

***Dewali* Through Sociological Lens:
Ancestor Worship among the Chettri of
Gaurada in Nepal**

A Dissertation Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy

By

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
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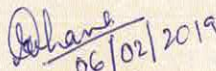
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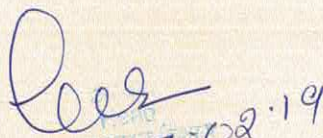
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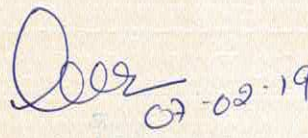
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "***Dewali Through Sociological Lens: Ancestor Worship among the Chettri of Gaurada in Nepal***" submitted to Sikkim University for partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in the **Department of Sociology** embodies the result bona fide research work carried out by **Rachana Bista** under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other Degree, Diploma, Association and Fellowship.

All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.


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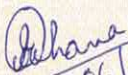
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Rachana Bista

MAP OF JHAPA DISTRICT

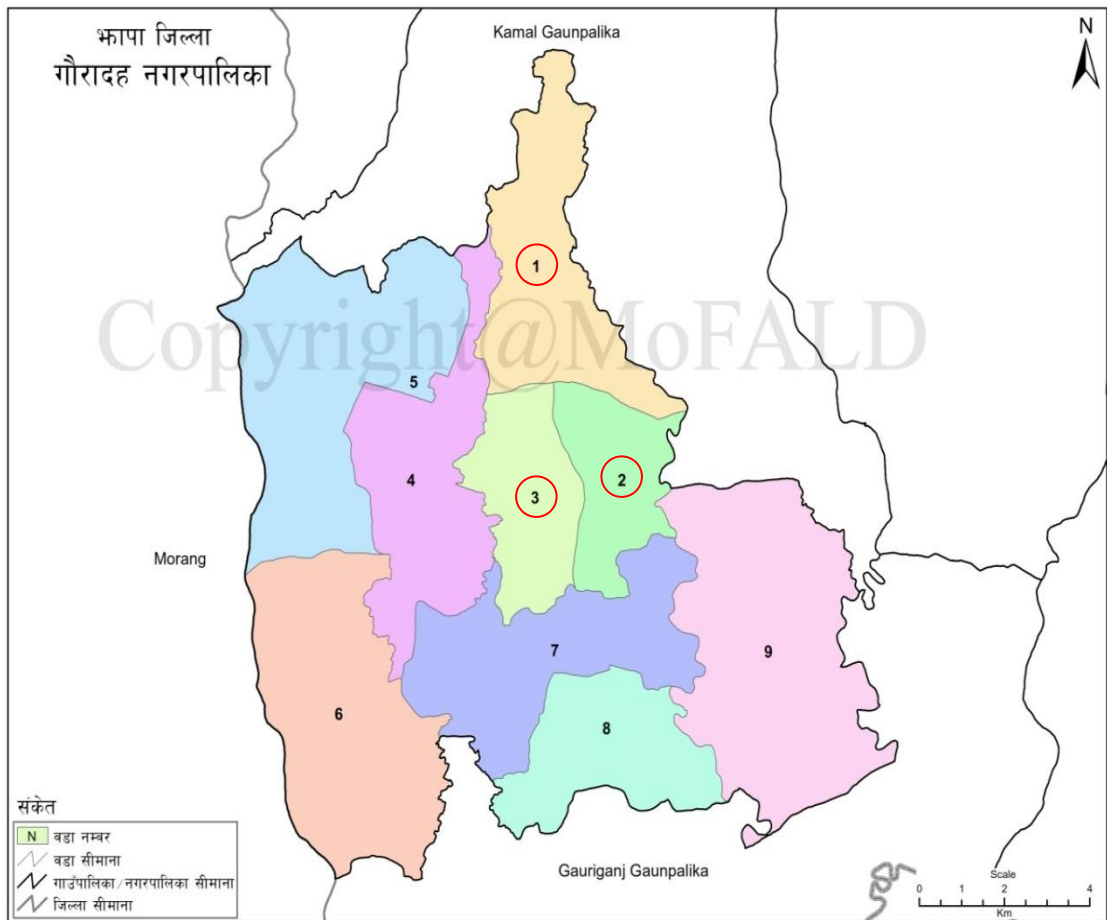


Source:

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Jhapa,+Nepal/@26.6034978,87.6328537,10z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x39e5bcb8fd2d8589:0x17a56116204711c!8m2!3d26.63982!4d87.8942451>

Note: The red highlighted region in the map shows Gauradaha/ Gaurada Nagar Palika

MAP OF GAURADA NAGAR PALIKA



Source: Collected from Municipality office of Gaurada

Note: Field work was conducted on the encircled ward numbers, as show in the Map
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Religious ritual and its ceremonial practices have often been a significant interest for the researcher. Numerous studies, related to methodological and theoretical discussion resulted into a growth of religion and ritual study into a flourishing discipline (Oras, 2013, p. 125; Poyil, 2006, p. 125). There are various perspectives that conceptualize religion. However, despite the diversity in approaches, sociologist and anthropologist agrees on one point that religion is a product of human being who created belief system, developed rituals and formed communities of faith (Emerson, Mirola & Monahan, 2011, p. 10).

Durkheim conceptualized religion as a “unified system of belief and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden- belief and practices which unite in one simple moral community called church, all those who adhere to it” (Abraham & Morgan, 2012: 120). Madan admired Durkheim’s concept of sacred and found it as “most fundamental religious idea or phenomenon” the word sacred is a contrast to profane. After studying world religion, Durkheim concluded that religion divides the world into two: the Sacred and profane. Both are the two side of coin which has the power to purify and contaminate rituals practices. Durkheim traced the origin of religious belief and practices in social interaction through collective conscience that acts as a means of social solidarity. Religion as a means of social solidarity has also been emphasized by Radcliffe – Brown, for whom the significant question is in “what measures religion contribute to the maintenance of social solidarity” (Madan, 2012, pp. 2, 3& 5).

Frazer was of opinion that religion is a product of magic, which developed out of a realization. Before the evolution of god, primitive men were engaged in performing magic and spell by which they controlled nature. Later when they realized that their magic was not adequate to deal with certain circumstance, they begun to assume existence of some other divine force which is invisible and much powerful then magic that grant them with their needs and desires, thus originated the belief in god in the form of religion (Samad, 1991, p. 3).

Taylor and Spencer saw Ancestor worship as the early form of religion; they stated that “worship of ancestor is one of the greatest kinds of religion” (Poyil, 2006, p. 293).

Contextualizing the religion in case of Nepal, despite being a Hindu kingdom, many ancestral practices in various forms are found among communities of Nepal. Ancestor worship through sacrifice ritual is one of them. Keeping up with these, the current study entitled “*Dewali* through Sociological Lens: Ancestor Worship among Chettri of Gaurada in Nepal” is an attempt to explore practices of ancestor worship among the Chettri of Nepali community called *Dewali*. The study discusses about the traditional belief that Chettri caste posses, pertaining to the existence of their ancestor soul even after death. It attempts to understand the sacrificing ritual called *Dewali*, discussing about their faith in the supernatural being that influence the life of existing relatives. Although *Dewali* can be observed in different provinces of Nepal, the present study is specifically carried out in the eastern zone of Nepal, at Gaurada Nagar Palika, which falls in Jhapa District. The ancestral worship of *Dewali* rituals has been analyzed from various perspectives within the framework of sociological theory.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The contemporary world has presented itself multi-faceted challenges increasing risk to human existence; therefore, it became imperative for humans to be in constant search to liberate themselves from all the complexities arising in the ever-changing world. In such situation human society often make an attempt to find solace in the supernatural power. Among various ways of dealing such insecurity, human societies developed religious rituals and worship in various forms. One such way is the ancestral worship, which is a universal form of religious expression. It is an ancient world tradition, "which stressed the influence of deceased relatives on human life" (Poyil, 2006). It is one of the greatest phenomena of religion, which is considered as one of the most important religious expression of humankind. Thus ancestral practices can be found in a society where traditional culture and belief is survived such as in countries like Latin and North America, Asia, Africa, Oceania and Australia (Bae, 2007, p. 19).

i. Understanding Ancestor and Ancestor Worship

The Oxford Dictionaries definite ancestor is “a person, typically one more remote than a grandparent, from whom one is descended”¹.

Cultural Anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor saw “ancestor worship is a major branch of religion, in which man maintains a social relationship with the other world. The deceased ancestors, who passed into a divine being, protect their family from torment and consequently bless them.” (Poyil, 2006). Ancestor worship has been

¹ English oxford living Dictionaries (2019)

practiced by various communities and is age old custom. A brief discussion in relation to the term and concept regarding ancestor worship is given below.

The worship of the ancestors includes a wide range of religious practices and beliefs that focus on the spirit of the deceased. The ritual is performed with the action involving “rites relating to the propitiation of death member of family or ministrations to their needs”. Generally through these rituals the living being tries to maintain good relation with the deceased family member, they please the dead soul with food and other needed material (Hwang, 1977, p. 343).

For those practitioners of such religious practices, ancestors are regarded as intimate members of a family: they are part of the family and are considered and consulted on all important occasions (Mulambuzi, 1997, p. 6). Similar explanation has been given by (Hwang, 1977, p. 343), who said they could be spirit of grandfathers/ grandmothers, fathers/mothers, sibling/ cousins, uncles/ aunts. They are generally an important figure in the clan, the head / elder of the family and the head of a tribe / state. According to Akan belief system, one need not have be an elder member to be a ancestor, but have to live a valuable life, have to be a benefactor to the people, who dies at ripe age with natural death. The one who is died due to accident is considered as curse by Akan and they don't qualify to be ancestor after death (Brown, 2007, p. 7).

The ancestors have ability to connect the people with their past generation, which generates a strong belief in support and strength. Ancestor plays a strong role in influencing one's life, making it a reason to be respected while being most loved and feared. There is no specific idol of the ancestor thus “they are never portraits; instead they have structure that is not restrained by reality” (Teilhet, 1978).

Sharma (1994) gives an analytical study of worship of ancestor, highlighting its main objectives: (a) honoring the deceased soul of ancestor who is regarded as elderly, (b) abolishing/ getting rid of fear, fear that if the ancestor are not treated well then the concerned person/family/friend have to pay back as they would be harmed or punished, (c) people are urged to pursue the custom because they are afraid that they will be socially condemned and after death their souls may not be at peace. With this focus, adoration of the ancestors is carried out in various parts of society.

Ancestral worship is practiced in various forms in different societies. One such form is through the animal sacrifice which is practiced and known by different ways and names. Here are some global examples of Ancestor worships.

The Sama Dilaut groups from Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia practice a ritual called *Pagomboh* which has survived since the immemorial time. This system of belief is performed by the people for their dead ancestor which is further practiced in different ways “some elaborately and some simply, as dictated by tradition or economic capacity”. Moreover the motive to communicate with ancestor’s spirit remains same. (Jumala, 2013, pp. 196 &199).

Amongst Hindus of Bali Indonesia their ritual of animal sacrifice is called *Caru*, More than 95 percent of Hindus in Bali are very devoted to perform this *Caru* ritual. The ritual it is accompanied with ‘spilling liquid’ such as the liquid of animal blood, wine or arrack. Donder figured out that the main reason to carry out animal sacrifice (*caru*) is to establish harmony of universe (Donder, 2012).

In Inner Mongolia, people hold an event called *Taxilag*, which is followed by sacrificial rites. Most of these occasions involve the killing of a domesticated animal,

where they offer certain organs of animals to the spirit power, and the subsequent consumption of the edible parts of the dead beast (Humphery & Laidlaw, 2007).

Madhya Pradesh's Thakur Gonds equate their ancestor as god and believe that they possess mystical power. They believe they have supernatural strength to benediction or punish the individual according to their action. Thus from time to time they worship ancestor to hold on with the anger that can bring disaster to the family or clan. Following the tradition it is one of the customs of Gonds to bring the ashes of the dead family member to home, they heap the ashes on the floor giving it semi lunar shape adding *trishul* (Trident) on top of it and named it as *diwal-ke-devta*. On every festival or occasion like marriage, rites of passage etc. devta is been worship by making sacrifices. Whereas, today due to adaptation of Hinduized activity the sacrificial rites has been replaced by foods. Gonds gets moral support and psychological relief of having their kin even after death. (Sharma, 2014, pp. 17-24)

The Mangars of Langaun of Baglung district of Western Nepal celebrates their traditional ritual *kulpuja* at an alternative of three, five, seven or nine years 3, 5, 7 or 9 years as there is no clear cut demarcation. It is usually celebrated at the "end of December or January's bright half of a lunar month", mainly on Wednesday or Friday. The Mangar from different geographical area and clan have respective name for their ritual, thus they also differ in their sacrificial practices. Mangars of Langaun call their ancestor god as *Chandi Bahara*, as he accepts pig's heart. Similarly in Karnali district, they sacrifice male sheep, cock, pigs, he-goat and other bird species such as pigeons. Mangars by nature becomes weak and helpless in front of their ancestral god. They believe that all the upcoming misfortune/unfortunate activities are barren by their ancestral happiness (Sapkota, 2011, pp. 235-246).

Sacrificial ritual is also common amongst the Muslim at the time of Eidul Adha which falls two month and ten days after Eidul Fiter. The term Eidul Adha itself mean the feast of sacrifice. During the celebration people remember Hazrat Ibrahim (obedient disciple of Allah) by slaughtering an animal such as camel, sheep, cow and goat. People had to call the name of Allah during this act of sacrifice. According to the common belief, this act of slaughter is symbolization that man is most powerful creature on the earth above all and this power is given by Allah, They are powerful because they are taking the name of Allah and if they don't take the name of Allah their power will be none (Khan & Mohyuddin, 2013).

In Akan culture, the achievement of harmony, protection, power and prosperity depends upon the blood sacrifice, which is classified on the type of victim that is offered. Human sacrifice is considered to be of highest prize, Akan have three basic concept of human sacrifice; (i) Ritual killing at the death of the chief- the chief is one of the most important persons for the Akan, so that during his death human sacrifice is made as in the common belief that in the other world his chief may need a subject to be served. (ii) Human sacrifice for victory- human sacrifice is needed to ensure victory during inter-tribal warfare. The victims of the sacrifice were usually servants or male or female members of the tribe, a prince or chief can also take part in the sacrifice in order to win. (iii) This act of human sacrifice offers God the opportunity to save him from his crime, to avoid natural calamities, to seek blessings and to protect him from God. In such cases, a virgin is sacrificed to the gods and deities as a slave. (Brown, 2007).

Among the Chettri of Nepal, the sacrificial ritual of *Dewali* represents a form of ancestor worship with its own unique cultural connotations. It is a sacred ancient ritual which is followed by sacrificing uncastrated goat to the ancestral deity.

The above examples are evidence to the fact that the communication between the ancestor and living descendent are found in different part of the world. Thus we can make general assumption that, even after creeping of modern era, ancestor worship is still persisted as major ritual amongst all. We can discover that every communities posses their own name for their ancestor worship which differs in term of their understanding, actions, belief, practices and behavior. However their ultimate aspiration is one- “happiness of the supreme power, ancestor god” (Sapkota, 2011, p. 238).

Like a guardian, Ancestor continues to take an active interest in the fortune of their living descendants. (Mulambuzi, 1997, p. 7). They protect humans from evil spirits and evil in general, they bless them with good harvest, good health and fortune; they can bestow fertility upon women to make children or bless men with more reproductively. The ancestors have power to reward humans with good physical condition and prosperity while been treated well with respect and love. They can be punishable, if they are offended by ignorance/ neglect. They can impose pain/ suffering, they may curse with bad fortune / health, whereas the whole family, clan, or the communities have to deal with the consequences. (Chikwekwe, 1997, p. 18).

The importance of ancestor’s worship is also substantiated by (Mulambuzi, 1997, p. 7) and states that the lives of human beings are profoundly influenced by their ancestors, so they must make regular sacrifices, or when a Divine considers that fit.

ii. Understanding Sacrifice and its Significance

Sacrifice plays a significant role in the world of religion. The word sacrifice is derived from Latin word “sacrificium”, where sacer means ‘holy’ and facere ‘to make’, which means ‘to make holy/sacred’. Thus to sacrifice something is to make “the object holy or sancity” (Oras, 2013, p. 138).

The practice of sacrifice can be understood from various perspectives. Khan and Mohyuddin, (2013, p. 61) regard sacrifice as an object through which an individual express gratitude to the almighty. When people offer their lives symbolically to Almighty by offering the sacrifice of an animal they are expressing their gratitude.

The origin of sacrificial ritual is always debatable. According to one perspective, sacrifice is a very old ritual in many ancient cultures, where humans were sacrificed to please spirit/ god, at the death of king/ priest/ great leader, at the time of natural disaster etc. (Khan & Mohyuddin, 2013, p. 59). The Akan culture is an example of human sacrifice. “In primal time, people were sacrificed at the death of chiefs. They believed that the chief must have some subjects to serve him or her in the underworld” (Brown, 2007, p. 11), on other hand animal sacrifice came apparently later with hunting and gathering societies. Whereas the other argument says that the animal sacrifice started when the concept of god emerged in human society. It is one of the oldest rituals which has pass through many phases and with the passage of time it has become fully organize in different religion (Khan & Mohyuddin, 2013, p. 59).

There are number of theories that accounts for the origin and purpose of this significant rite. Tylor in his concept of animism traced “its evolution through the peculiar, homage and renunciation stages”. Robertson smith distinguished “the honorific, peculiar, sacramental and communion rites in sacrifice”. Frazer on other

hand held that “sacrifice was designed as a group defense-mechanism against the disasters to death, and as a symbolic aid to the spirit of fertility”. According to Tylor, “sacrifice is originally a gift given by savage to a super natural being in order to get favor from him. When god expanded and became more distant, the necessity of continuity to transmit to them this gift gave birth to sacrificial right” (Hubert & Mauss, 1909, pp. 33-34). According to Hurbert and Mauss, “sacrifice is a religious act through which the moral condition of the participant and the present object alter and they are sanctified” (Oras, 2013, p. 139). “Sacrifice is offering of food objects of the life animal to a higher purpose in particular divine beings as an act of worship” (Khan & Mohyuddin, 2013, p. 59).

An assessment of all various sacrifices is a practices show that sacrifices an inevitable component of ancestral worship, a belief system implying the relation of human being with supernatural beings. Against this backdrop, the present study once such sacrificial ritual among Chettri of Nepal is *Dewali*.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There are various sociological theoretical perspectives and concepts in religion. Functionalist saw society as a framework where social organizations work together collectively as a system and make society as a whole (Haralambos & Heald, 2014, p. 625). The Structural functionalism focuses on the concept of “system within systems,” to understand how various system and sub-systems works together in the functioning of the society (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008, p. 349). Functionalist Emile Durkheim saw Religion as a triggering factor to maintain social solidarity and conscience among the members and for the wellbeing of society (Ritzer, 2011, p. 91).

Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski also provide ongoing functional interpretation of religion. According to them, mankind in order to survive and meet functional prerequisites needs social interaction. Thus solidarity becomes very essential, and religion is one such institution which promotes solidarity by uniting people and binds moral value (Abraham, 2015, p. 237).

R K Merton another functionalist in his book *social theory and structure* while codifying the functional postulates stated that any social institution including religion has both manifest and Latent Functions (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008, pp. 382-383). The immediate assumption can be made by the participant by observing what is visible but the hidden meaning behind is not recognized. Binding people together with community solidarity can be one such latent function of religion.

Hurbert and Marcel Mauss came up with nature and social function of Sacrifice (Hubert & Mauss, 1909, p. 34). They made a distinction between the role of victim, sacrifice and sacrificer. The term sacrifice is given to those who get the benefit from the sacrifice. The victims are object to sacrifice by the sacrificer. Sacrificer are the one “who perform the physical activity of sacrifice”. Hurbert and Mauss gave definition “sacrifice is a religious act which through consecration of a victim modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplished it or that of certain object with which he is concerned” (Berardi, 2018). In the context of *Dewali*, Victims are the uncastrated goat, Chettri are the one who gets benefitted through the sacrifice and *Dhami* are the sacrificer.

