancestor

Gaijatra: Festival of cows

Ganesh: Hindu God; son of Lord Shiva

Gathe Mangal: Newar festival to get rid of Evil Spirits

Ghasu: Marking of 12th day of the death

Ghate Vaidya: A special priest who worships and conducts only death rituals

GopalBanshi: Cow herders (first rulers of Kathmandu valley)

Gorkha: Chhetri Kingdom from where unification started

Gufa: A dark cave

Hanuman Dhoka: Royal Palace of Mallas located in the Center of Kathmandu

Hari Shankar Narayan: Incarnation of Lord Bishnu

Jankoo (Annaprashan): Rice feeding ceremony

Jat: Caste

Jatra: Procession of deities in chariots; festivals

Jayasthiti Malla: A Malla king who introduced occupation based caste system among the Newars

Jyotish: Newar Astrologer

Kaa (Ka:) Baja: A musical instrument (pipe shaped) used in funerals as well as other festivals and rituals by the Newars

Karma: Deeds of a person during his lifetime

Karuwa: A vessel used by Newars to keep water

Kayata Puja (Barahchhuigu): A ritual to mark a Newar male child's adulthood

Khamhu: A traditional basket used by Newar males

Kirati (kirat): Previous rulers of Kathmandu before Lichhavis

Kola: Another kind of vessel

Kota: A bier made of bamboo used to carry the corpse

Krishna Janmastami: Birthday of Lord Krishna

Kusle: A lower Newari caste; also termed as *Jugi* or *Kapali*, caretakers of Dya Chhen

La twankegu: A ritual of feeding water to the deceased

Lakhe dance: A special kind of traditional dance in which the performer wears the mask of devil

Lamhi: mediator appointed for matchmaking

Latwankegu: serving water

Lichhavi: Previous rulers of Kathmandu before Mallas, immigrants from India (Baishali)

Locha: A ritual in which condolence if offered by the female relatives by bringing some food to the house of deceased

Lord Bishnu: Hindu God of prosperity (Also called Narayan)

Mahispaal Banshi: Buffalo herders; who ruled the valley after GopalBanshi

Malla: Newar rulers of Kathmandu before the unification drive

Manda Mecha: Selected buffalo for sacrifice

Mandala: Architecture of Newar settlement, also used for symbols for rituals by the priests

Mangsir: A month in Nepali calendar (normally lies in 15th November to 15th December)

Mipuli: A torch made of small pieces of bamboo used by chief mourner to give fire to corpse

Mitaima: Chief mourner who offers fire to the corpse

Nakha Tya:: Feast organized by the households during festivals

Nasa Dyah: A newar god of dance and music

Nepal Bhasha: Newari language

Nepal Valley: Previous Kathmandu Valley

New Road: Main market place of Kathmandu

Newa:/Newah: Local term used for Newars

Nhya Gaya Jatra: Procession festivals of seven villages

Nhyanma Bigu: Ritual marking 7th day of death

Nidan: A manuscript written in Newari language

Niji: literally means private

Nirha Punhi: Second birthday of the child

Nwaran: Naming of a child based on astrology

Nya Baja: A special kind of musical instrument played by butchers

Pati: a resting place

Panga: A locality in Kirtipur

Phanga Tayekegu: A ritual performed by married daughters in which a piece cotton is placed on the corpse

Pinda Bigu: Offering food to the deceased

Po Hola Wanegu: A ritual in which females attend the funeral and on the way, spread paddy grains, rice and coins to make the path secure

Prithvi Narayan Shah: King of Gorkha who initiated unification process

Puja: Typical Hindu worshipping ritual

Pukhusi Guthi: Another Guthi of Panga, which associates the immigrants as *Guthiyaars*

Pyarha Punhi: Fourth Birthday

Raj: literally means royal

Ranjana Lipi: Newari Script

Salun (Guthi): marking the first day of month

Sanaa Haa Wanegu: A ritual in which *Pala* of Guthi publicly informs about death

Sankhu: A religious place where the temple of Goddess Bajrayogini is situated

Sattal: A kind of common resting place (people can stay overnight)

Seshyo Guthi: A Guthi of Shrestha castes

Shraddha: A ritual in which the deceased is worshipped and offered food

Shrestha: A Higher ranked Newari merchant caste

Sisu Palu: Food taken by the mourners after returning from funeral

Sudra: Lower caste of Hindus

Surya Darshan: Ceremony of facing the sun

Swayambhu Purana: Buddhist Scripture about origin and development of Kathmandu Valley

Tagadhari: people (Brahmin and Chhetri in Hindu; and only priests in Newari) who wear holy cord around their body