Contextualizing this in the ancestral worship of *Dewali* practiced by the Chettri of Nepal, researcher propose to use Durkheim’s perspective of social function of religion and Merton’s concept of Manifest and Latent Functions .Using this functional

perspective, the present study is an attempt to understand its functional significance of continuity of *Dewali* rituals, manifest and latent function and its changing dynamics. Taking Hurbert and Mauss perspective, the study also tries to examine the significance of accomplishment of such act of sacrifice. The study attempts to explore also the changes if any, what are the changing aspects and what are the factors contributing to such changes. Therefore, the present study attempts to locate the significance/continuity and changes noticed in this ritualistic practice among Chettri of Gaurada.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature related to one's study is fundamental in understanding and conceptualizing any research problem. Research cannot be completed and justified without adequate review of the related literature, which helps to get an insight into the previous work done and to understand the background as well as the theoretical understanding of research problem. By assisting an investigator to understand, locate and evaluate the past as well as present literature of research, the review helps to state clearly the research problem and defining it precisely. It enables the investigator to for to undertake research from various perspectives, methods, approaches and procedures.

There are ample literatures available on religion and rituals however taking into consideration of the present study, the following literature review has been done which is thematically classified into two sub-heading.

There are ample literatures available on religion and rituals however taking into consideration of the present study, the following literature review has been done which is thematically classified into two sub-heading.

i. Rituals and Sacrifice

Donder (2012) opined that the ceremony of ritual/ religion which undergo animal sacrifice is the earliest form of sacrifice made by all the religions. Whereas such rituals are still practiced in India and among the Indonesian Hindus. In Indonesia, in particular in Bali, the animal sacrifice ritual is referred to as *Caru* as an "indispensable condition". In Bali, more than 95 percent of Hindus are devoted to their ritual Caru, which is accompanied by 'spilling liquid' such as the liquid of animal blood, wine or arrack. Donder found that the main reason for animal sacrifice (*caru*) is to establish universe harmony.

Humphery and Laidlaw (2007) gives an analytical outline by using the primary source/ field view based Inner Mongolia of southern side of the Mona Uula mountain range. Mongols hold an event called *Taxilag*, which is followed by sacrificial rite. In the ritual certain organs of domesticated animal is offered to the spirits, The Mongols are holding the *Taxilag* event, followed by the rite to sacrifice. In most cases, a domesticated animal is killed, certain organs offered to the spirit power, and the edible parts of the dead animal are eaten. Humphery and Laidlaw argued that killing of animal (sacrifice) Animal killing (sacrifice) takes place in the most sacred place of a ritual. Clearly a ritual and a clear sacrifice that at certain places and not others is injected into sacrificial action.

Oras (2013) argued that there is no general consensus on the relationship between sacrifice and offering, as the definition vary from scholar to scholar. Different religious systems contain various beliefs, practices, concepts and relationships. The same applies to the both Sacrifice and Religion. Oras on the basis of his study came with a conclusion that finding a proper definitions and distinction between sacrifice

and offering is fundamentally problematic or can be said as impossible. For practitioners for whom sacrifice and offering are important, the distinction or definition does not concern contemporary scholars.

Poyil (2006) finds that ancestor worship is a core of people's religious practice such as in China, tropical Africa, Malaysia and Polynesia. It is still a universal form of religious expression in tribal contexts. Every generation, from tribe to tribe and from place to place with various names and practice pervades ancestral worship, with a slight modifications caused by the modernization. Thus he states the primitive man has a strong belief in the soul of supernatural being, they have been a center for the primitive people through their life. The intrusion of his spirit has been the credit for all his virtues and failings.

Hwang (1977) opined that Ancestor cults are not only limited to primitive society, but can also be explored at each levels of social and educational development in the same cultural environment, although the meaning of the term may differ from poor to educated. The ritual has many different forms of expression, which vary from person to group. He also argued that the political and social upheavals of today's era had an impact that changed the ritual a little.

Mulambuzi (1997) notify that in various African ethnic groups, people and their respective ancestor are related to each other. African belief that, death does not bring end to an individual life but continues after that and some amongst these departed souls grasp the power of became ancestor. The spirit of divine power can be anyway but mostly is expected to reside in tress and grave yards. According to the faith ancestors either directly or through other people like serpents are visiting their descendants.

Khan and Mohyuddin (2013) trace the sacrificial practice of Muslim at the time of EidulAdha, highlighting the importance and purity of sacrifice. During the festival people sacrifice their useful animal like camel, cow, sheep and goat; these animals are used to run their livelihood. With sacrifice, they express gratitude to the Almighty, in that respect, special attention is taken as to check the type of animal for offering, a knife used for slaughtering, the rope used to tie animals, time, place of sacrifice, so that everything which is offered to Allah is pure and sacred.

Sharma (1994) accounts that the Tribals of Madhya Pradesh named Thakur Gonds adopted Hinduized activities, which in turn brought certain change in their cultural practices. Their traditional ancestor worship in which they use to sacrifice animal is replaced by fruits and other food materials. *Bhowmka* their ritual man who acted as a medium man to control the spirit of the ancestors, is replaced by Brahmans. *Bhowmka* is still respected and is considered as important person. Likewise Gonds still worship their ancestor with different method as their ideology remains the same.

ii. Nepal and Ancestral Worship among Nepalese

Bista (1967) write about the historical background of different community of people of Nepal, Rai began with Brahmin and Chettri (as they are highly populated caste group), further proceed with Newar, Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Mangar, Sunwar, Gurung, Thakali, Panchgaune, Tharu, Rajbansi and Sherpa, particularly highlighting on Khas. Bista argued that, the educated people don't want to identify themselves as Khas and they leftover their traditional area and introduced them as Chettri. And the people who are poor and uneducated remain within the community of Khas known as khasan.

Chhetri (2014) discussed about the meaning and the cultural importance of Mastro puja among the Chettri community, highlighting the ways and form of practice. He

argued that due to influx of modern influences the sacred tradition of Masto puja is in the edge extinction. He further writes that the purity of its practice should be kept intact and “conserve this tradition as a part of cultural heritage” which gives different identity of Chettri community.

Rai (2013) gives the background and history of the Khas, Chettri of Nepal. He writes that the Khasa are one of the powerful Gurkha Army members and played a key role in unifying the country, they are the most popular of the history in terms of arms and amenities. In terms of population and management and its rich culture, from monarchy to democracy, Chettri was the mainstream community. Rai further came up with many descent groups or can be said as surnames, which comes under the large umbrella of Chettri.

Sapkota (2011) writes about the importance of *Kulpuja* among the Mangars of Langaun of Baglung district, western Nepal. Among Mangars *Kulpuja* (worship of deities) is an important ritual like those of Chettri, but they differ in their practice and sacrifice. The mangars offer “chicken and black pig heart” to keep their ancestor god happy. Sapkota opines that the belief in natural calamities like tsunami, earthquake etc. increase when human realize that they brought into the world and are provided with all the necessary resource for living such as animal, plants sun, water etc, which ultimately comes from supreme power. To please these supreme powers they perform certain kind of rituals and practices which has become their traditions.

Sharma (1983) provides a great literature which gives knowledge about the culture of Nepali people from Hinduism and Buddhism to Shamanism. He gives his opinion that Religion plays vital role in sustaining the rich culture of Nepal. It act as a prime

motivator for people, it does not matter whether an individual is poor or rich, literate or illiterate religion is religion it equally plays important role in the life of people.

Rana (1999) writes Nepalese society is binded with animistic tradition practices and amongst the Tharu community, animistic practices act as a unifying force for binding people together. They believe in spirit that reside in nature such as trees, stone, mountains, animals etc. in order to please the spirit they offer sacrificial ritual through *Gabru* who act as a medium between man and supernatural force. In return Tharu seek blessings from Deity. The spirit plays significant role in shaping the life of the people from birth to death.

From the above literature we can mark that there are couple of research done on ancestor worship and sacrifice but there are very few scattered article on *Dewali* among Chettri. However, the comprehensive assement study of rituals from the sociological perspective has not been yet been done.

IV. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The Chettri caste among Nepali belongs to the dominant Khas community. By virtue of being Hindu by religion, Chettri worship thousands of Hindu God and Goddess and practice many Hindu rituals and customs. However, despite being Hindus several clans of Chettri still has retained their faith in their traditions shamanistic and animistic practices and worship *Masto God*. This practice of ancestral worship is known as *Dewali* which is a sacred ancient tradition passed through generations. These rituals of *Dewali* vary amongst the clans of Chettri in terms of their practices and process although the predominate belief system remains same.

In recent times, with the change in socio economic realities, people have developed more rational outlook, which undermines religion and its belief system and due to such trend, traditional rituals are losing its moral authority amongst the people and its symbolic value amongst the intellectual. The process of migration for better education and job facilities and creeping of modernization widely contributed to such scenario and, the traditional system of staying together with a strong collective conscience and social solidarity is missing these days.

Therefore, taking *Dewali* as the traditional practices of ancient worship still existing among Chettri of Gaurada Nepal, the present study is an attempt to explore the contemporary significance of the *Dewali*, as ancestor worship amongst the Chettri of Gaurada. In addition, despite there are few literatures based on Shamanism and Ancestor worship (Humphery & Laidlaw, 2007; Oras, 2013; Poyil, 2006; Donder, 2012) in Nepal. But in the context of *Dewali* or *Masto puja* there are very scattered literatures (Bista, 1967; Chhetri, 2014; Rai, 2013) and no comprehensive study, and the study of rituals from sociological perspective has not been found. Thus the study aims to fill the gap by adding to it and exploring the rituals of *Dewali* from sociological perspective.

V. OBJECTIVES

- (i) To comprehend the detailed rituals and practices and understand symbolic significance of *Dewali* ceremony amongst the Chettri of Gaurada.
- (ii) To understand continuity and changes of the ritual and ceremonies and the factors contributing to such changes, if therein.
- (iii) To explore the role of women in the rituals.
- (iv) To explore how the ritual is perceived by the youth and sustained in contemporary time.

VI. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- (i) What is the contemporary significance of the *Dewali* ceremony as practiced amongst the Chettri of Gaurada Nepal?
- (ii) What are the continuity and changes that have occurred in the practice of *Dewali* over the period of time?
- (iii) Does the ceremony still is an integrating force among the Chettri?
- (iv) Does the ritual vary across various clans of Chettri?
- (v) What is the role of women in the ceremony?
- (vi) How is the ritual perceived by the youth and how do they sustain the rituals?

VII. METHODOLOGY

The present study is primarily qualitative in nature but also includes quantitative data such as census, survey data etc. The primary data is collected through fieldwork via participant observation as well as by conducting semi-structured and informal in-depth interviews with the selected important individuals. On the other hand secondary data sources have been collected from the books, journals, article, Census, published report and *Vanshawali* (genealogical text) of each clan. The literature consulted are published both English and Nepali languages.

Field and Sample size

The study was conducted in a newly formed Municipality called Gaurada Nagar Palika which falls under the Jhapa District in the 1st province of Mechi Zone of East Nepal. Gaurada earlier along with 50 other villages were under Village development Committee (V.D.C) under Jhapa district of Nepal. It was recently in 2015, the villages got transformed into the Municipality, which is further divided into 9 wards. The survey is primarily conducted in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd ward of Gauradaha.

Gaurada is basically agrarian society with most of the population engaged with agriculture. The village is predominantly inhabited by Chettri, like other part of Nepal. Gaurada before and after Municipality has always been a traditional society, keeping their ancient traditional practices alive. *Dewali* is one of the ancient practices of highly populated people of Gauradaha i.e. Chettri. The ceremony amongst all the clan takes place at an interval of three years. This year (2018) happens to be one of such year and the ceremony has taken place among Puwar Khadka during the first

week of May 2018, in ward no. 3. Therefore, the rituals and ceremonies were studied using the participant observation.

Apart from collecting information of the rituals as a participant observer, the study is based on interview and interaction with a respondents belonging to three clans with a total sampling size of 75, taking equally i.e 25 each from Puwar Khadka Basnet and Adhikari clans in order to assess similarities and differences in the rituals and processes.

In-depth interview using purposive and snowballing Sampling is conducted to elicit the information required for research objectives, taking into consideration of variables like age, gender and different clans of Chettri caste group. The old age people are also taken into consideration to collect the oral history of the ritual. In addition 3 *Dhamis* or Shamans from each clan were identified and interviewed, as they are inevitable part of *Dewali rituals*.

Since, the study aims to see gender dimension and role of women in the ceremony and also the perception of different age group, the sample size of 75 is divided using stratified sampling based on gender and age as significant variables. In addition to this, Qualitative information, though narrative and case study were collected regarding the continuity and the changes.

VIII. CHAPTERAZATION

Chapter 1. Introduction: This Chapter provides an overview of the present study incorporating statement of the problem, theoretical framework, literature review, which laid the basis for rationale of study, objectives, research questions and methodology pertaining to present study.

Chapter 2. Locating Chettri community in Nepali social structure: The chapter traces the history of Chettri community and locates in Nepali social and caste structure. The chapter gives a comprehensive over view of Social cultural practices with special focus on belief system religious ritual and practices of Chettri.

Chapter 3. The field setting and its socio-economic backdrop: This chapter gives an overview of the field- Gaurada Nepal and its socio- economic backdrop.

Chapter 4. Dewali rituals and practices in Gaurada: It begins with socio-economic profile of respondents followed by detailed accounts of the rituals, their cultural significance and organizational aspects.

Chapter 5. Continuity and Changes in Dewali rituals: An assessment: This chapter highlights the continuity and change in the celebration of ritual over the period of time. It also brings in the similarities and differences in ritualistic practices among different clans of Chettri. A section on perception of youth is also included.

Chapter 6. Conclusion: This chapter summarizes the entire thesis and concludes with the findings.

CHAPTER 2

LOCATING CHETTRI COMMUNITY IN NEPALI

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

I. INTRODUCTION

The chapter begins with a brief profile of Nepal, and its demographic features. It gives a brief overview of caste structure in Nepal followed by an extensive discussion on belief system, tradition and religious practice of Nepali society in general and Chettri community has been incorporated. More significantly the chapter tries to locate Chettri in the entire socio structure of Nepal along with a brief historical backdrop.

II. Nepal: A Brief Profile

The landlocked Asian country of “Nepal” is located in the southern slope of Himalayan reign. It is sandwiched between “India over the west, south and east area, having Tibet region of People’s Republic of China over the north” (Bista, 2015). In 1816 Sugauli treaty was signed between East India Company and Nepal (Bista, 1991, p. 26), after which boundaries of Nepal were build having Sikkim in the east and Kumaon in the west of Indian continent, giving Nepal a shape of rectangular. The kingdom of Nepal had enjoyed the Monarchy till modern era, 2008 which turned out to be the historical day for Nepal, as for the 1st time Nepalese witnessed democracy (Sharma, 1983, p.1).

Nepal covers over 54,718 square mile of area, with 26.5 million of the total population². The country is administratively divided into 7 provisions, 14 zones and 77 Districts³. Which is further divided into 191 Municipalities⁴ and 3, 276 V.D.Cs (Village Development Committees)⁵. Kathmandu is the capital city of the country, which is nested in the central region of Nepal (Karkey, Aryjal, Basnyat & Baker, 2008). The city is rich with its cultural heritage⁶ which becomes an attraction to the tourist across the world. The larger city of Kathmandu is highly populated city of Nepal with 1,744,240⁷.

Nepal is the second most affluent country in the world with water resources. “Brooks, wells, rivulets, water-falls, rivers, lakes, ponds, and glaciers are the major resources of water” (Puri, 2014, p. 5). The land is also fortunate with an incredible contrast in the countryside and topography, the northern country is home to part of the Himalayan region, which includes the world's highest mountain, Mount Everest(29,028 feet) and stretches southwards with the Gangetic plain (Bista, 2015).

The Himalayan country Nepal is equally rich with its diversity, it is a homeland to 125 caste/ ethnic group, having over 123 languages⁸ and different cultural group, among which Nepali speaking Hindu are dominant one. Linguistically, various languages come under the umbrella of two main families, the Indo-Aryan and the

² According to 2011 census population of Nepal, Central Bureau Statistics of Nepal 2014: as per the report the population size has increased to 14% from 2001 census

³ <http://www.imnepal.com/name-75-districts-nepal-nepali/> Retrieved on 09/01/2019

⁴ <https://techsansar.com/municipalities-nepal-ict/> Retrieved on 09/01/2019

⁵ <https://techsansar.com/vdc-nepal-list/> Retrieved on 09/01/2019

⁶ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/121> Retrieved on 09/01/2019

⁷ According to 2011 census population of Nepal, Central Bureau Statistics of Nepal 2014.

⁸ Alternative report of indigenous people of Nepal.

Tibeto-Burman (Sharma, 1983, p. 1). Nepali is the official national language of Nepal (Bista, 1991, p. 26).

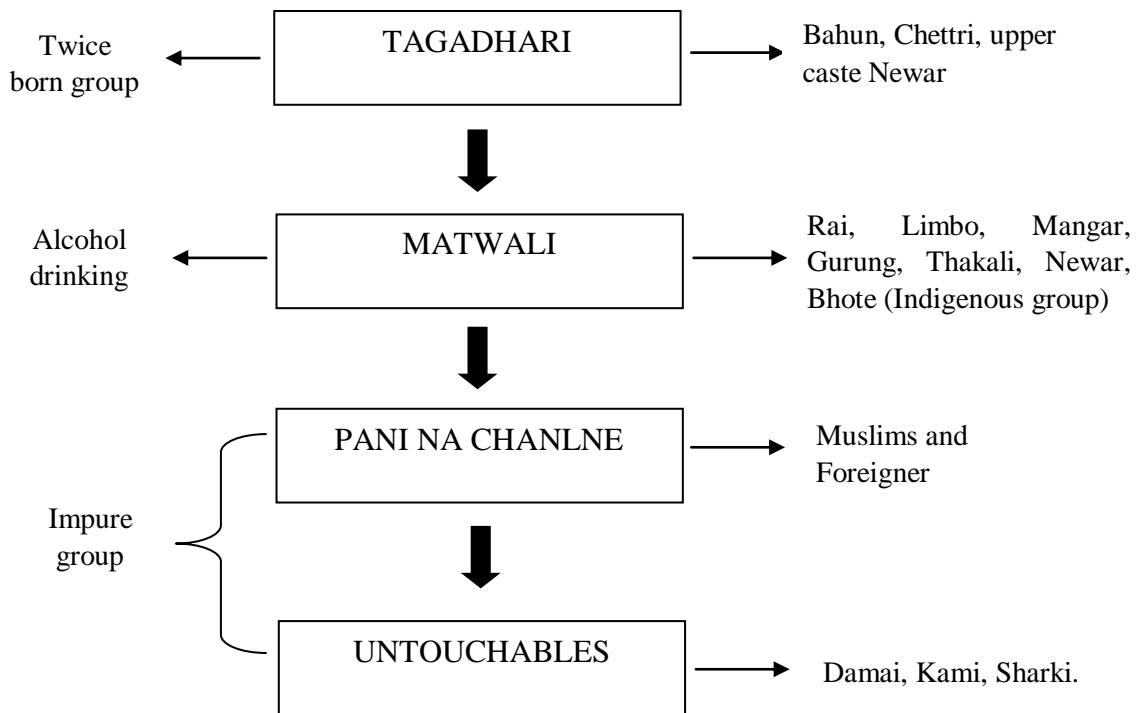
According to the 2011 census of Nepal, there are approximately 26 million populations. The census recorded Chettri caste group as numerically highest with 16.6% of the total population followed by Bahun (12.18%), Magar (7.13%), Tharu (6.56%), Tamang (5.81%), Newar (4.99%), Kami (4.75%), Muslim (4.39%), and Yadav(3.98%)⁹. The Chettri and Bhaun community involving the Kamis, Sharki and Dami are known as Khasas residing in the western hills and are called as Parbatiyas/Pahadis (hill people) (Gellner, 2007, p. 1823).

III. SOCIAL- STRUCTURE OF NEPAL

Like other part of the world, Caste framework in Nepal is very rigorous and rigid. It is utilized to particularize individuals' character which is attributed by birth. It acts as a mediator to differentiate people into high and low in terms of their occupation (Puri, 2014, p. 29). Bista (1991) narrated that “Although Hinduism came in Nepal quite early but its native people were far away from the knowledge of caste principal” Bista, (2001). However it was only in 1854 when King Jayashiti Malla introduced Caste system in Nepal with *Mulukin Ain* (old legal code), it a legal document which gives authority to judge the people of Nepal (Subedi, 2010, p. 154). Since then Caste system became one of the most important practices of Nepali society. The adaptation of caste system is profoundly reflected on the features such as observance of commensality, endogamy and maintenance of hierarchical caste order (Mishra, 2008, p. 125). Thus the hierarchical manifestation in Nepali caste structure is imitated from the Varna system.

⁹ According to 2011 census population of Nepal, Central Bureau Statistics of Nepal 2014

Figure 2.1: Caste system of Nepalese society



Source: (Sharma, 1978, p. 4)

Chettri belongs to *Khas or Tagadhari*, as indicated by the model, they wearing sacred thread and are considered as the twice born group, who rank high in the caste hierarchy next only to Bahun. Along with Chettri and Bhaun *Tagadhari* includes Rajput, Thakuri, jaisi Brahmin, Lower Jaisi, Sanyasi, (castes wearing sacred thread): Upadhaya Brahmin, Rajput, and Newar who wear sacred thread. They belong to Aryan stock of family, followed by '*Matwali*' literally means alcohol drinking caste which include the tribal group, who spoke Tibeto- Burman language. The *Matwali* are divided into two category (a) '*namasinya matawali*' unenslavable liquor drinking class, the one who are prominent ethnic group i.e. Magar, Gurung, Sunuwar, Rai, Limboo and below them (b) '*masinya matawali*' enslavable liquor drinking class, which include prominent and economically backward group such as Bhote, Chepang, Kumal, Hayu, Tharu, Gharti etc. this matwali group comes under tibeto

Burman family. Beneath them comes the two different impure group, any type of social interaction with these two caste was prohibited such as sharing of food, water and marriage. These two categories of caste are *Pani nachalne chhoi chitto halnu na parne*: from whom water can be excepted but any type of bodily touch doesn't required purification, Kusle (Newar musicians), the Kasai (Newar butchers), *Kulu* (Newar tanners), Hindu Dhobi (Newar washerman), Mleccha and Musalman, comes under this category. The untouchables who occupy the bottom of hierarchy are '*Pani na chalne, choi chito halnu parne*' as their bodily touch needs purification. They are the service castes from whom upper caste people demand all kind of services such as Kami, Darjee, Sarki etc (Sharma, 1978, p. 4; Sharma, 1983, p. 17; Bennett, 2005, p. 6; Bennett, Dahal & Govindasamy, 2008, p. 2).

Table 2.1: Caste based Traditional Occupation in Nepali social structure

SL. NO	CASTES	OCCUPATION
1	Bahun	Priests
2	Chettri	Warrior
3	Thakuri	Aristocrats
4	Newar	Businessmen
5	Rai, Mangar, Limbu and Yakha	Agriculture
6	Tamang	Horse tracers/Cavaliers
7	Gurung, Thami and Sunuwar	Shepherds
8	Bhujel	Beaten rice makers/palanquin Bearers
9	Yolmo	Paper maker

10	Sherpa	Porters
11	Sunar	Goldsmiths
12	Kami	Ironsmith
13	Damai	Musicians/Tailor
14	Sarki	Cobblers

Source: (Sharma, 1994, p. 163)

Table 2.1 indicates the traditional based occupation of caste groups in Nepali Caste and social structure. This hierarchical ladder of caste is paraphrased as *char varna chattis jat*, which means, “four Varnas” which divides the society into four hierarchical groups and *Chattis jat* indicates “36 various caste groups” that are differed on the basis of their occupation. (Puri, 2014, pp. 28-29).

i. Religion in Nepal

Religion plays a center role in the lives of all culture and civilization. The Nepali term given to religion is *dharma*, which is known as “duty, morality, rule, merit, and pious acts” (Bista, 1991, p. 29). Bista further points out that, when it comes to religion, the people of Nepal understand its broader meaning as compared to people from western world¹⁰. Like the country India, Nepal has similar largest Hindu population including some of Christian, Buddhist and Islamic followers (Puri, 2014, p. 5). There are also some ethnic group in Nepal whose religious form is animism and their specialist are Shamans who has the skill/ knowledge of diving “oracular methods to deal or control

¹⁰<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=JzFR0pFVYRAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Fatelism+and+development+nepal+struggle+for+development&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiw1vzctv7eAhUZknAKHc08CasQ6AEILDAA#v=onepage&q=Fatelism%20and%20development%20nepal%20struggle%20for%20development&f=false> Retrieved on 04/12/2018

the spirits” (Sharma, 1983, p. 10). Having Hinduism as the state religion; number of Hindu temple can be witnessed in each of the district including the priest, devotee and some religious materials (Puri, 2014, p. 5). These temples also attract tourist from different part of world such as Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu. The constitution of Nepal also seems to favor Hinduism, as according to guided rules only the Aryan from Hindu group of religion can become the successor of royal family (Sharma, 1983, p. 11).

According to Central Bureau of Statistic Nepal 2011, Hindu alone holds (81.3%) of population; followed by Buddhist with (9.0%); Islam (4.4%); Kirat (3.0%); Christian (1.4%); Prakrit (0.5%); Bon (0.05%); Jain (0.01%); Bahai (0.0%); Sikh (0.0%); others (0.2%). Prakrit here is referred as animism, which is an old religion of Nepal but was only recorded in 2011 census study.

ii. Rituals and Belief System of Nepal

The rituals and festival are main attraction in the life of people; Durkheim saw religion as a means of social solidarity, R.K Merton opines that any institution has both Latin and Manifest function. Religion and festival gives an individual joy and happiness an occasion for family and community get together. On such occasions, they decorate the house, wear new clothes, eat delicious homemade food, exchange gifts and seek blessings from elders.

In Nepal some of these festivals are celebrated in a day whereas some festivals comes like a season, although it brings a package of pleasure, excitements and happiness for family which leisure the tensions, stress and anxieties. Every single festival has a notable religious and social importance in individual life (Puri, 2014, p. 6).The

festival in Nepal include both Hindu festival and the nature worship and animistic practices

- **Dashain:** *Dashain* is one of the important festivals of Nepali people, which is known as Dusshera in main stream India. Dashain is celebrated for 15 days it begins with *Ghatasthapana*¹¹ and finally ends with *Kojagrat purnima*¹², thus it is known as one of the longest festival. It is generally celebrated in the month of October. “During this period they worship goddess Durga (kali) and indulge in feasting and mercy making” (Bista, 1967, p. 14). Dashain is celebrated in the glorifying victory of Durga after defeating the demon Mahisashura, thus the festival is also known as *Vijaya dashami* (victory celebrated on the 10th day). The Seventh day of the festival is celebrated as *Fulpati*¹³, eighth day is *Maha Ashtami*¹⁴, ninth day is *Maha Nawami*¹⁵, and tenth day of fortnight they have *Tika*. On the particular day, each individual wear new clothes and joyfully visit the elder member of family to seek blessings and put red colored tike made of rice which is known as *acheta* in local Nepali term. During Dashain people sacrifice animal, such as goat, pig, chicken etc is sacrificed

¹¹ It means the installation of Ghata (sacred pot/ kalash). This is the most important ritual which begins the series of Dashain festival.

<https://www.astrospeak.com/slides/what-is-ghatasthapana-and-importance> Retrieved on 21/01/2019

¹² It is the full moon day which bring end to the festival of Dashain. On this particular day Laxshmi goddess is worshiped. The kalash which was installed in Ghatasthapana which is filled with holy water and flower is buried into a river, and this act brings end to the Dashain festival.

<https://publicholidays.asia/nepal/kojagrat-purnima/> Retrieved on 21/01/2019

¹³ *Ful* means flower and *pati* means leaf. On the particular day nine type of fulpati is brought to the house that represent nine goddess who bring, prosperity to the house.

<http://newsonair.nic.in/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=354117> Retrieved on 22/02/2019

¹⁴ It is also known as Durga astami, on the particular day people fast for Ma Durga. The day is specifically celebrated to rejoice her victory over demon.

<https://www.speakingtree.in/blog/significance-of-number-8-for-durga-ashtami> Retrieved on 22/01/2019

¹⁵ It is the last day of Navratri which falls before Vijayadashami.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/religion/mahanavami-2017-importance-and-significance-4863560/> Retrieved on 22/02/2019

and offer it to the guest and family members. Most of the offices and educational institute are remained closed through the festival. (Puri, 2014, p. 7; Bista, 1967, p.14).

- **Tihar:** *Tihar* is another important festival for the Nepali people. It is known as *Diwali* /Dipawali in main stream India; it is generally celebrated in the triumph of lord Rama, as he safely returned his home Ayodhya along with his wife Sita and brother Lakshman after 14 year of exile and victory over Ravana. During this day every house is cleaned and decorated with *saipatri phul* (Marygold flower), diya and fairy lights. Tihar is another longest festival after Dashain, thus throughout the festival “different deities are worshiped on different days and offer food and decorate and worship one per day: a crow, dog, cow, bull and Lakshami (goddess of wealth)”. In local term it is known as *Kaag Tihar*¹⁶ (crow day), *Kukur Tihar*¹⁷ (dog day), *Gai Tihar*¹⁸ (cow day), *Goru Tihar*¹⁹ (ox day) respectively and on Lakshami puja goddess of wealth is worshipped in order to seek blessings. The last day of festival is celebrated as *bhaitika* when women worship for long life of her brother and puts different color of tika in his forehead and offer gifts and food (Bista, 1967, p. 14).

¹⁶ Kaag (crows) are known as “messenger of death”, on this day people offer rice to the crows. It is ensured that the crows are happy, else they will illuminate the terrible news, and awful things would occur in the coming year.

¹⁷ On the second day kukur (dog) is worshpied, as according to the belief dog are “gate keeper of heaven”. They ensure that the spirit of death reaches to heaven, thus on this day people put tika, grandal made of marigold and offer good foods.

¹⁸ Cow is represented as Lakshmi Goddess of wealth, thus on the 3rd cow is worshiped and offered fruits and marigold grandal, and in the evening house id decorated with the lights in order to attract the Lakshmi Maa.

¹⁹ Ox I an essential aid to the farmer thus on the 4th day Goru puja is done for Ox. This day is also celebrated as Newari New year.

<https://www.tibettravel.org/nepal-festival/tihar-festival.html> Retrieved on 22/01/2019.

- Manghe Sankranti:** *Maghe Sankranti* is also known as *Makar sankranti* which falls on 1st of *Magh* (15th of January). It is the festival of sun god, who is symbol of wisdom, power and dignity. The day brings end to winter and welcome spring and harvest season. This particular day, people take holy bath in a holy river²⁰. They take sacred food on this day such as *selroti*²¹ (Nepali traditional sweet bread) and root of various fruits. On this day mother of every house wishes good health to all the family members. Grand fare is organized in different markets and on this occasion kids gets an opportunity to play *Lingey ping*²² in Village areas (Puri, 2014, p. 6 ; Kharel & Basnet, 2006, p. 68).
- Ubhauri- Udhaul:** *Ubhauri and Udhaul* are the two phases of year. *Ubhauri* falls in the month of *Baisakh* (April-May) and *Udhaul* in the month of *Mangsir* (November-December). *Ubhauri* is a combination of two words *Ubho* and *auri* which means upward. On other hand *Udhaul* comes from *Udho* and *auri* which implies downward²³. The population in Nepal from village areas depends on the cattle rearing and agriculture. It is believed that goddess of nature *Brindawasini* travel to north during summer and south during winter, according to that the cattle are shifted to north during *Ubhauri* and valley during *Udhaul*. It is generally the cattle shifting occasion. It marks the season

²⁰ <http://www.weallnepali.com/nepali-festivals/maghe-sankranti>
Retrieved on 23/01/2018

²¹ The traditional bread is made up of rice flour and other ingredients such as ghee, sugar etc. the bread is made in the shape of donates which is much larger in size. In every occasion of Nepali selroti is prepared.
<http://www.weallnepali.com/recipe/Khaja/sel-roti-nepalese-traditional-bread> Retrieved on 23/01/2019

²² *Linge* means “tall and lean bamboo” and *ping* means “swing”. Around 12 feet long swing is prepared with the help of four bamboos and jute rope.
<http://www.imnepal.com/dashain-ping-photos-swing-festival-nepal/> retrieved on 23/01/2019

²³ <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/udhaul-and-ubhauri-festivals/> Retrieved on 23/01/2019

of plantation and harvesting respectively (K. Basnet, personal interaction, November, 2018).

Kharel and Basnet have featured other type of festival such as *Tij* and *Vaishaki*; *Tij* is the festival of women which is done for the long life of husband. It falls in the month of September. On the other hand *Vaishaki* is the Nepali New Year falls in the month of April (Kharel and Basnet, 2006, pp. 70- 71).

Beside these Hindu festival, there are many our ceremonies and festivals celebrated by different religion and community of Nepal such as Christmas by Christians, *Loshar* and Buddha Jayanti by Bhuddist, Eid by Muslim and *Chasok Tangnam* by Tamangs. Each festival has religious and social importance in the life of people of Nepal (Puri, 2014, p. 6).

IV. THE KHASA OF NEPAL: HISTORY AND ORIGIN

The term *Khasa* to local Nepalis means those who come from tropical regions (Thapa, 2002, p. 30). According to the documentation, in the extreme west of Indian Himalayan range, towards the western Punjab, lived a tribal group which was known as *khasa*, who looked upon as Kshatriya of Aryan origin (Grierson, 1916, p. 1; Thapa, 2002, p. 31). In the great history of Himalayas, land of *khasa* used to be their “political domain”, a large kingdom until medieval period due to migration (Bista, 1967, p. 81).

The *Khasa* tribe is frequently brought in scenario in different Indian Ancient text such as *Purans*, *Mahabharata* and *Manusmriti* which is spelt in various ways such as *Khasa*, *Khasha* or *Khasiya*. (Grierson, 1916, pp. 1-5; Thapa, 2002, p. 31; Kharel & Basnet, 2006, p. 68). Manu in *manusmiriti* mentioned *khasa* as the offspring of

Kshatriya (Grierson, 1916, p. 5). Subsequently being a war tribe they involved imperative position in the focal Asia. *Khasa* were somewhere connected to the clan, of Pisachas and Carnivals. Their dialect is firmly allied with Sanskrit. In sixth century they moved towards the Himalayas of Nepal with the foundation of Shamanism and the Sindhu human progress. Thus the *Khasa* are mostly settled in the south of Humla, Mugu, Jumla, Dolpo, Kalikot, Jarakot and many other areas in western hills. (Thapa, 2002, pp. 30- 31).

During Mughal invasion in India, many Brahmins escaped to the western hills of Nepal in the region of *Khas*. At that period agriculture was the primary source of their livelihood; Brahmins on other hand came with the knowledge and skill of teaching and went on introducing Hinduism to the *Khas* people. The introduction of Hinduism was done in such a way, that it would provide *Khasas* with higher status in Hierarchy. In this process the *Khasa* king and the feudal were given the title of Chettri, whereas the peasants and the workers remained as lower caste (Bista, 2015, pp. 75-78). Hinduism was used as a tag to indicate the people as high or lower caste in society (Puri, 2014, p. 29).

Bista in his book mentioned that the mostly educated Chettri in Nepal deny to call themselves as *Khasa*. Thus Chettri migrated to tarai leaving their native place and in recent time they are widely spread all over the territory but are mainly concentrated in the mid western districts of Nepal including several central and eastern districts (Pradhan & Shrestha, 2005, p. 9). Today most of the people of *Khasa* are living in folk style, presenting their cultural heritage and values in their remote Himalayan gorges without being victimized by socio-cultural changes. So this Himalayan gorges have become a stable homeland for *Khasa* culture. (Thapa, 2002, p. 30).

The term Chettri is derived from the Sanskrit word Kshatriya, which falls under the category of ‘warrior/ ruler caste group’ according to Hindu Varna system. The Chettri along with Bhauns are dominated group scattered throughout the country as policeman, soldier, administrator, landowner and priest (Gellner, 2007, p. 1823). Today “the Chettri are largest group in the country as a whole and is found everywhere from west to east” (Gellner, 2007, p. 1824). The way through which dominant group spread so widely is through inter-caste marriage, the children of Brahman father and Chettri mother were categorized as Khatri / Khatri-Chettri and “their status is labeled as pure Chettri” (Subedi, 2010, p. 153).

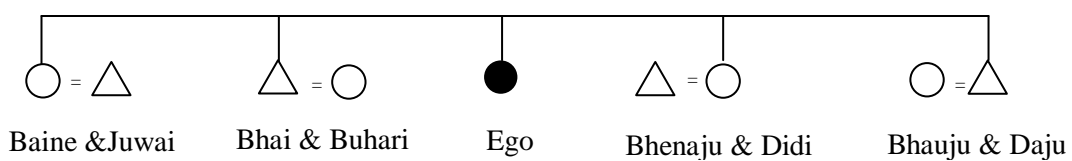
Chettri speak Nepali as their native language and their major occupation is farming and government Service. Those living in the rural area are engaged to agricultural sector, they are either rich landlord or average farmer. Whereas over the world: Chettri are known for their bravery in military service. (Bista, 1967, p. 5). They played a significant role in the unification of country being a core of Gorkha army. Their population is dominant one in terms of rank in army, government services, language and rich culture. (Rai, 2013). The Chettri are larger caste group of *Kshatriyas* community, they are divided into several sub-caste and clan. Their surnames are therefore largely derived from their position in their army such as “Bista(baron/distinguished), Baruwal, Karki(revenue officer), Bhandari(military officers and some are store keeper), Baniya (military officer), *Dhami*, Thapa (officer) (Tibetan: man at the border), Thadarahi Adhikari, Budhathoki, Deoja, Khatri, Ghatri chettri (GC), Budhathoki Chhetri (BC), Dangi Chhetri (DC), Katwal, Lamichhane, Thakuri, Basnet, Kunwar, Rana (Timilsina), Khadka (sword bearer) and Dani (ibid).

V. KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY OF CHETTRI

The term used to refer/ address to the kin is known as kinship terminology. These terminologies vary across the societies, linguistic and cultural difference as it differs in content, meaning, structure and organization of relationship (Read, 2015, p. 61).

The Chettri and Bahun use similar kinship terminologies. Kharel and Basnet came with the terminologies used in the extended family to address the children along with their numbers. The first son and daughter is known as Jetha - Jethi, 2nd as *Maila - Maili*, 3rd *Saila - Saili*, 4th *Kaila - Kaili*, 5th *Thaila - Thaili*, 6th *Antarey - Antari*, 7th *Jantarey - Jantari*, 8th *Khantarey - Khantari*, 9th *Mantarey - Mantari*, 10th *Lakhantarey - Lakhantari*, 11th *Thula Kancha - Thuli Kanchi* and lastly *Kancha - Kanchi* (2006, p. 83). The larger group of Chettri family with specified relationship and terminologies are given in following figures which demonstrate the kinship relation of the community.