Terai: Flatlands of Nepal

Thalay Kulay: A ritual of cleaning the corpse

Vaishya: middle class caste of Hindus

Yama: King of Hell who decides the fate of the soul

Yomari Punhi: A Festival of Newars

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Appendices

Appendix I - Categorization of Indigenous Nationalities of Nepal

Endangered Group	Marginalized Group	Disadvantaged Group
1. Kusunda	1. Sunuwar	1. Chhairotan
2. Bankariya	2. Tharu	2. Tanbe
3. Raute	3. Tamang	3. Tingaunle Thakali
4. Surel	4. Bhujel	4. BaragaunleThakali
5. Hayu	5. Kumal	5. Marphali Thakali
6. Raji	6. Rajbangshi	6. Gurung
7. Kisan	7. Gangaai	7. Magar
8. Lepcha	8. Dhimal	8. Rai
9. Meche	9. Bhote	9. Limbu
10. Kuswadiya	10. Darai	10. Sherpa
	11. Tajpuriya	11. Yakkha
Highly Marginalized Group	12. Pahari	12. Chhantyal
1. Majhi	13. Topkegola	13. Jirel
2. Siyar	14. Dolpo	14. Byansi
3. Shingsha	15. Fri	15. Yolmo
4. Thudam	16. Mugal	
5. Dhanuk	17. Larke	
6. Chepang	18. Lohpa	
7. Santhal	19. Dura	
8. Jhagad	20. Walung	**Advanced Group**
9. Thami		1. Newar
10. Bote		2. Thakali
11. Danuwar		
12. Baramu		

Source: http://www.nefin.org.np Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)

Accessed date: 3rd September 2008

## Appendix II – Newari Caste System Hierarchy

Water acceptable Jats, their family priests are either Brahmin (Hindu priests) or Bajracharya (Buddhist priests) and their body purification rite is performed by Nau (barber)		
Levels	**Broad Jats**	**(Jat/Thar) Castes**
Level 1	**Deo Brahmin**	**Rajopadhyay:** Priests for all Hindu Newars
	Bare	**Bajracharya:** Gubhaju (priests) for all Buddhist Newars **Shakya:** Commonly referred as 'Bare' in contrast to Bajracharya, Temple priests with rights of membership in Newar Buddhist Bihar (monasteries) and also traditionally Goldsmiths.
LEVEL 2	**Chhathare** **(Shiva Margi)**	**Joshi:** Astrologer **Malla:** Descendants of Royal family **Pradhan**, **Amatya** and other sub-castes are descendants of Royal advisors
	Paanchthare **(shiva Margi)**	**Karmacharya (Acaju):** Tantric priests **Shrestha:** mixed offsprings of Chhathare and Paanchthare Thimi Shresthas Dhulikhel Shresthas
	Uray/Udas	**Tuladhar:** Merchant **Baniya:** Merchant **Sikarmi:** Wood worker, House builder **Tamrakar (Tava):** Metalsmiths **Loh(n) – karmi:** Stone workers **Awa:** Mason **Kansakar:** Bronze workers **Tamot:** Stone workers (not recognized as Uray because they eat chicken)
LEVEL 3	**Jyapu**	**Maharjan/Dangol:** Farmers (majority in Lalitpur, Bungamati, Balambu, Kirtipur) **Suwal:** Bhaktapur Hindu Jyapu, numerous other sub-castes **Kumhal:** Potter, not accepted as Jyapu by all **Pahari:** farmers from out skirts of the valley, not accepted by other jyapus
Jats whose body purification rite is performed by Nay (butchers)		
LEVEL 4		**Gathu/Mali:** Gardeners (provider of followers of

		worship)
		Nau: they provide barber service, cutting and painting nails in purification rituals to all levels above this level
		Chitrakar/Pun: Painter, painting pictures of various deities as well as houses and temples
		Chapa/Ranjitkar: Dyer of cloth
		Manandhar/Saimi: Oil pressers
		Kau: Newar blacksmiths e.g. Nakarmi
LEVEL 5	Touchable Jats	**Sanga/Sangat:** Dhobi (who wash clothes)
		Bha: Dyers of red cloth
		Nay/Kasai/Khadgi: Butchers
		Kusle(Jogi): Musicians, also tailors, caretakers of deities
	Untouchable Jats	**Kulu:** Cobblers, drum makers
		Pode/Pore: Fishers, skinners, traditionally executioners
		Chyami: Night-soil removers, cleaners
		Hara Hura: Offsprings of Pode/Chyami

Source: (Gurung, 2000: 39)

* But cannot termed as the complete caste system according to hierarchy as numerous castes are missing like Tandukar, Shilpakar, Vaidya, Singh, Malakar, Byanjankar etc. and other sub-castes.