Figure 2.2: Relatives from Sibling side

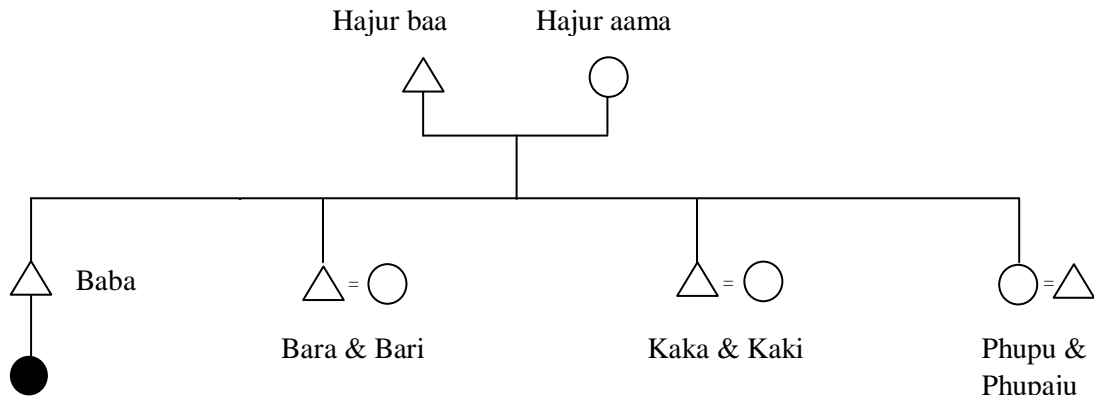


Source: (Kharel & Basnet, 2006, p. 85)

The right side of ego presents the elder siblings, and left presents the younger sibling. The elder brother is known as *daju* and his wife as *Bhauju*, Elder sister is known as *Didi* and her husband as *Bhenaju*. *Bhauju* and *Bhenaju* refer ego as *Nandaa* and *Sali* respectively. The younger brother is known as *Bhai* and his wife as *Buhari*, on other hand younger sister is referred as *Baine* and her husband as *Juwai*. For the entire

younger sibling and their spouse ego is known as *Didi*. The offspring of siblings are referred as *chori/ Chora* (daughter/ male).

Figure 2.3: Relatives from Father side

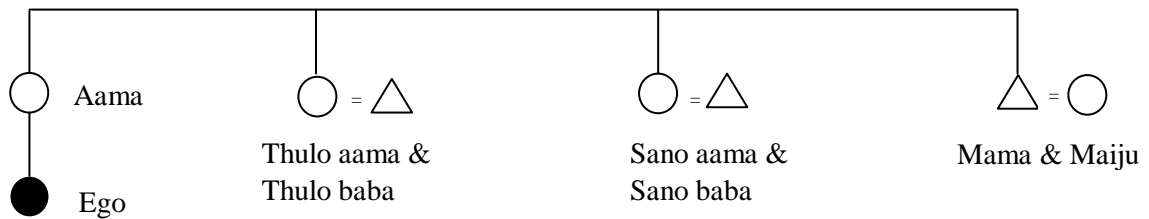


Source: (Doherty, 1974, p. 28)

Grandparents from both father and mother side is known as *Hajur baa* (grandfather) and *Hajur aama* (gand mother), they refer ego as *Natini*²⁴. On other hand, Father of ego is known as *Baba*, his elder brother and his wife is known as *Bara* and *Bari*. The younger brother of father is known as *Kaka* and his wife as *Kaki*. Sister (elder/younger) is referred as *Phupu* and her husband as *Phupaju*. Offspring of the above spouse is known as cousins. Ego is referred as *chori* (daughter) to all these relatives shown in figure 2.3.

²⁴ If the ego was son the he is referred as *nati* and his wife as *natini* Buhari. Their offspiring are known as *panati* and *panatini*

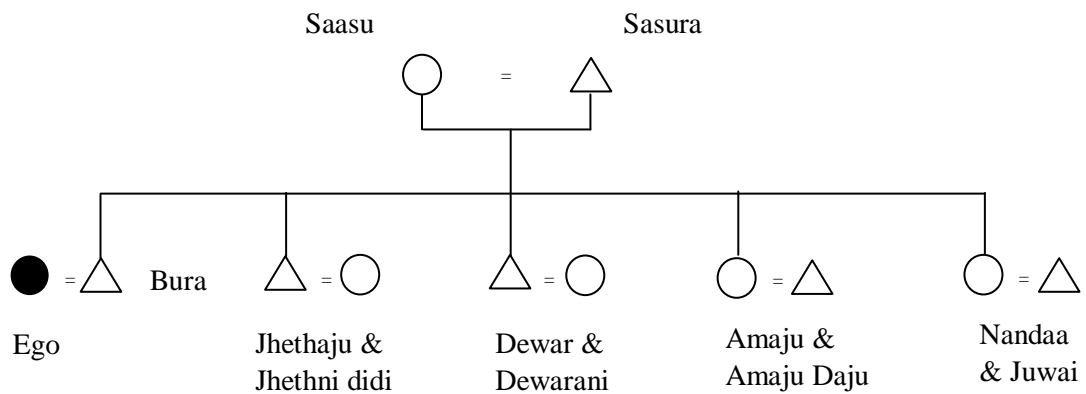
Figure 2.4: Relatives form Mother side



Source: (Doherty, 1974, p. 29).

Mother of ego is known as *Aama*, her elder sister and her husband is known as *Thulo aama* and *Thulo baba*, whereas younger sister and her husband is known as *Sano aama* and *Sano baba*, both the relatives refer ego as *chori* (daughter). The brother (elder/ younger) of mother is known as *Mama* and *maiju*, who refer ego as *Bhanja/ Bhanji*. The offspring of the relatives are known as siblings.

Figure 2.5 Relatives from Husband side

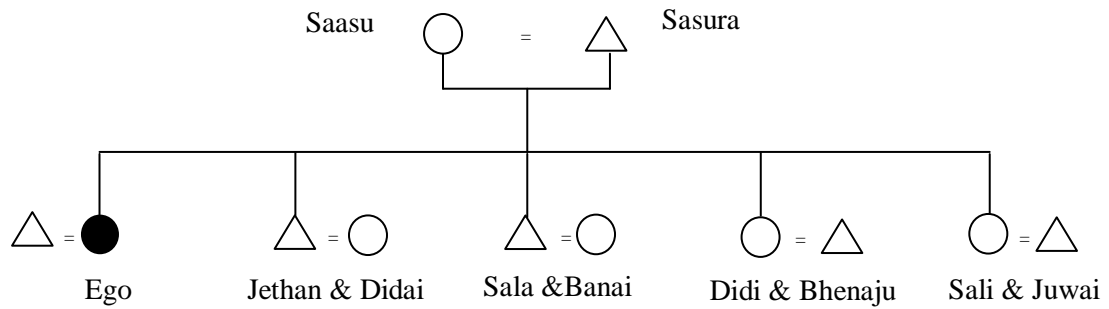


Source: (Kharel & Basnet, 2006, p. 85)

Ego after marriage is known as *Buhari* at *sasurali* (in-laws-house), the mother and father of husband are refer as *Sasura* and *Saasu*, husband is known as *Bura* and ego is referred as *Buri* (wife). The elder brother and his wife of husband are known as

Jhethaju and *Jhethni didi*. The younger brother and her wife are known as *Dewar* and *Dewarani*. Elder sister and husband is known as *Amaju* and *Amaju Daju*, younger sister and her husband on other hand is known as *Nanadaa* and *Juwai*.

Figure 2.6: Relatives from wife side



Source: (Kharel & Basnet, 2006, p. 85)

Ego's husband is known as *Juwai*, by elder member of ego including the parents, whereas the younger siblings refer husband as *Bhenaju*. Even here the parents are known as *Sassu* and *saura*. The elder brother and sister in-law of ego and is known as *Jethan* and *Didai*, younger brother and his wife is known as *Sala* and *Banai*. The elder sister and her husband is refer as *Didi* and *Bhenaju*, younger sister and her husband as *Saali* and *Juwai*.

VI. TRADITIONAL DRESS AND HOUSE OF CHETTRI

Their traditional houses are build with “stone and mud with flat mud roofs in the northern and with thatch roofs at the lower altitude” (Bista, 1967: 81). The ground floor of the house is used for cattle and the upper floor is used by family members. Generally in each floor contains an open terrace in the entrance, which is used for drying agricultural produce. The ladder which leads to the top floor is usually built outside the house. (Thapa, 2002, p. 33; Bista, 1967, p. 81)

The Chettri are generally dressed up in Nepali attire. Men wear *Daura, surwal* with *topi* and *esta-coat*; married women wear *Chhit/saree, cholo, kamlo pauro* and *Khaddar's patuki*. Un-married girls on other hand wear *dauda* which gives the work of *choli* and *ghangar* made from thick *Khaddae, Kora* or *Thetuwa*. In traditional days man use to weave clothes by man themselves, whereas in today's generation due to lack of resource for making tradition dress through sheep farming, people are forced to wear the dress made out of machine or western outfit (Thapa, 2002, p. 43).

VII. BELIEF SYSTEM OF CHETTRI

Chettri like Brahmin belong to larger population of oldest Religion of the world "Hinduism", thereby they practice major religious festival of Hindu such as *Dashai*(Durga Puja), *Tihar*(Diwali), *Bhai Tika*(Bhai Duj), Teej, *Ubauli/Udhauli* etc. and worship thousands of Hindu deities including Lord Shiva, Lord Ram and Lord Vishnu. However, there are some clans and sub -clans of Chettri who worship *Masto God* (Bista, 1967, p. 14), a form of animistic practices. Chettri are rich with their festivals and religious practices, as some of them are given below.

The Chettri are the follower of a blend of Hinduism and animistic practices. There are many culture traditions unique to Chettri, among many traditional practices; *Dewali* is one such ancient tradition which is being practiced by Chettri of Nepali population (Chhetri, 2014). It is a set of ritual, practice and belief which is performed to worship the household deities locally known as *kul/ kuldevta*²⁵ to please the deities for peace and healthy life of family members. The ritual is practiced after a gap of three year which is followed by sacrifice of uncastrated goat/ he goat. However the

²⁵ It is known as Clan Deity: the household deity of a family, who is been worshiped and passed from generation to generation. Kul is also known as Masta and every clan possess their own Masta, which gives an identity to the clan.

process and practice of worship of *kul puja* differ from each other with the clan of Chettri, as every clan has their own *kul/Masta*. Traditionally, the ritualistic practices and ceremonies acted as a unifying force at clan level, to bind and unite the family under one roof.

VIII. THE RITES OF PASSAGE OF CHETTRI

In every society, the social identity and duties of the individuals is established in rituals of rich symbolic content. Since life change of a person is significantly affected by their identity i.e. clan, caste, tribe etc (Thapa, 2002, p. 35). Arnold van Gennep called such rites as *rite de passage*; he saw that individual's life in society is shaped by sequence of evolution: "from youth, to maturity, to old age; from single to married; from childlessness to motherhood; from birth to death, and so forth". Each of these stages is confined to a ceremony which is known as 16 *Sanskar* according to Hindu mythology. These ceremonies enable an individual to transit from one stage to another, successfully (Geertz, 1960, pp.1801- 1802).

Transition of status from one to another

- Before the birth of a child four types of sanskar are pursued with *Garvadhan sanskar* when the couples mate for a child, *Yugmaratri* or *Ayugmaratri* for the birth of son or daughter are arranged. "*Yugmaratri* is the evening of even day ideally sixteen after monthly cycle of the mother and *Augmaratri* is the odd day". For these customs a unique puja is led, for good son or daughter this function is known as *Garvadhan sanskar*.

After some months when the baby is formed into a boy or girl inside belly, the *Punsanvan sanskar* is done. Seventh or eighth month later *Simontanayan*

sanskar is executed when the child is still in belly. Lastlty *Jatakarma sanskar* is done at the birth of child (Kharel and Basnet, 2006, p. 73). Which is done to remove the kind of defect an infant is born with; it is believed that after this sanskar child will live healthy and long life²⁶.

- There are other types of sanskar done after the birth of child i.e. *Chhaitee pujan sanskar* which is on the sixth day after the birth of child, according to folklore, it is believed that at mid night *Vidhaata* (Goddess of Destiny) comes and write the faith of child²⁷, and to please the god puja is organized. Throughout these days, right after the birth a child, both mother and infant are kept in isolation, as they are considered as *acchut* (untouchable) till *Namkaran sanskar*. On this particular day the whole house is purified with *gauth* including the houses of father blood relatives (Kharel and Basnet, 2006, p. 74-75). *Namkaran sanskar* is celebrated on the 11th day and it is also known as *Navran*, it is a name giving ceremony which is based on astrological procedure. The ceremony is usually organized on the 11th day of the birth a child (Adhikari, 2012, p. 53).
- *Anna Prasan*: is rice feeding ceremony of child for the first time, and is done after 6-7 months when the child start developing teeth (Adhikari, 2012, p. 70). After 10 month *Karna Vedan* (spearing of ear) with gold or silver is done²⁸.

²⁶ http://hindi.webdunia.com/hindu-religion/sixteen-sacred-rites-of-hinduism-112043000025_1.html
Retrieved on 28/01/2019

²⁷ <https://www.sanskarteaching.com/gujarati-customstraditions/chhathi-na-lekh-sixth-day-birth/>
Retrieved on 28/01/2019

²⁸ http://hindi.webdunia.com/hindu-religion/sixteen-sacred-rites-of-hinduism-112043000025_1.html
Retrieved on 28/01/2019

- ***Keshantsanskar***: is specifically done for boys, on this particular day maternal uncle shave the hair of the child and very precisely he keeps a *tupi* (tuft) at the center of head (Kharel and Basnet, 2006, p. 76). ***Vedaramba sanskas***: A child is given knowledge of the Vedas under it²⁹. The Second and the most important rites among boys is ***Bratabanda***, which is also known as *Bratadesh* meaning *Bartha ko Bandhan mah basnu* “to stay in fast”. Brahman calls this ceremony as “asali pratighya” (Adhikari, 2012, p. 86). This is initially a ceremony after which a Chettri boy is known as twice born. The ceremony is done after boy completes eight years, after this ceremony he becomes eligible to continue with other sanskar such as marriage, *kriya* etc (Kharel and Basnet, 2006, p. 76). ***Samaavartan sanskaar*** meaning returning again. The ritual is carried out after an individual attains education from the Ashram or Gurukul and send back to society. It means that the Brahmachari person is psychologically prepared for struggle of life³⁰.
- ***Vivah***: Marriage as an institution is one of the most important rites in the life of human being. The types and forms of marriage may differ in different society in terms of the rites, ritual and believe system of society. Marriage among the Chettri- Bahun and other Nepali community are usually conducted in the month of “*Baisahk-jeth* (mid May – mid July) *Mangsir* (mid November – mid December) *Maghand Phagun* (mid January – mid March)” (Bista, 2015, p. 8).

²⁹ http://hindi.webdunia.com/hindu-religion/sixteen-sacred-rites-of-hinduism-112043000025_1.html
Retrieved on 28/01/2019

³⁰ Ibid.

Before marriage the bride and groom *kundali* are logically matched and marriage is arranged. According to which a suitable marriage date is maintained. The Girl and boy from same *gotra or thar*³¹ are not allowed to married. On wedding day, boy applies *sindoor* and gives *potey*³². The most important ceremony in marriage is *kanyadan* (gifting girl to the groom) it is a very big dharma for the bride family (Kharel and Basnet, 2006, pp. 77-78).

- **Kriya:** Life's end is death and the ritual related to death is known as "*antim karma*" last ritual or yatra of human being. The ritual is done for the peaceful journey towards heaven without any pain and suffering (Adhikari, 2012, p. 221).

After death, the body is consigned to fire by a holy river, followed by certain rituals. The elder son lights up the funeral pyre, after the burial process the boy returns to the house and site for *kora*³³, shaves his head and is dressed in white dhoti and consumes pure vegetarian food for 13 days. The boys sitting in kora has to prepare food on their own made without oil, salt and turmeric. The entire families with blood relation are bonded with the rites of *jutho* (morn).

³¹ Gotra of individual is derived from the rishi, and people from same gotra cannot marry as according to belief marriage between same gotra brings miss fortune to the offspring of the couples. Thar on other hand refers to the clan, individual from same thar are also not allowed to marry as they belong to same ancestor. Person from same gotra and thar makes brother and sister. (Kharel and Basnet, 2006: 86)

³² Sindoor and potey depict a married life of a woman. Sindoor which is also known as kumkum, is made of red powder, and is applied in the center of fore-head of women. It symbolized the energy of Female.

Potey is a necklace which is made of green beads. Both Sindoor and potey is 1st applied by groom at the day of wedding, after which a women has to wear it throughout her married life. A widow woman is not allowed to wear them.

<https://www.utsavpedia.com/cultural-connections/colored-with-pride-sindoor/> Retrieved on 11/01/2019

³³:it is a secluded spot where only the children's of deceased are allowed to enter and perform death rituals

Within these 13 days no rituals or ceremonies should be performed (Kharel and Basnet, 2006, p. 79-80)

IX. SUMMARY

From above discussion, we can understand that the Chettri are highly populated caste group in Nepal. They belong to Khasa community practicing both Hinduism and animistic tradition. Historically times Hindu caste group migrated to the hills of Nepal, and later was introduced to Hinduism. Through this Hinduisation process Chettri were introduced as upper caste of society in Nepali caste hierarchy. However despite the assimilation to larger Hindu caste structure, many clans and sub clans of Chettri still retained their faith in traditional animistic and shamanistic practices. Masto puja or *Dewali* is one such animistic practices of ancestral worship among Chettri of Nepal.

CHAPTER 3

THE FIELD SETTING AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKDROP

I. INTRODUCTION

The present chapter gives an overview of background and field setting of Gaurada Nagar Palika located in Jhapa District of Nepal. The brief profile is followed by demographic and socio- economic features of area which is derived from secondary sources like census study, literature review, official information and field visit as well.

II. THE JHAPA DISTRICT

Jhapa is situated in the 1st provision of Eastern zone of Nepal, which lies on “87°39’ east to 88°12’ east longitude and 26°20’ north to 26°50’ north latitude”. It is bordered with Illam district towards the North, Indian states to the east and south i.e. Bihar and West Bengal respectively and lastly Morang district of Nepal towards the west. The district covers over 1,606 Square kilo meters of total area³⁴. Jhapa is a terrai region which receive 250 to 300cm of annual rainfall, during summer monsoon season. The district is the largest rice producer and is accordingly known as the Nepal’s Grain Grocery, because of its alluvial soil type which makes farming

³⁴ <http://ddcjhapa.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/DTMP-jhapa.pdf> Retrieved on: 01/12/ 2018

appropriate³⁵. Beside these cereal crops, Jhapa is also popularly for its various other cash crops, horticulture, tea and animal livestock.

Jhapa has 2068.5 kilometers of road network, out of that 342.38 km are black top road, 1131.55 km are gravel road and 594.56 km earthen road which covers both district and village³⁶. The distance between Jhapa and Kathmandu (capital of Nepal) is approximately 281 kms which takes 45 minutes via air from Kathmandu to Bhadrapur Aiport of Jhapa³⁷.

Bhadrapur is also the head quarter of Jhapa, located on the bank of Mechi River which flows between Bhadrapur and Galgaliya of India. It is one of the oldest Municipalities, which is also called the tea city of Nepal. Bhadrapur has important legislative and other vital foundations, including a zonal clinic, domestic airplane terminal, school, colleges, police and military base camp, and has the Central District Offices³⁸.

There are 8 Municipalities Including Gauradaha and 37 V.D. C (Village Development Committee)³⁹ under Jhapa district such as, Arjundhara, Birtamod, Bhadrapur, Damak, Gauriganj, Haldi bari, Barhadashi, Kankai, Kamal, Mechinagar, Buddhashanti, Jhapa, Kachankawal, Shivasataxi etc. According to the census of 2011, Jhapa comprises total population of 8, 12,650 which accounts to 3.07% of Nepal population, with 385,096

³⁵Doshra Nagar Parishad bata sukrit nagar vikash aayojana, 2018

³⁶ <http://rapnepal.com/district/district-profile-4> Retrieved on 05/01/2019

³⁷Doshra Nagar Parishad bata sukrit nagar vikash aayojana, 2018

³⁸ <http://bossnepal.com/bhadrapur-eastern-nepal/> Retrieved on:05/01/2019

³⁹ Doshra Nagar Parishad bata sukrit nagar vikash aayojana, 2018

male, 427,554 female and 90.07% sex ratio living in 1, 84,552 houses⁴⁰. The district has literacy rate of 75%⁴¹.

III. GAURADA NAGAR PALIKA

Gaurada is pronounced in two way Gaurada (by some local people) and Gauradaha (by census). According to the oral history, Gauradaha came from word “*Gauri Daha*” *Gauri* is a ‘species of cow’ and *daha* means ‘lake’. It is believed that Raja Birath’s Gauri Gai (cow) used to travel to east to drink water, and in those days the place Gaurada was *gairoh* meaning “deep” where water use to be stored, which further formed into a lake. The place never got shortage of water even though the other part of Nepal got dry, therefore this place was known as Gauri daha ‘*gauri le pani kane daha*’ (lake where Gauri Gai drink water).

Gaurada is an eastern Nepal municipality under the Mechi district of Jhapa. Rohit Kumar Shah is the Mayor and Gita Bhetwal is the Regional Deputy Mayor⁴². The town is connected with 22km black top road from Padajungi-Gauriganj. It is about 10 km from Padajungi to Gaurada, and 12 km from Gaurada to Gauriganj⁴³. Gaurada covers over 123.3 sq ft of the total area, it is located 100 mtr. above the sea level⁴⁴. Neighboring village like Topgachi, Ratwa River, lakhanpur Village and Khjurgahi Village is located in the east, west, north and southern zone of Gaurada respectively (field work, 2018).

⁴⁰ National population and housing census 2011, Government of Nepal.

⁴¹ <http://rapnepal.com/district/district-profile-4> Retrieved on 05/01/2019

⁴² <http://gauradahamun.gov.np/en> Retrieved on 05/01/2019

⁴³ Data is collected from Hem Raj Sharma, a worker from municipality office, 2018

⁴⁴ Doshra Nagar Parishad bata sukrit nagar vikash aayojana.

In 19th September 2015, Gaurada got its municipality status after merging four V.D.Cs with it; Maharanijhoda, Juropani, Khobara and Baigundhura after which it became Gaurada Nagar Palika⁴⁵. When it was V.D.C, Gaurada was divided into 13 wards which is brought down to 9 after the merger, each of these ward is headed by a Chairperson. Back then Gaurada village consisted of 14,771 of total population, with 3,514 household consisting of 6,897 (46.69%) male, 7,874 (53.30 %) female and 87.59% of sex ratio⁴⁶. However the census study after this merger is yet to be done, says Hem Raj a worker from Nagar palika⁴⁷.

Table 3.1: Population of Gaurada Municipality after merging 5 V.D.Cs

V.D.Cs	Total Population	Male	Female	Households	Sex-ratio
Baigundhura	5,640	2,643 (46.86 %)	2,997 (53.13 %)	1,251	88.19%
Gauradaha	14,771	6,897 (46.69 %)	7,874 (53.30 %)	3,514	87.59%
Juropani	11,635	5,630 (48.38 %)	6,005 (51.61 %)	2,589	93.76%
Khobara	10,326	4,855 (47.01 %)	5,471 (52.98 %)	2,343	88.74%
Maharanijhoda	10,661	4,911 (46.06 %)	5,750 (53.93 %)	2,373	85.41%
Total	53,033 (100 %)	24,936 (47.01 %)	28,097 (52.98 %)	12,070	88.75%

Source: National population and Housing census 2011, Government of Nepal.

⁴⁵ <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2015-09-19/govt-declares-26-new-municipalities.html> accessed on: 01/ 12/ 2018

⁴⁶ National population and housing census 2011, Government of Nepal.

⁴⁷ Nagar Palika is the municipality office which was established in 2015.

Note: the total figure has been calculated based on 2011 census of individual V.D.Cs

Gaurada is the highly populated V.D.C with 14,771 of total population and Baigundhura is the least populated with 5,640 of population. After merging all the 5 V.D.Cs i.e. Maharanijhoda, Juropani, Khobara, Gaurada and Baigundhura (5 V.D.Cs), we get the total population of Gaurada Nagar Palika which is 53,033. The population comprises of 24,936 (47.01%) of male and 28,097 (52.98 %) female with 88.75% of sex ratio. Here the population of Female is relatively high as compared to that of total number male, in all the respective V.D.Cs. These populations are found to be residing in 12,070 houses.

After Gaurada got its municipality following infrastructural developmental initiatives were undertaken.

- Road facilities – the roads connecting different household and wards was one lane during V.D.C, which is now being extended into two lanes. A 16 ft of gravel road (made of pieces of rocks and sands) is been constructed in every ward of Gaurada.
- Health Center – *Swasta Chowki*⁴⁸ is located in Gaurada Bazaar ward no 1. The facilities in the chowki was scrawny during V. D.C. it was headed by a nurse and a helper. Whereas today it consist of an M.B.B.S Doctor including with the Nurse and helper. Free medicines for minor sickness such as Fever, cough and cold is provided to the people, in addition to that, the doctor also advice the patients with a good hospitals out of town/country (such as in Siliguri, West Bengal, India) to cure their sickness.

⁴⁸ Locally known as Health center which is funded by government.

- Water Facilities – safe drinking water is an essential need of an individual. Thus with the progress of health and road facilities, water facilities is improved which is under process. Water tank is build in every part ward of Gaurada which was facing scarcity of water till now.
- Quality of Education – Teachers salary has been increased, which resulted in the increase of faculty in school and study hour. “Whereas before due to minimal salary none were interested to get into teaching profession, the classes were not taken sincerely, most of the time the students were given half day because of teachers irresponsibility” said by Hemanta Karki ward chairman of Gaurada. Now the number of teachers has also been increased in the class room and classes are taken till 4:00 pm. The new education act of 2072 (2016) of Nepal has made +2 compulsory, at present every school is running till class 12 which was running till class 10, this initiative was taken to improve the literacy rate of Nepal⁴⁹.

i. Religion Composition of Gaurada

Religion plays an important role in the life of people, god dwells in every heart of individual whether it is Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian etc and this inclination is similar in Gauradaha. We can find people from different religion composition, given below are some of the worship places found within the vicinity of Gaurada:

- Temples – there are 17 registered temples, found throughout the municipality. As are many other temples which are yet to be registered says Hemanta Karki, Chairman of Ward number 1. Through the respondents it was revealed that

⁴⁹ <http://therisingnepal.org.np/news/11883> Retrieved on 26/12/2018

every other corner of Gauradaha small or large temples can be witnessed.

Most of these temples are of Goddess Durga, Hanuman or Shiva.

- Church – there are three Churches in ward number 3, 4 and 9.
- Mosque – there is only 1 Mosque in the entire town.

These number of worship place indicates the population of people from different religion. Hindus are highly populated followed by Christian and Muslim. Apart from these, there are some other Maharaja *than* (worship place of spiritual leaders), in the vicinity. *Sakhela and Skaewa*⁵⁰ *thaan* (religious place) of Rai and Limboo also exist in ward number one and five. A separate temple for conducting *Dewali* is also found in Ward number one, two, three and five.

The religious diversity is reflected in the area as most importantly, the celebration of any rituals or festival are not just confined within the family or community people, but is celebrated in a unified manner. During Christmas all Hindu and Muslim is invited, similarly during *Sakela* and *Dewali* people from all the caste and community is welcomed. A worship place is opened for people from all the caste and creeds whether it is Temple, Mosque or Church.

ii. Other Infrastructures

The development of various infrastructures laid a strong foundation to the development of an area. Following are the private and governmental infrastructure found in Gaurada Nagar Palika:

- Private companies – there are N.G.Os, Cooperative and real estate companies, Lubricant and gas production factories, Poultry and Fishery farm, Bricks

⁵⁰ It is one of the important rituals or Rai celebrated twice a year at the time of Bishak Purnima. it is also known as Ubauli and Udauli

Factor. Among educational infrastructure, there are two colleges and many Schools. Private health Clinic is found throughout the town which is run or owned by people of Gaurada or from peoples from nearby places.

- Government infrastructure– There is various primary, lower secondary, and higher secondary Schools which is funded by the government of Nepal. It also includes two college and two Gurukuls which imparts Sanskrit education. There is a veterinary center to cater the problems related to livestock.

iii. Economy of Gaurada

Although Gaurada has become Nagar palika, the area is basically agrarian, where people mostly earn their livelihood through farming and rearing livestock. Those who are in town area are mostly engaged in business and simultaneously practice farming in the villages. A good number of youths are reported to have out migrated to work in foreign countries in various capacities. Following are the sources of livelihood and means of earning of people of Gaurada:

- The people who are engaged in Agriculture earn cash income agricultural product like Maize, rice, Wheat, Mustard and some vegetables, which is sold in the nearby markets.
- The income is also earned through livestock. Which is sold to wholesaler, who further sale it to Damak Bazaar, after which it is deported to Mechi, Katmandu and Indian Border. Milk from houses is collected by a collector who sells it to the dairy farm. Dairy further produce curd, ghee, paneer out of it or simply pack the milk and sell it in the market.
- According to respondents, agriculture has become much easier as it has been mechanized. The introduction of machine like water pumping, *dhan katney*

(Harvesting Machine) and Threshing machine etc are introduced, which have made the agriculture much easier.

Image 3.1 Agriculture cutting machine

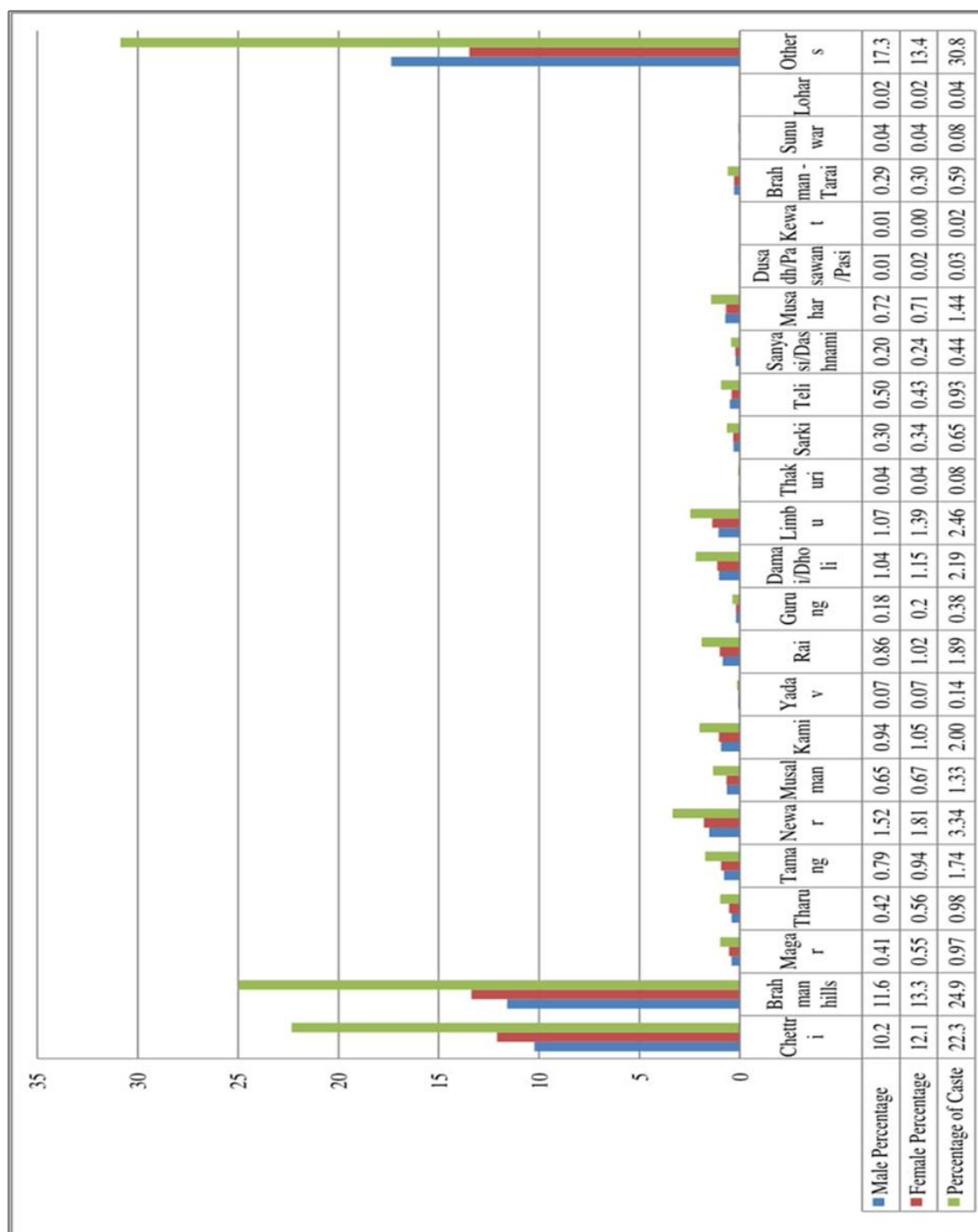


Source: Gaurada, ward number one, 2018 (Personal Collection)

iv. Ethnic Composition of Gaurada

The municipality of Gaurada is a diverse multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, still following Hindu socio-hierarchical caste system. Although, people from different castes and faith share the land together, yet there are some gaps that is still maintained by some households. Through personal interaction with the people of Gaurada from different ages and sex, it was discovered that caste and ethnicity still plays an important role in day to day interaction. Commensality with lower caste people is still prohibited by higher caste people of Gaurada. In some families exogamy is still not permitted, whereas there are some families who accept Inter-caste or inter- community marriages. Among the entire ethnic group Chettri and Bhaun are the dominant Hindu caste groups found in Gaurada.

Figure 3.1 Caste and sex wise population of Gaurada:



Source: national population and housing census 2011, Gaurada Nepal

Figure 3.1 indicates that the population of Bahun and Chettri are highest in Gaurada Nagar Palika with respective population of 24.9% and 22.3% of total population. Followed by Newar (3.34%) and other caste group of Nepali such as Limbu (2.46%),

Damai (2.19%), Kami (2.00%), Rai (1.89%), Tamang (1.74%) etc. Gauradaha nagar palika is a blend of different community and culture. The communities like Damai, lohar (0.04%) who occupies low rank in caste hierarchy are also found. Other than this people outside Nepali community can also be found in the land of Gaurada such as Yadav (0.14%), Musalman (1.33%).

The population which comes under other communities exist in relatively small percentages (30.8%) are Kathbaniyan, Gharti/Bhujel, Mallaha, Kalwar, Hajam/Thakur, Rajbansi, Halwai, Munda, Majhi, Meche, Tatma/Tatwa, Majhi, Rajput, Kayastha, Satar/Santhal, Jhangad/Dhagar, Dhimal, Tajpuriya, Bangali, Bantaba, Others Janajati, Others Terai and people who are undefined.

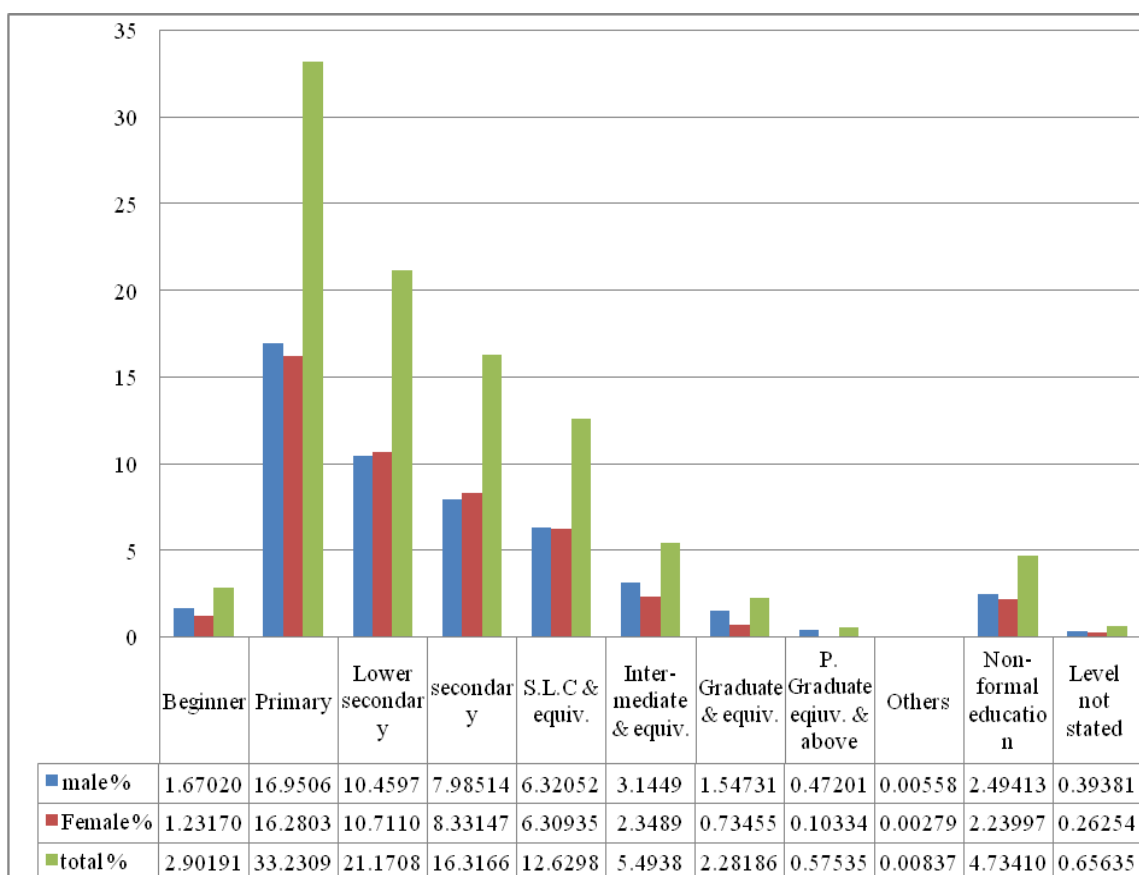
v. Educational Scenario in Gaurada

In Nepal, education level is divided into four phases: Primary from 1-5 grades, Lower secondary from 6-8, Secondary level from grade 9-10 which is concluded with School leaving certificate (S.L.C) and higher secondary (grades 11-12)⁵¹. S.L.C opens the gateway to the higher education, a student is virtually groomed to qualify the S.L.C examination from class 8- 10, it is also known as set-up exam. Thus it takes 12 years of span form primary to higher secondary. After which a student pursue higher education such as Graduate, Post Graduate, Mphil and Ph.D⁵².

⁵¹ Education System Nepal, 2015

⁵² http://www.educatenepal.com/education_system/display/education-system-in-nepal Retrieved on 24/01.2019

Figure 3.2: Education attainment by different sex of Gaurada



Source: National population and housing census 2011, Government of Nepal.

Figure 3.2 portrays education attainment of people of Gaurada it reveals the level of education attended by the people; the percentage in primary level is high with 33.23 % followed by Lower Secondary which is 21.17 %. Whereas a steady and constant decline in the education level can be witnessed, from primary (33.23 %) to higher level of education with Graduate equivalent (0.57 %) and above. Women enrolment in education as compared to men gradually declined after S.L.C (school level certificate). At lower level, women's percentage is more than men in Primary, Lower secondary, Secondary and S.L.C. women participation in higher education that is graduate and above is virtually non existence with 0.10% as compare to 0.47 of

men in post graduate and above. The education level of 0.66 % population are not stated or identified as per census study of 2011.