Appendix III - *Newar* Settlement patterns – the *Mandala* Design
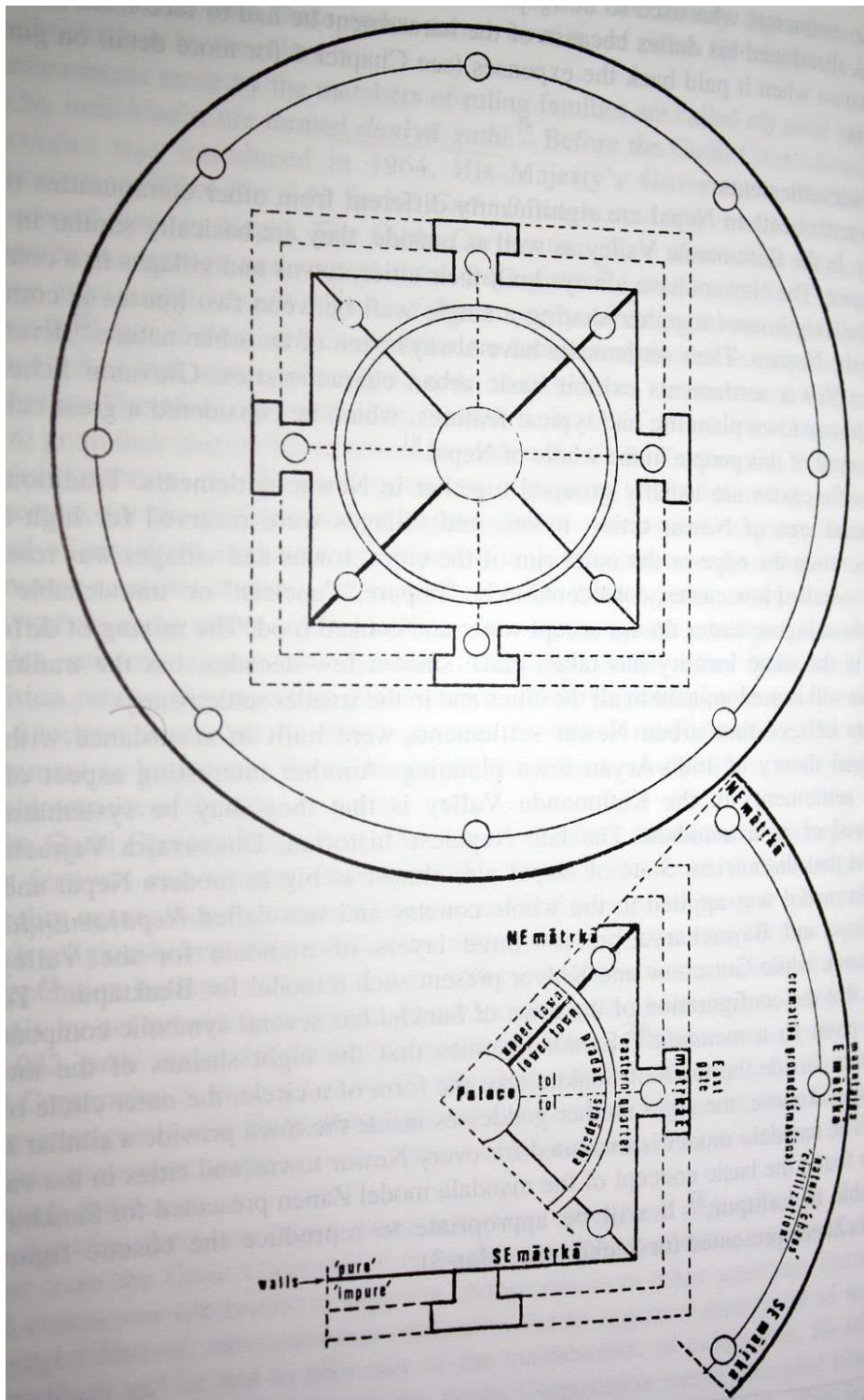
3.1 Hypothetical *Mandala* Design of a Newar town

Source: (Shrestha, 2002: 36)

3.2 A *Newari Mandala* art illustrating the deities

Source: http://www.traditional.com.np/index.php?cPath=27_34 accessed on 3rd October 2009

Appendix IV: Topic Guide for the Interviews

Objectives:

- To explore Guthi System in detail
- To find out the functions of Guthi and the methods of approaching to those functions
- To determine the factors that are affecting on the Guthi System as well as Newar Communities
- To understand the overall impact of Modernization

Phase 1: Introduction of the research objective and research theme

Phase 2:

- Name of the Interviewee
- Family background (not in detail)
- Name of the Guthi that he belongs to
- Type of membership and position in Guthi
- Time of his enrollment in the Guthi
- Involvement status in different Guthi organizations
- Structure of Guthi and working principles

Phase 3:

- His knowledge on what Guthi actually is
- The functions of the particular Guthi that he belongs to
- Income sources of the Guthi that he belongs to
- About the death ritual, how it is performed and what specific role is played by the Guthi in this ritual
- Involvement in the Festivals and other religious rituals– mentioning the festivals as well as the role of Guthi in those festivals
- Other social works that Guthi gets involved (if any)
- Respondent's personal involvement and contribution in the Guthi functions and rituals
- Respondent's opinion on the importance of the Guthi system in Newar society (social and cultural significances)
- How well is Guthi functioning and the economic condition of the Guthi

Phase 4:

- Is the Guthi itself changing in the course of time
- Are there any changes in death rituals? What kind of changes (Difference between past and present)
- Is there any lack of interest experienced personally? (personal experiences if any)
- Whether the role played by Guthi in festivals are changed along with time or not? If yes, then what kinds of changes are observed over the years?
- The operation system and management within the Guthi is changing or not? (the functioning method, working committee etc)

Phase 5:

- Opinion on the possible reasons on declining interest on Newari traditional costumes
- Are the youngsters aware of the importance of Guthi (their attitude towards Guthi ceremonies)
- Likewise, on Traditional food of Newar (as the Newars are popular all over the country for the varieties in traditional food)
- Traditional "Lapte Bhoj" (feast) vs. Buffet party
- Lack of knowledge on the basic motive of the festivals among the youngsters and the reasons for that
- Festivals for religion or festivals for entertainment
- Effect of mainstream culture on traditional Newari culture
- Effect of western culture on traditional Newari culture

Phase 6:

- What can be done in order to preserve the Newari tradition and culture
- Preservation of Guthi necessary or not
- Steps that can be suggested for the preservation of such organizations
- What efforts are being made in maintaining the Guthi culture

* Some questions are to be avoided for the youngsters

Appendix V: Some Pictures from the Fieldwork

4.1 Temple of Bishnudevi

4.2 Balkumari Temple

4.3 Harishankar Narayan Temple and the statue inside it

4.4 Central Chowk with Dya Chhen (house of the Gods and Goddesses)

4.5 Idol of Balkumari located in Dya Chhen

4.6 Idol of Bishnudevi located in Dya Chhen

4.7 Idols of various gods and goddesses in Dya Chhen

4.8 Cremation site of Panga located nearby Bishnudevi temple

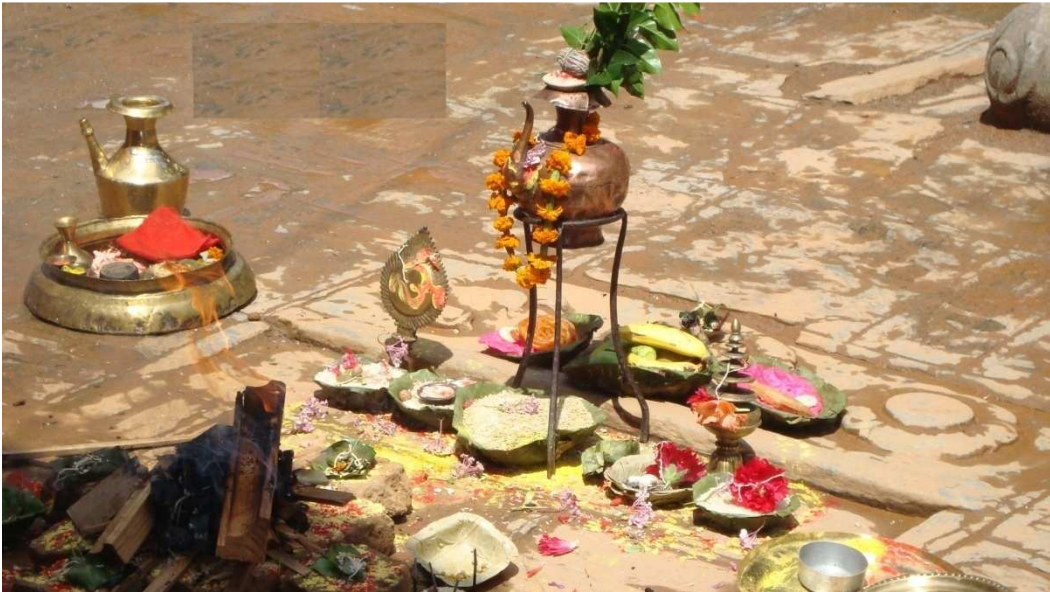**4.9 Slaughtering of goat during Harishankar Narayan Bosran**

4.10 After sacrifice

4.11 Getting ready for spreading the blessings during Harishankar Narayan Bosran

4.12 Playing traditional Ka: Baja during the same occasion

4.13: Worshipping materials required for Puja of Bosran

4.14 People carrying the chariot of Bishnudevi during the Jatra

4.15 People carrying the chariot of Goddess Balkumari during the Jatra