The brief profile of the field setting of Gaurada provides the backdrop for the present study, a society still rooted in traditional social structure however is beginning to witness change and expose to external forces. Against this backdrop, the study attempts to locate continuity and change of ancestral worship of *Dewali*. The study which is based on interaction with 75 respondents will give an analytical over view of continuity and changes of the rituals. Following section includes the socio- economic background of the sample respondents.

IV. SUMMARY

Gaurada Nagar Palika has become a vast land after merging 5 V.D.Cs. The land is shared by people from all the caste and creeds, living in harmony and peace. People of Gaurada are living in a land which is under process of modern development. And side by side they have kept their ancient traditional practices alive. Most of the people, who have migrated to market area, are still somehow managing to engage with their agricultural practices. Agriculture is priority to the every individual of Gaurada, and somehow their belief in *Kul* devta is helping them to keep up the challenges in there every day life.

CHAPTER 4

DEWALI RITUALS AND PRACTICES IN GAURADA

I. INTRODUCTION

As has been discussed, the practice of ancestral worship of *Kuldevta* is known as *Masto Puja* or *Dewali* among Chettri of Nepal. The main focus of the study has been the detailing out the rituals taking into account the cultural significance and organizational aspects. The information is mostly collected through in depth interview, case study and narratives.

The first section contains the socio- economic profile of sampled population of respondents from Gaurada, who are selected from three different clans i.e. Khadka, Adhikari and Basnet of Chettri caste, which will be followed by an exhaustive discussion on rituals and organizational aspects.

II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF SAMPLE POPULATION

The Socio Economic Background to a considerable extent moulds the opinion of an individual. In addition, the other variable like age, education level, occupation, income, gender and once exposure to their outside world can have a determining role in once perception and worldview. Therefore an examination of these variables is important in understanding the rituals as well as their perception, continuity and changes.

The section analyses the socio-economic backdrop of respondents. A total of 75 respondents were interviewed, taking three clans viz; Puwar Khadka, Khrisiney Adhikari Khatri and Khabatari Basnet clan of Chettri. These respondents were basically from ward number one, two and three of Gauradaha Nagar palika.

i. Clan Distribution

The equation amongst the three clans is done as to highlight the similarities and differences of the *Dewali* Ceremony as practiced among the clan level. The respondents were selected on the basis of variables such as gender and age. In addition to this, the *Dhamis* or the shamans who are specifically men were interviewed. Among others, youth and senior member of the family, both male and female have been taken into account.

Table 4.1: Clan wise distribution of respondents

CLAN	PUWAR KHADKA	KHRISINEY ADHIKARI KHATRI	KHABATARI BASNET
MALE	16 (21.33 %)	15 (20 %)	13 (17.33 %)
FEMALE	9 (12 %)	10 (13.3 %)	12 (16 %)
TOTAL	25 (33.33 %)	25 (33.33 %)	25 (33.33 %)

Source: Fieldwork, March- October, 2018

The sample size of 75 respondents is taken into consideration, which is equally distributed between the three clans of Chettri i.e. Puwar Khadka, Khrisiney Adhikari Khatri and Khabatari Basnet taking 25 respondents from each clan of Chettri.

ii. Age Group of Respondents

Age is the most important variables that determine one's thought process. The worldview of individual differs on the bases of age and generation. Thus to understand the perception of different age group, which is one of the objective of present study and to get in-depth information, the sampled population is categorized into four age groups.

Table 4.2 Age group of respondents

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
15-29 YEARS	9 (12 %)	8 (10.67 %)	17 (22.67 %)
30-44 YEARS	10 (13.33 %)	5 (6.67 %)	15 (20.0 %)
45-64 YEARS	16 (21.33 %)	12 (16 %)	28 (37.33%)
65 YEARS	9 (12 %)	6 (8 %)	15 (20.0 %)
TOTAL	44 (100%)	31 (100%)	75 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, March- October, 2018

The age groups from 15 – 29 are the youth whose perception was crucial to know as how the younger generation sustains their belief and practices *Dewali* at the contemporary time. A total of 31 women from different age were taken, they were interviewed to know their role and status of work in the ritual. Specifically, adults from 30-44 and 45- 64 that included both male and female were taken to understand the respective contribution and gender role in the rituals. The senior member of family including both male and female were also taken into consideration who were basically

above 65 age, they were an important source of information with regard to the continuity and change in the ceremony, which has occurred due to modernization. The oral history is an important source for the study. Therefore three *Dhamis* from respective clans were selected and interviewed, to understand the ceremony in depth and to understand the significance and process of rituals.

iii. Family Type of Respondents

Family is one of the primary social institution and plays an essential role in socializing a child; Parson argued that “families are factories which produce human personalities”, as according to him family is the only institution which provide love, security and support to a child (Haralambos & Heald, 2014, p. 398). Basically, there are two types of family viz; Nuclear family consisting of husband, wife and their offspring and. Joint family on other hand “is a social unit comprising parents and children and other more distant relatives, perhaps including grandparents, uncle aunty living under one roof” (Abercrombie, Hill, Turner,2010).

Table 4.3: Family type of respondents

Type of household	Number of respondents	Percentage
Nuclear family	28	37.33 %
Joint family	47	62.67 %
Total	75	100 %

Source: Fieldwork, March- October, 2018

The data collected from the field reveals that 62.67 % of respondents belong to the joint family and most of them were found living in traditional way at the *mul ghar* (house of grandparents) and very few found shifting to the market areas . Around

37.33% of respondents were from small size Nuclear family. As elsewhere the family is basically patriarchal in nature.

iv. Educational Background of Respondents

The Education level of an individual moulds the perception of an individual. To understand one's perspective on any social issues, knowing educational level and background is important as it makes the crucial difference in one's thought process and opinion Therefore the respondents are classified, on the basis of education level which is presented in the following table.

Table 4.4: Educational background of respondents

EDUCATION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
ILLITERATE	6 (8%)	7 (9%)	13 (17.33%)
PRIMARY (I-V)	2 (3%)	3 (4%)	5 (6.67%)
LOWER SECONDARY (VI-VIII)	2 (3%)	3 (4%)	5 (6.67%)
SECONDARY (IX-X)	11 (15%)	6 (8%)	17 (22.67%)
HIGHER SECONDARY (XI-XII)	10 (13%)	4 (5%)	14 (18.67%)
GRADUATE & POST GRADUATE*	6 (8%)	2 (3%)	8 (10.67%)
PURSUING	7 (9%)	6 (8%)	13 (17.33%)
TOTAL	44 (100%)	31 (100 %)	75 (100 %)

Source: Fieldwork, March- October, 2018

*2 males were post graduate and one among female is dentist.

As shown in table 4.4, the highest percent of respondents (22.67%) have secondary level of education followed by 18.67% having higher secondary level of education. 13 % male and 5 % female have cleared +2 (class XII). The respondents from secondary level of education accounts to 15 % male and 8 % female; they are the one who holds S.L.C (School Leaving Certificate). The number of respondents with higher education is high in case of male. We can find 10.67% of people holding Graduate degree, as two among them are Post graduates holding MSc and MCom. Out of 3 % of female one was Dentist running her own clinic at Damak Bazaar and one unemployed. The illiterate people (17.33%) are the old age people who were basically of 65+ ages. The one who are pursuing education (17.33%) are school going or college going youth.

v. Occupation of Respondents

Occupation is an important variable that determines the socio- economic background of individual. There is a mutual relationship between education and employment. The quality and types of education determines the occupation which shapes the income of family and mode of living.

Table 4.5: Occupations of respondents

OCCUPATION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Pursuing education	8 (10.67 %)	7 (9.33 %)	15 (20 %)
Agriculture *	20 (26.67 %)	23 (30.67 %)	43 (57.33 %)
Business*	9 (12 %)	0 (0 %)	9 (12 %)

On service	1 (1.33 %)	1 (1.333 %)	2 (2.67 %)
Working Abroad	3 (4 %)	0 (0 %)	3 (4 %)
Ex- service man	3 (4 %)	0 (0 %)	3 (4 %)
Total	44 (100%)	31 (100%)	75 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, March- October, 2018

* 5 respondents in agriculture category and 4 respondents in Business category are *Dhamis* (Shamans)

Table 4.5 present Occupations of respondents Gaurada nagar palika is an Agrarian society; from the above table we can articulate the fact that total of 43 (57.33 %) respondents out of 75 are engaged in agriculture. Both male and female equally contribute towards agriculture. The interesting fact is that the three ex- service men are today working in their field growing vegetables and doing cultivation. Three male members who are working abroad also belong to agriculture family. Most of the house in Gaurada is supported by foreign remittances females' participation in agriculture is there but the women in business working abroad and service sector is almost non existence. Through the interview it was revealed that only one young married woman was found working as Dentist. The remaining 20 % are the school and college going students.

vi. Land Holding of Respondents

Number of respondents were found engaged in agriculture sector, thus it is important to initially check the size of land they are possessing for the agriculture purpose. Size of land indicates the pattern of land ownership which largely determines socio-economic background of family.

Table 4.6: Land holding of the respondents

SIZE OF LAND (In bigha)	KHADKA	ADHIKARI	BASNET	TOTAL
1 – 2	5	6	5	16
3 – 4	6	6	4	16
4 and above	1	2	4	7
Total	12	14	13	39

Source: Fieldwork, March- October, 2018

Table 4.6 shows the size of land holding, in Nepal bigha is the unit of measurement of the land holding. Here 1 bigha is equivalent to 0.68 hectare (1.67 acre). Here the land holding of 39 respondents were taken into consideration as other respondent are either Childers or the women. People owing land between 1 – 4 bigha are highest in number as compared to people with 4 bigha and above land. These lands were mostly inherited by son or daughter from father. Some land holding are jointly shared by brothers who equally contribute in the agricultural production. Of these where shared between brothers or between father and son who gave equal effort towards the field.

III. THE RITUALS OF *DEWALI*

Tradition can be defined as a set of ancient customs, established beliefs and ritual which has been passed from generation to generation by the means of practice, folklore, proverbs and myths. Among many such traditional practices, *Dewali* is one such ancient tradition which is still being practiced by Chhetri of Nepali population (Chhetri, 2014).

Dewali is a ritualistic practice, which involves faith and emotions of devotees. The ritual is performed to worship the *kuldevta* or household deities for peace and healthy life of family members. The term *Dewali* is a Nepalese derivation which literally means slaughter. Therefore the sacrificial rite is the core, of this greatest tradition of Chhetri community. It is practiced after every three years at the time of *purnima*⁵³, the day is considered as holy/ sacred.

Every houses of Chhetri community holds a *kul* in their family which is being purified and worshiped on certain festival or occasion for example Dasain, Marriage, Barthabanda etc. Thus *Dewali* ritual is specifically practiced to worship the *kul* with an offering. On this particular day the *kul* is offered with blood sacrifice of *Boka* (uncastrated- goat/ he goat) and the other deities kept with *Kul* is sacrificed with *Bhedo*(sheep) or female goat. The sacrifice pattern differs within the clans of Chhetri, whereas sacrifice of *Boka* to *Masto god* is similar amongst all the clans. Only one Sheep or female goat is sacrificed to deities other than *Masto*, while as many as uncastrated goat is sacrificed which is offered from individual houses to *Masto*. This sacrifice of many number of uncastrated goat is first initiated with sacrificing *mul*

⁵³ The word *Purnima* is derived from Sanskrit word, which signifies “full moon”. Thus it refers to full moon day of a month. The day is regarded as sacred to perform rituals throughout Asia. <https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/8147/purnima> Retrieved on 07/01/2018.

boka (head uncastrated goat), which is raised and nurtured carefully for entire three years in the house of *mul dhami* (head shaman). This is followed by sacrifices from all other households offering of the clan members.

This ritual of *Dewali* is also known as *Masto puja* which is also locally pronounced as *Masta*, here *Masto* refer to “*kul*”; “the household deity”. The term *Masto* signifies *hawa* “wind”. In relation to this a *dhami* of Puwar Khadka gave a very beautiful description “*masta/ masto* is like *hawa/ wind*, we cannot see *hawa*, we don’t know from which direction it comes and goes but it poses a strong power. Likewise *masta (kul)* has no structure, no one has seen it, we don’t know where it came from but it is very power full, powerful enough to execute human according to their karma”. Thus we can say that *Dewali* is the ritual worship of *masto*.

Masta is known by different name in different clan such as: *Adhi masta, Rumal masta, Darhe masta, Khappar masta, Thedhi masta, Mandali masta, Dhudhe masta, Ladhe masta, Mundda masta, Rudra masta, Kaile masta and Kala masta*. As there is no specific idol of these *masta*, *diya* is considered as its symbol and representative (Karki, 1996, p. 52).

From personal interaction with the clan members, it was revealed that *Masto puja* is known by different names in different clans and sub –groups; however it is widely known as *Dewali*.

For Chettri community *Masto God* is considered as their soul protector. There is a strong belief among the people, if they please or worship *Masto god*, they would recover from all kind of pain, suffering, illness, loss in business or agriculture, obstacle, misfortune, frustration, regret, or any kind of discomfort. This belief made them worship *Masto God* as a family deity. While, *Masto* is worshiped in one name or

another throughout the country and is the result of Nepal's land, that symbolize Nepal's religious convention and its social example. (Chhetri, 2014).

63 year old Narendra Kr. Khadka and 56 year old Dev Narayan Khadka 56 who is farmer by occupation and an inhabitant of Gaurada ward no. 2 and 3 respectively, opined that life of a farmer has a close relation with soil, thus agriculture and animal husbandry is primary source of income. However a fertile land and suitable weather for agriculture is crucial, on the other side good and healthily life of domestic animal becomes necessity. They claim that here *kul* has major role to play, as he is the one looks after our resources and in return they offer him uncastered, He goat. Similar opinion was also given by Damber Khadka aged 41.

Gyanendra Khatri Adhikari a 45 year old social worker and businessman, who also happen to be a committee member of *Dewali* organization, perceived that during our hardship and suffering *kul* has always; protect us, which is the reason why they worship him.

85 year old Lakshami Khatri and 73 year old Gayatri Adhikari, are the elder member of the family, they shares respect and reverence towards the *kul*. They gave similar opinion and claims that *kul puja pitri ko puja ho* which literally means “*kul puja* is the puja of our ancestor, that is why people worship him whole heartedly”. Dal Kumar Khatri Adhikari who is 70 year old perceives that *pitri bhayeko le garda hami kul lai aru devata bhanda pani thulo maan chum* “because *kul* is our ancestor we worship him more than any other god and goddess”. In the same tone Sancha Maya Khadka 71 year old, shares her gratitude towards the *kul* and says that *mero pariwar lai dhukha ra pirah ma kul le sath dinu bhako cha, kul ko thulo shakti cha ra tai sathi ma bhakti*

cha meaning “*kul* has always looked after my family in our sorrow and bad days, he is very powerful and we adhere him”.

The interview with the different clan members also revealed that practice of *Dewali* in terrai (plains) is a recent phenomenon. They believed that the ritual is originated at *mul thalo* (native place) which happens to be *pahad* (hills) from where they belong to. People migrated to terrai region in search of occupation along with their family. Therefore, every year they had to travel to the *pahad* to practice the ritual. However, due to lack of transport facilities, the travel was very strenuous as people have to walk for four to five days to reach their destination. It became more problematic for elderly and sick people. Therefore with the concern of brothers and clan members, they brought *kul diya* down to terrai from their native houses. Some clans even claimed of stealing the diya when they were not permitted to carry it to terrai. Over the years, the people of Gauradaha slowly and steadily started practicing *Dewali* within their respective clans in the region itself instead of travelling to long distance remote native place in hilly region.

i. The Role of *Dhami*/ Shamans in Rituals

Dhami or Shamans are the mediator between clan members and the *kul* or ancestral deity; they possess divinely power to call the spirit of ancestor into their body thorough, which people can make a direct contact with the deity and share their pain and suffering. Each clan has their own *Dhamis* who is supposed to possess the divinely power to communicate with the ancestor. The *dhami* are their own clan member who are said to be chosen by god themselves. They are living representative of the gods, who are gifted with some divinely powers. These supernatural powers are generally transmitted through inheritance within the family. However at times, it

might transfer into the next family members of same clan. One can't get spiritual power and became *dhami* on their own choice. The *Dhami* are crucial part of ancestor worship of Masto Puja. (Thapa, 2002, p. 45).

60 years old Shanta Khadka, claims that to live a life of *dhami* is not an easy task, as there are many prescriptions and restrictions they have to follow. They have to be very particular at the type of food and water they consume; they have to strictly follow the taboo of staying sacred. By observing strict diet prepared by themselves. Similar kind of opinion was given by some other respondents in relation to their own story.

Dhan Maya Adhikari 52 year old housewife states that her younger son is a *dhami* who stays at *pardesh* (foreign country). He has to take a special care of staying sacred; he doesn't consume food made by people from other clan. She narrated one incident "Once in the evening when her husband entered *bharar* (a sacred place where *kul* is kept) to lit diya after feeding some domestic animals, accidentally a chicken followed him inside the *bharar*. My son from Dubai called and made us alert of the situation, which our family member of the house was unaware". Thus she claims that being a *dhami* has to strictly follow certain norms and restrictions.

81 years old Gita Maya Basnet who is a widow of *mul dhami* asserts that, "her husband was *dhami* even before their marriage; she was always said that he is special of being blessed by god. But there are years of hardship that she have to counter throughout her married life; she has to take a special care of keeping his food, water and other belongings sacred. She has seen him going through pains when some mischiefs are done by some other people of our clan. She further claims that if human

have faith and respect towards *kul* then their pain and suffering is all overshadowed by *kul* himself.”

On the other hand, 47 year old Lomesh Basnet, claims that even though a *dhami* has to go through lots of hardship, *kul* gives him extra strength to bear the pain and challenges. Lomesh himself is a *Dhami* and he considers himself to be a lucky one from the family, to be blessed by the *kul*.

The interaction with *dhami* and other clan's respondents it was disclosed that there is no particular time or age to become *dhami*, even a 5 year old boy or 80 year old man can have a faith to grasp the power. *Dhami* shares their personal experience of being transformed from a normal human being to a *dhami*.

A 52 year old farmer Chandra Khadka son of *mul dhami* (head shaman), claims that at the age of 22 he acquired the supernatural power of being *dhami*. Among his five brothers he was the only one to be the fortunate. Even though, he never aspired. He became *Dhami* because of his faith/destiny. Tirtha Bahadur Khadka of 42 year, a business man by profession: he has been *dhami* for 18 years. Since then he has performed 6 *Dewali* rituals. According to him when *kul* enters the body they gets a divine power, the body doesn't feel like our own, unconsciously they perform some of the activity which is beyond the range of normal human being, and they can assert the future or past of individual. Mostly *dhami* are like a mediator and messenger who connect human and *kul* together.

Kamal Khadka, a 40 year old man who runs a hardware shop at Gaurada bazaar narrates how suddenly he was destined to become *dhami*. Seven years before, one day he took food as usually and slept early and at the mid night all off a sudden he woke up and his body started shivering and began to utter certain words. His uncle who was

also a *dhami* from neighboring house came and settled him down. That was the time when he realized his fortune of becoming a *dhami*. He state that it just feels like yesterday, but within this short period he have initiated two *Dewali* under him, however it was in this *Dewali* that he drank the blood for the first time. He claims that he didn't feel any oddness or strangeness to suck the blood because it was not him but the *kul* who initiated it.

The siblings Mahesh Adhikari Khatri 52 years old and Chandra Khatri Adhikari 42 years old, declare to ascribe the status of being *Dhami* from their father. At a very young age they both have achieve the respectful status of being a mediator, till now Mahesh has completed seven *Dewali* so far Chandra has completed five *Dewali* as a *Dhami*. On the other hand 33 year old young business man, Surya Khatri Adhikari: at the age of 23 he found a different power and source controlling him from inside his body. At that age he was not well aware of the practices.

Naresh Basnet 43, son of *mul dhami*, heavy heartedly mourn for the loss of his father a month back. He asserts that among his three brothers he is the youngest one of family who got blessed with the status of being *Dhami*. Now after his father, he has a great responsibility to carry his family *kul* further. He narrates that before any mishap or tragedy takes place, the supernatural power signals him. "One night before my father's death, I heard ringing sound from Bharar at mid night, even before the death of another member of our clan I heard the same sound. Thus *kul* always alert us of such situations".

It was also identified that among some clan such as Basnet and Khadka, there are two types of *dhami* who address two different *kul* i.e one is *dhami* of Masta known as *mama* (maternal uncle) and other is *Dhami* of *bhanjo* (Nephew). 44 year old Krishna

Basnet is the only *dhami* of *bhanjo* found in the field area from ward number two. Whereas the Khadka has no *dhami* for the *bhanjo*, thus the *mul* (elder) *dhami* takes the offering of blood. Krishna asserts that because of lack of *bhanjo dhami*, he is been invited in several nearby places to conduct the ceremony. He claims to possess the faith of being *dhami* at the age of 23.

An individual is not given the responsibilities of *Dhami* immediately after being identified as one. He is tested and trained, only after which he can acquire or fulfill his duties that is given to him.

There is no such specific idol of *Masto god*, the *dhami* calls *Masto* spirit within their body and acts as a mediator to communicate. In this process they use *syauli* (machilus plant) and start shaking his body to call the deity and when *Masto god* enters into the body, the *dhami* develops a divine power and can perform various miracles like for example plunging hands into boiling oil, walking barefoot on burning coal, drinking flaming mustard oil, revealing past activities and uttering future etc. During the sacrifice *Dhami* carries *chamar*⁵⁴ in right hand and *ghanta*⁵⁵ in left hand. Which act as an instrument to successfully complete the ritual of sacrifice.

ii. Dewali Rituals: Observance of Purity and pollution

The Chettri who adhere to animistic practices are Hindu by religion. Since *Dewali* celebration is regarded as sacred by Chettri who occupy higher position in hierarchical caste order, every practices related to them is considered as a sacred, thus they forbid the touch of lower caste people. The notion of purity and pollution

⁵⁴ It is made of yak's tale, which is used to purify the goat by sprinkling sacred water before the sacrifice. During ancient times Chamar was also used to tie in the body of witch to control her powers.

⁵⁵ It is used to warn the people of other clan, to not enter the premises of *Dewali* venue.

becomes very essential in every footstep that is related to *Dewali*. The rituals can be witnessed by any individual from outside, but only the family/ clan member can participate in it, the other castes or clan people within the Chettri are not allowed to enter the sacred place where the ritual is performed. So, it is purely an intra- clan affair and celebration.

Religious practices in everyday life in Hinduism has always restricted women's participation during Menstruation period throughout history, thus *Dewali* ritual is not exception in this terms 24 years old girls from Basnet clan's states that "throughout their periods they don't get involved in the ceremony, as the notion of purity and pollution is very strict especially when it comes to *kul*. They themselves get alerted and restrict their presence in the rituals".

Throughout the socialization of a girl child, she is taught to refrain from participating in rituals during her menstruation. Another girl from Adhikari clan asserts that, "we are not even allowed to come in physically contact with the head member of the family or to the male member who lit diya in the family or perform a role in the ceremony". As according to the belief, during those days a female is considered as impure, her presence or touch can bring misfortune to the family.

56 year old women Oma Devi Adhikari shared her fear towards *kul*. Once she mistakenly rested on the wall of Bharar during her periods and consciously she was frozen for a second, according to her she felt a current of 350 volt. Later which her husband purified the *bharar* with *teel pani* (sesame water), Oma after this situation takes a special care of such situations. The menstruation cycle forbids women from ritual related to *Diwali*. Women are regarded as impure during her periods.

It is believed that any process that leads to impurity will unsatisfied the god, and the family/ clan member has to face its consequences.

iii. Bharar- The sacred place of *Kul* (Ancestral) deity

Every house holds a sacred room for religious purpose where their god resides. In local term this scared room is known as puja *khota* (worship room) whereas among the Chettri and Bhaun it is known as *Bharar*. In this room along with the different Hindu deities, a separate corner is kept for *kul* which is usually covered in order to avoid any contact with women. In ancient traditional houses *kul* are kept in the ceiling so that only men's can approach to that. According to the belief women are not allowed to enter the area where *kul* deity is kept.

Sita Basnet who has recently lost her husband because of heart attack, she claims to have two daughters. Now because there is no male member in the family, she has to ask her brother-in-law from neighboring house to lit diya for them. She questions herself as who will take their practices further and who will worship the *kul* in future. 20 year old Premika Adhikari asserts that, she has never come across or seen the *kul* diya, as since her very young age, she and her siblings were narrated the bed time stories of *kul devta*. The punishment *kul* gives while being disobeyed and violating the rules. This fear has always kept her away from entering *bharar* and *kul* diya.

The deities who are kept at *Bharar* are:

- (i) *Diya* – it is commonly believed that *kul* does not have any shape and form, thus diya (lamp) represents the deity or *Masta* of the clan/family. The diya is lit daily by the male head member of family in the name of ancestor who protect them.

- (ii) Other Hindu deities like lord Shiva, Ganesh, Lakshimi etc also finds the place in Bharar.

iv. Gadhighar

Gadhighar is the house of eldest member of the clan, where the main deity lamp is kept along with *Ghanta*, *Chamar*, *kalash*: the equipments used by the *Dhami* when they have to invite the ancestor within them. These entire sacred fetishes are kept in supervision of *mul dhami* (head shaman) who reside in the family itself; therefore, the family must have shamans within them. All the items along with deity lamp are only opened or lit during the time of *Dewali*; otherwise it is remained closed throughout the years. On the particular day *kul* and its other items are carried to the venue where ritual is conducted and is positively brought back to *gadhighar later*.

v. Sacrificing Rituals

The rite related to sacrifice is the key element of *Dewali* ceremony. The blood of specifically uncastrated goat/ he goat is offered to the Masta, as according to the belief, when *kul* entered the body of *Dhami*, he demands for the sacrifice of uncastrated goat, thus this belief and practice is still continued today. There are phases of rituals:

- (i) Rudri puja or the pre sacrifice ritual
- (ii) (ii) Sacrificial ritual

Phases of Rituals: The photograph clips of details of various phases of rituals being carried away during the fieldtrip among Puwar Khadka *Dewali* ceremony are given (Image no 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3) which was conducted in the month of April, 2018.

Image 4.1: Rudri Puja, Pre sacrificial rituals



Source: Puwar Khadka Dewali, Gaurada, Nepal, 2018 (Personal collection)

The sacrificial rites are conducted after certain series of Hindu rituals. Image 4.1 shows the people's engagement in *Rudri puja*, which is done within the first half area of *Dewali thann*⁵⁶, and initiated by the Brahmins and followed by both male and female of clan⁵⁷. The puja is conducted in the name of Lord Shiva. After lord Shiva, Brahman chants the name of all the Hindu god and goddesses (Interview with Brahman Priest an elder family member). It is an ancient practice of remembering all the Hindu deities before the sacrifice. Krishna Basnet gives the justification of the

⁵⁶ It is a place where *Dewali* ritual is conducted.

⁵⁷ The involvement of women in the rudri puja is only found among Khada and Basnet clan of Chettri, where as among Adhikari clan women are not involved in any such ceremonies related to *Dewali*.

rituals by saying that, “when we invite guest for supper, we serve the vegetarian first and then we serve non-vegetarian people, in order to, avoid the blunder of mixing the food. In the same way, we worship Hindu deities first by offering fruits and flower and then proceed with for *Goth-dhup* puja⁵⁸ with *kheer* and fruits. Later then *Kul* devta is worshiped who ask for sacrifice and blood”. Between *goth-dhup* puja and sacrificial rites of offering blood, *Brindavasni* Devi is worshiped. The ways and pattern of worship varies from clan to clan in terms of their offering, as some offer fruits and some offer sacrifice of blood.

Image 4.2: Sacrificial rite



Source: Puwar Khadka Dewali, Gaurada, Nepal, 2018 (Personal collection)

After the ritual of Rudri Puja is performed sacrificial ceremony is begins, the sacrifice is done in the second half of the *Dewali thann*, where only clan male are allowed to

⁵⁸ The goth dhup puja is specially done for the prosperity of the cattle. It is also known as Ubauli and Udauli.

enter. The sacrifice is initially done by the male member from the clan (as shown in image4.2) who is capable enough to chop the goat at one attempt, as according to the belief if the goat doesn't get copped at one go then it will bring bad fortune to the family. Tirtha Bahadur Khadka (*Dhami*), “assert that if the sacrifice is not done at once, then the blood of the said goat is not offered and is thrown, out of the fences”. Even the sacrificial rites has to go with two phase of offering. Before a mass sacrifice of uncastrated/He-goat, a sheep or Goat has to be offered two different deity. Among Basnet and Khadka one Sheep is offered to the *Bhanjo Masta* and Among Adhikari female goat is sacrificed to *Brindavasini* devi after which the sacrificial rites of uncastrated goat is initiated whist is offered to their respective masta.

Image 4.3: Sucking of Blood



Source: Puwar Khadka Dewali, Gaurada, Nepal, 2018 (Personal collection)

Immediately after the sacrifice and chopping of head of goat, the *dhamis* carry the goat and one among them suck the blood (as shown in image 4.3) and take one round around the *mandir* (sacred place) where the *kul* is kept and throw away the goat out of the fences. After which the people recognize their goat and take its responsibility. The chopped head of the goat is offered to the *kul*, which is kept inside the *mandir* in front of *kul* diya. At the end of the entire rituals, people identify the head of their respective goats and collect it. This process of sacrifice is continued until the end.

vi. Significance of Rituals

The ritual *Dewali* signifies and marks the identity of the Chettri community. According to Dev Narayan Khadka “*Kshetriya bhako le garda Chettri haru lai bhadur manincha ra, kaat maar garnu auta bhaduri bhanda sano kaam haina*”. According to Varna caste hierarchy Chettri belongs to the Kshetriya group of community which makes them brave and fearless. Therefore to perform the ritual of sacrifice need courage, as to conduct the act of chopping and slaughtering goat in one go is not less than bravery.

The offering is genuinely done to thank or appease the *kul*. The ritual is thanksgiving in the sense; if certain wishes of the devotee come true then in return they greet *kul* with an offering. Sacrifice is also done for the good cultivation and healthy life of a family. An Adhikari women who was blessed with twins after her several miscarriages said that *maile bhakal rakheko theye, mero nani bhayo bhane duita boka charauchu bhanera, ra mero mano kamana pura bhayo ani aaune Dewali ko lagi boka tayar pardechu*, “I kept my promise with the *kul* to offer two goats if i am blessed with the baby. Thus for the forthcoming *Dewali*, I am raising two uncastrated male goats to offer”.

IV. GENDER DIMENSION

A clear gender division of work is noticed in the *Dewali* rituals. While the prime responsibility is that of male members of the clan, the female member of the family plays a secondary role in the *Dewali* ceremony. Through the interview with the female member of different clans it was revealed that, during the occasion it is women's responsibility to clean the house (before and after ceremony), prepare *prashad*, supper for invited guest and arrange good hospitality to them. However it is the male member who plays primary role in the ceremony. Whether it is being a *Dhami*, lighting diya, making sacrifice, entering the sacred place and performing the minor or major rituals of *Dewali*, men are privileged then the women.

Tulshi Maya Basnet 58 claims to be doing the arrangement for *Dewali* since her early married life. Including the cleaning of house, she is responsible to arrange items such as ritual like fruits, flowers etc which is needed for rituals.

30 years old Srijana Khadka, and 60 years old Shanta Khadka stated that, *Dewali* is an age old tradition of our culture, which is why it is executed without fail once in three year. On the day of *Dewali*, women prepare *babar* (an pancake made of buckwheat), *kheer* (sweet dish made of rice and milk) or other items for the guest and for the one who are fasting. Kalpana Adhikari 40 year old: in addition asserts that women also gets responsibility of nurturing the *mul boka* (main uncastrated/ He goat)⁵⁹, a special care has to be taken that the goat might not fall sick or get harm, so that it is worthy of offering.

⁵⁹ Main goat is the one which is sacrificed at first, and its blood is sucked by the mul dhami. And the goat is raised in the house of mul dhami itself.

Kumari Basnet on other hand asserts that *Kul puja nai chora manche harle garne puja ho* “*kul puja* is the puja to be initiated by men where a woman has least duty to perform”.

There is gender dimension with regard to rules governing women's entry within *Dewali* place: women are forbidden from entering the premises where the sacrifice ritual is conducted. Basnet and Khadka permit their clan women only till the premises where *rudri puja* is done, in this premises women prepare prashad for entire family. Adhikari on other hand, build a seven feet wall to avoid women contact from the entire ceremony. The elder women members of the family are given responsibility to carry the *kul* and other items, to the place where ritual are performed and returned it in same process to the *gadhighar*. But in this procedure, she is not allowed to see or touch the *kul* diya, she is only supposed to be carrying it in a basket which is placed in her back. An elder men guide her towards spot of rituals or *Dewali* place, to assure that the diya is not hindered and other community people doesn't touch her.

These women who are involved in the ceremony are the unmarried daughter or daughter-in-law of the family. Once a daughter is married, she is considered as *parayadhan* (Property of others) which bounds her to be guest in her own family ritual. On the other hand, the daughter-in-law from other community or castes lower to Chettri has no role to play in the occasion.

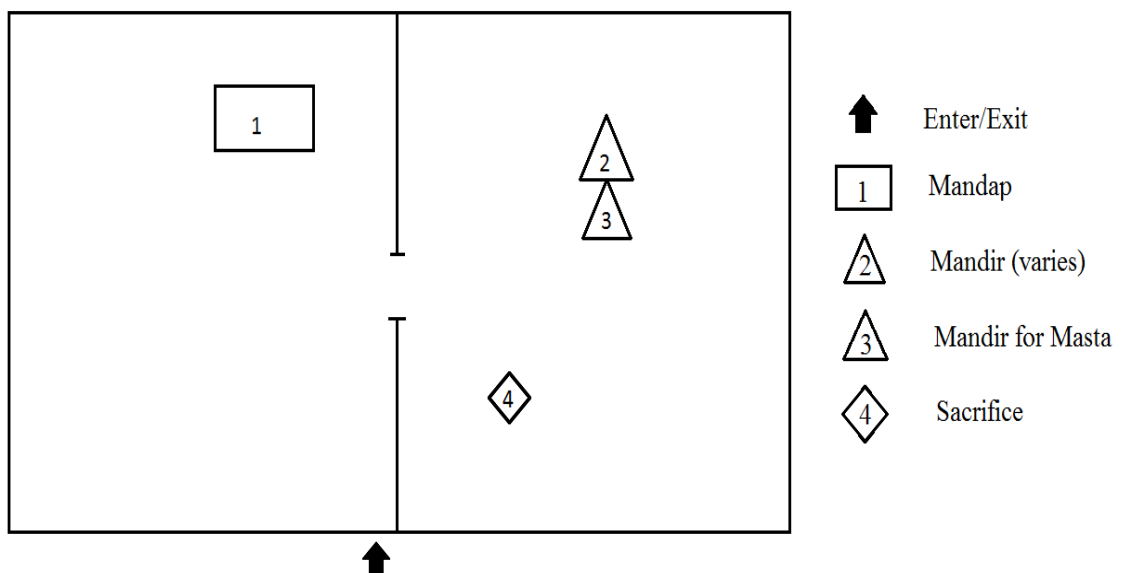
Justifying the gender dimension, some respondents opined that women are weak and they cannot see blood sacrifices, thus they are kept away from the sacrificial place. They were also of opinion that the menstruation forbids women entry to the sacred sacrifice place, as it makes them impure.

V. ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

The preparation for *Dewali* is quite elaborate which is why it begins early; the occasion is celebrated with a proper plan beforehand. A committee is setup which consists of some elder members of the clan, *dhamis* and the educated individuals.

In the past days, the elder member of the clan was said to sit along with brothers and make planning for ritual. At the first place, they look and decide for suitable place to perform the ceremony collectively. Whereas, today. Since clan members are scattered, every clan posses their own *Dewali* sthaan (place) where they perform the ceremony. These sthaan is usually located near gadhighar⁶⁰. The land is usually voluntarily given by a clan member or is brought through the collected money. A pictorial representation of the *Dewali* sthaan looks like:

Figure 4.1: Pictorial representation of *Dewali* sthaan



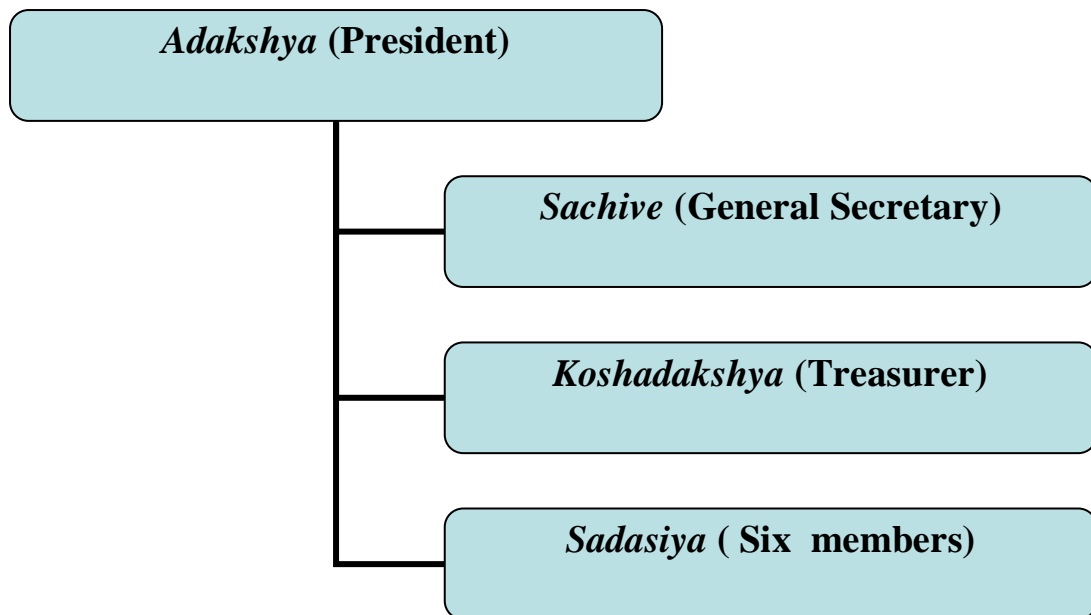
Source: Field survey in Gaurada, 2018

⁶⁰ So that it becomes easier to carry Kul diya, during the *Dewali*. The dhami who resides in the gadhighar can also have a close look of the sthaan.

The fences shown in above pictorial representation are build with half wall around 5 or 7 ft tall, with a door in the front (left) section of the sthaan. The inner portion is divided/ separated into two sections; in the left section rudri puja (rectangle 1) is conducted and on the right section sacrificial ritual is done as shown in image 4.4. In the right section of the fences two small mandir is made. The mandir (Triangle 2) is made to keep Devi Brindavasi among khadka and adhikari whereas in case of Basnet Bhanjo Diya in kept. In the Mandir (Triangle 3) Masta is held, both mandirs are hidden from others contact. (Diamond 4) shows the sacrificial place, in this place women are not allowed to enter. They are only permitted on the left side of the premises given in image 4.1, where they can participate in rudri puja and prepare prasad. This entry of women varies among the clan as the adhikaris' do not even allow women in any of the premises; moreover they build seven feet wall in order to keep the ceremony only among clan male members.

This entire *Dewali* sthaan is build under the supervision of the organization committee, which is headed by *Adakshya* (President) who is well knowledgeable elder member of clan, *Sachive* (General Secretary), *Koshadakshya* (Treasurer) and 6 *Sadasiya* (members of clan). The meeting is only held between clan members, people from other clan or community are prohibited.

Figure 4.2: Dewali Committee

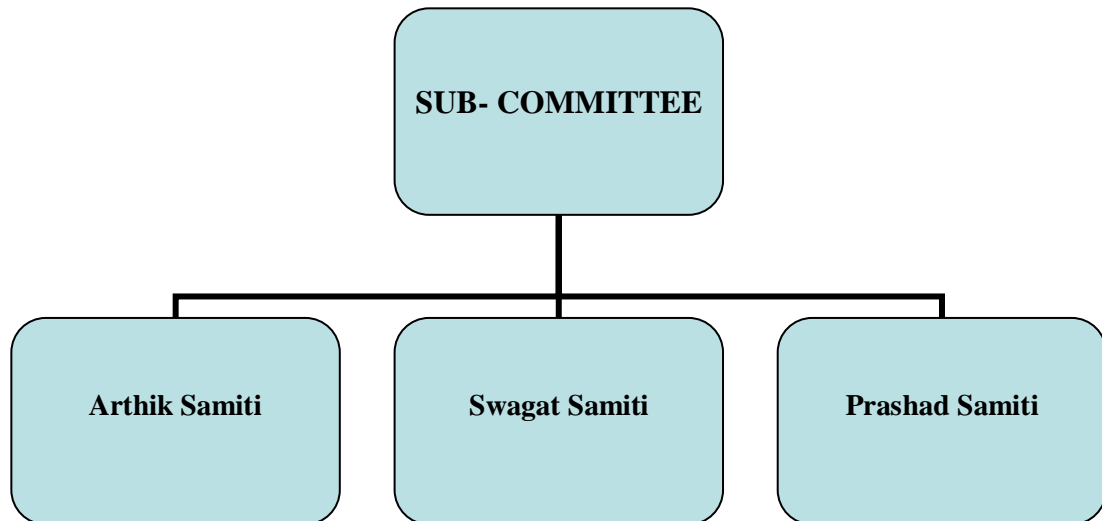


Source: Field work in Gaurada, 2018

Preparatory stage: The preparation stage begins with the planning before one month of the rituals, after having general discussions with *Adakshya*, *Sachive* calls a meeting with the committee members. In that meeting, 6 *sadasiya* makes a tentative estimate and figure out the guest from each household and the number of goats for sacrifice. Accordingly, time, date and budget plan is made by the *Koshadakshya*, in the presences of the entire members. Six *sadasiya* who are selected from the different areas with much networking, they act as a mediator with the other people of the clan and communicate the detail message and information of the meeting.

For a smooth transition of the occasion, different *samitis* (sub committees) are made which looks after different area and task, to perform for the smooth functioning of the rituals. The detail responsibilities and tasks of committees are given hereby:

Figure 4.3: Sub-committee/ Organizing Committee



Source: Field survey in Gaurada, 2018

- (a) **Arthik samiti** – The samiti looks after the finance, who keeps track of collected fund and expenditure that is to be made. The fund is raised based on the expenses of the year and number of guest being invited, for eg: During the field work in April 2018 in the *Dewali* celebration among Puwar Khadka, Rs. 5000 per clan household was collected. However depending on economic position, for example those household who cannot afford the said amount are exempted/ can contribute according to their affordability. They can contribute in whatever form, such as fruits, food items and providing the free service in the celebration. The people who live in foreign countries and fails to attend at the time of *Dewali*, also contributes some amount of money as a fund to the committee. The samiti also takes the duty to buy food materials for preparing prashad for guest and to buy way various items needed for rituals.

(b) **Swagat samiti**– The reception committee is the Swagat Samiti. The common people and guest from nearby village and relatives from far places are invited, thus it is the responsibility of swagat samiti to welcome the guest, provide them assistance and look after the need such as providing them chairs and serve refreshments such as juice, water, distributing prashad, showing them way to washroom etc.

(c) **Prashad samiti**- is given responsibility to prepare *prashad*. There are three different types of *prashad* which is prepared on the day of *Dewali*, for the invited guest and for family members. (i) *Bhat/ Chura* and *masu*⁶¹ for the invited guest and viewers from villages prepared by family member themselves (ii) *Kheer* and *Babar ko roti*⁶² is specially prepared for the family member to break their fast. (iii) Meat of Sheep/ female goat which is prepared by the clan male members for the clan member.

⁶¹ Chura is mainly flattened beaten rice which is served with masu (meat) of uncastrated goat. According to the number of guest invited, separate goat is kept by the committee which is purchased from the collected fund, to feed the guest.

<https://glosbe.com/en/en/chiura> accessed on 14/01/2019

⁶² Kheer is made with milk and rice; Babar ko roti which is known as Buckwheat Bread in English. It is a thick form of Chapati made up of Buckwheat flour. It is a traditional food of Nepal.

<http://tasteofnepal.blogspot.com/2015/10/buckwheat-bread-phaapar-ko-roti.html>
accessed on 14/01/2019

Image 4.4: Women preparing prashad



Source: Puwar Khadka Dewali, Gaurada, Nepal, 2018 (Personal collection)

Image 4.4 shows Khadka women, being involved in preparing *Pharpar ko roti* for the clan members to break their fast. The roti is initially prepared in the 1st section of the area, where Rudri puja is performed and till where women are allowed to enter. Including Phapar ko roti, Kheer is prepared, and only the clan member can consume this prashad. In terms of leftover it has to bury in mud.

Image 4.5: Men preparing prashad



Source: Puwar Khadka Dewali, Gaurada, Nepal 2018 (personal collection)

Image 4.5 shows male member getting involved in preparing prashad made out of sacrificed Sheep which is offered first to the bhanjo, which is being prepared in the 2nd section of area. According to the belief, only the male member form the clan can cook and consume the sheep's meet. Like the *Babar ko roti* and *Kheer* the left over meet of sheep should be buried, instead of distributing to the any other person whether it is female, other clan members or dogs.

The occasion of *Dewali* begins three or four days before the main ritual, followed by house purification and fasting one day before the rites. Fasting becomes mandatory for one of the family members and in the fourth day, they end up their fast by major

practice of animal sacrifice. After the ritual ends, relatives are invited for supper in which the meat of the slotted goat is offered, as according to the beliefs the meat is not supposed to be sold but should only be consumed for feeding friends and family.

VI. SUMMARY

Summing up, *Dewali* as an important ritual among Chettri of Gaurada and is performed with lots of devotion to the *kul* deity. The ritual sacrifice of uncastrated goat, concept of purity and pollution, the role *Dhami*, marks the important feature of *Dewali* rituals. The organization of the ritual is done much in advance and Chettri of Gaurada still has retained their tradition and faith in ritual.

CHAPTER 5

CONTINUITY AND CHANGES IN *DEWALI* RITUALS: AN ASSESSMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

With the understanding of socio- cultural significance of *Dewali* rituals among Chettri, the present chapter attempts to present the inter-clan variation in rituals and practices. The chapter is outcome of an exhaustive discussion with the clan members and also based on secondary materials *Vanshavali*⁶³ of respective clans. It is followed by an assessment of the continuity and changes in the rituals till date. The chapter also sums up with youth perception on rituals.

II. INTER-CLAN SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN *DEWALI* RITUALS

There are many similarities in *Dewali* rituals amongst the various clans of Chettri but there are certain variations across clans in terms of their practices and processes. Following section presents the clan wise details of rituals. Through this, the similarities and differences among three clans are figured out.

⁶³ It is a Genealogical text, which contains the details of decedent including the practices and ritual of clan member. Each clan posses their own Genealogical text, basically it is dictated or written by the ancestor.

Khadka Clan

Khadka clan of Chettri who is also known as sword bearer practiced *Dewali* once in three year at the time of Buddha Purnima. Even among Khadka, the practice of *Dewali* varies within Khadka sub division *thar* (sub-caste), one such is Puwar Khadka from *Kapil Gotra*. The mythology for the origin of puwar khadka begins in Ujjain, when raja Biswamitra took shelter at Rishi Vashista's *Ashram*. During his stay, Raja Biswamitra was amazed by the ability of Rishi Vashista's cow *nandini*. On the next morning Raja tried to abduct *nandini*, to intervene the abduction Puwar kharka are said to have evolved from *nandini's* nose.

Puwar Khadka solemnizes *Dewali* on *mugsir purnima panchami* (mid November- mid December), *maghey purnima panchami* (mid January – mid February) or *Fagun purnima panchami* (mid February- mid March). In case they fail to perform on the day, they have to solemnize on the month of *baishak* (mid April – mid May). Due to seasonal change, these days or month is celebrated as *udauli/ubauli* are celebrated. It is the timing for “*goath sarney*” (to relocate the cattle), and during time *Adhi Baraha masta* is worshipped.

Amongst Puwar Khadka, the ritual of *Dewali* begins with three days of fasting. On the first day *kul* and its items are purified with *gauth*⁶⁴ and *tilani pani*⁶⁵ and the male member are asked to shave their head after which *Vashista gotri* Brahman begin a puja. On previous day of the ceremony, *diya, kalash, ghanta, chamar* is brought to kitchen at *Gadhighar* and light diya, after which puja is conducted which is usually initiated by *dhami*. Throughout the night the diya is witnessed.

⁶⁴ It is the urine of Cow; it is regarded as sacred water for purification according to Hindu believes.

⁶⁵ It is sesame water; according to the belief teel is originated from the sweat of Bishnu God which is why it is sacred and used for purification.

Next morning, the eldest daughter-in-law dressed as a bride carries the kalash⁶⁶ along with diya followed by *pujari*, *mul bhedoh* (main sheep, of white or black color) and *dhami* who chant mantra with full blow of traditional music march towards *Dewali* spot which is located right in front of *Gadhighar*. Three rounds of boundaries are taken where *Dewali* is performed. The boundaries are made in rectangle shape which is divided in between with a wall. In one portion of boundaries puja is conducted, where all the items are kept and *prashad* is prepared. In the other portion of boundaries, two small rooms are made where the *mul diya* is kept. Within this boundary, rituals related to sacrifice is done. Women are allowed to enter the only the first half of the area, whereas the second half is prohibited from them. Although they can witness the entire ceremony from the other half or from outside of boundaries.

Krishna Khadka – 32, a *dhami* of the ceremony opined that: women are weak they cannot see the process of sacrifice and blood scattered all over place, thus are prohibited from the area where sacrifice is done. Dev Narayan Khadka – 56 year old man, gave his view that because of menstruation cycle of women they are not allowed to enter the area.

As mentioned earlier, the ceremony starts with *rudri and chandi path* initiated by *pandith*. *Panchamrit*⁶⁷, *payus* (kheer), fruits and flowers are used in the puja, prepared by female member of the family. *Goberdhan puja* is conducted after *Devi puja*, these events are followed by sacrificial rites. In the beginning *mul bhedoh* (sheep) is

⁶⁶ Women carry the *kul diya* in a basket which is covered by the cloth, whereas a woman doesn't touch or come in direct contact with the diya. It is the men who puts diya in the basket and cover it with a cloth.

⁶⁷ It is derived from Sanskrit word which *pancha* and *amrit* meaning "five," and "immortal" or "nectar of the gods" respectively. It is a sacred liquid used during a ritual or festivals. It is made up of 5 ingredients i.e. Ghee, Honey, curd (yogurt), milk and sugar.

slathered which is offered to the Bhajo (Nephew) and its blood is sucked by the *mul dhami* himself, according to the belief only the male member of family can cook and consume the prashad of mul *bhedoh*. The leftover prashad have to be buried in mud, rather than distributing to any being. The sacrificial rites of uncastrated goat continue after this. After execution of all these events, the prashad is taken by all those who are present and retreat is made in same fashion towards *gahdighar*.

Adhikari Clan

Adhikari is generally a Brahman caste as, according to the oral history of Khatri Adhikari, in ancient days an Adhikari Brahman had two wives one was Brahman and other was Chettri. The offspring born out from Chettri women are called Khatri Adhikari. When there was a conflict between the brothers from different mothers, the father separated them and sends them away to live by own. As a responsibility, father handover the *kul* diya to the Khatri son, ever since then they are taking care of *Kul* diya. There are different sub-clans of Khatri Adikari out of which the Krisney Adhikari Khatri is the main focus of study.

The oral history further continues that during the reign of Rajendra Bikram Shah, Chanpur district of Sankhuwasabha was attacked by Tibet. The forefather Asha Khatri Adhikari seeking blessings from the *kul* entered the base of Tibetan army at midnight and defeated the chief and few army single handedly. King was pleased by the bravery of Asha Khatri and as a reward gifted him a place in Baneshwar (Sankhuwasabha). Today a huge temple is built in that place of Baneshwar where *Dewali* is celebrated in a mass way.

Dewali should be conducted in the span of 3 years among Adhikari Clan also. If because of some circumstances they fail to conduct in the gap of three years, then it

should be solemnized either in the gap of five, seven, nine or eleven years. Thus *Dewali* cannot be postponed more than the gap of eleven years as it may cause the threat of existence of genealogical deity. Therefore the deity must be pleased by performing the rituals and offering sacrifices

Here also *Dewali* is organized after *chandi puja* after a consensus among the brethren. The ceremony begins three days before at the *gadhigar*: on the 1st day earthen floor is purified by *gauth*, *tilani pani* and *gobar*. Three wider leaves are kept on cow dung smeared place and, devi *Brindavasini* is kept in the center, *kul* (*rumal masti*) in right and *Chetrapal devta* is kept in the left (*Brindavasini* and *Chetrapal* presented in the form of diya). Instantly *kul* should be presented with *koila* (Charcol), *dhup* (insence stick), *acheta* (made of rice and red tika) and lit the diya. This entire ritual is initiated by Brahman from Dhakal⁶⁸ clan.

On the second day Dhakal Brahman, *Dhami* and clan brothers' gathers, clean and purify *chamar*, *ghanta* with pure water and place it in the front of *kul*. On the day of *Dewali*, *pancha kanya*⁶⁹, elder women of the family who carry *kul*, *pancha baja*⁷⁰, Brahman and *dhami* march towards the *mandap* (*Dewali* sthaan). The *mandap* where ritual is performed is always located in the right side of bifurcating road from *gadhigar*.

⁶⁸ According to the belief, during ancient time Dhakal Brahman was appointed for the ceremony of *Bartabandha*, he came late to the ceremony completed his task and suddenly he got vanished at the evening. Later then it was found that the Brahman while making his way to the venue fell in river and died in the morning. Thus his presence in the ceremony left surprised to the people. Which is why till today every rituals of Khatri Adhikari is done by Dhakal Brahman. He is regarded as lucky for the clan people.

⁶⁹ It is 5 Virgin girl who represent Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara and Mandodari, they asre known as role model of women hood.
<https://www.shethepeople.tv/news/why-panch-kanya-or-the-five-virgins-stand-for-varying-paradigms-of-feminism>. Retrieved on 12/01/2012

⁷⁰ It is the 5 musical instrument used by Nepali community people during some auspicious occasions.

Before entering the premises of *mandap*, three rounds from right side are taken. Further the female's handover the *kul* and other items to the males as women entrance is prohibited. On the other hand the entire rituals can only be witnessed and attended by male members of family; the entire ritual is performed within the seven feet walls. *mandap* are prepared and shade is made with the branches of *mussaro*(castanopsis), floor is cleaned with *gobar* (cow dung) after which male come outside and take one round of the *Dewali* sthaan from the right side. After which they begin *rudri puja*, *goath dhup* and followed with sacrificial right.

Love Kumar Khatri Adhikari 60 year old ex- police officer and now a farmer states that today in Gaurada nagar palika ward no 2 *Dewali* of Adhikari is celebrated in a collective manner at community level. Every year they sacrifice 500-600 goats representing goat of all clan households.

75 year old Tilak bhadur Adhikari and 77 year old Bir Bahadur Adhikari, provided some additional information by stating that earlier *Dewali* was celebrated only in Baneshwar where people from different districts used to come together to celebrate it. In recent times it is celebrated in Gaurada. Therefore people of respective clan from nearby village also come for ceremony to offer the he-goat. Thus the number of sacrifices also has increased. That way Gaurada has become the center of *Dewali* celebration in a mass way.

Basnet Clan

The Basnet are highly populated clan of Chettri. There are four sub-clans of Basnet Khabatari, Khulal, Shripal and Lamichaney Basnet. Out of which Khabatari Basnet of Koushikay gotra were chosen for study. Kabtar is the name of a place. According to the belief Devi and Devata used to reside in that place. Kabtar happens to be the most

beautiful place of those days. It is an historical place, which has become a tourist spot, old engraved stupa of god and goddess is found which is the evidence of their existence. Thus the people from Kabtar are known as Kabatari Basnet.

Dewali among Khabatari Basnet is celebrated in ward no 1. It is celebrated one day before the Purnima. Whereas, the box where *kul* diya is kept is opened and is lighted 5 days before the *Dewali*. Throughout these 5 days, *dhamis* have to observe the diya whole night and day, eat *sudha* food (pure vegetarian food which is free of onion and garlic) one time a day. The entire brothers gather in *gadhihar* and perform certain ritual where *dhami* invites *kul* into their body. One day before the ceremony, all the male member of clan including the *Dhami* shaves their head. On the day of ceremony, the diya is carried by the head married couple of clan. The Khabatari Basnet has two different types of *kul/* diya. One diya represent *bhanjo*⁷¹ and other represent as *mama*. Both of them have their respective *Dhamis*, as according to the oral history the relation between *mama and bhanjo* is very strong and bonding. Thus before making a sacrifice to the *mama/ masta*, a sheep has to be scarified to the *bhanjo* first. The prashad of the scarified sheep can be only consumed by men member of the family. The two diya of *mama and bhajo* should be carried only by married couples, followed by 9 *kanya*⁷² towards the place where *Dewali* is performed. Like other two clans, the pre ceremony rituals of Rudri puja is done followed by Gobar dhan puja, after which they proceed to the sacrificial rites. A goat at the beginning is sacrificed for the Banjo whose blood is sucked by the *bhanjo dhami*. After offering blood, the head of goat is offered to *bhanjo* who is placed in the 1st mandir. At the end, sacrifice to the *masta*

⁷¹ Bhajna and mama (maternal uncle) has a close relation. According to belief, during some ceremony *bhanjo* has saved the life of *mama*, which is why *bhanjo* is very important to *mama*. Therefore as a love and reward a sacrifice is made to the *bhanja* before *mama*.

⁷² It is 9 unmarried young girls who represent the nine form of goddess Durga according to the Hindu belief.

kul (which is also known as *mama* by the Basnet) is done. The entire ritual is concluded by returning the two diyas and its items to the *gadhigar* in the same way as it was brought.

The enthusiasm and craze among the devotee is similar as it was found 40 years prior to now, says Sandeep Basnet. Dhani Kr Basnet in addition said that every year the population of devotee is increasing. The people from nearby village and urban areas also participate and contribute to perform the ceremony. And we welcome people from all the castes and creeds to celebrate *Dewali* with us.

i. Commonness in the Rituals among three Clans

- *Dewali* is highly significant and has been found and celebrated among all three clans in the gap of 3 years.
- The 1st goat which is been sacrificed by a *mul dhami*, is raised and nurtured in the house of *dhami* itself. Before the *mul* goat is taken to sacrifice, another goat is brought to replace the present one. A special care of the goat is taken as according to the beliefs if the goat is scratched, sick or handicapped; it is not offered to the *kul* which brings bad fortune to the family. Rajesh Basnet 25 years old shared his part of story “I was very naughty during my teenage, once I hit the *mul* goat six days before the *Dewali*. And all of a sudden I fell sick, I was taken to doctor, took several medicines but nothing came to cure my sickness. My family was worried; as the body temperature was not getting low. As soon as *Dewali* rituals were completed surprisingly I became cured, this was the unexpected incident happened with me. My parents are still unaware of this fact”. Thus the every member from the *mul* house takes special care of the goat.

- The main diya that is kept in the house or *Gadhighar* which represents as *kul*, can only be lit or touched by the male member of the family. Women's on the other hand is not even allowed to see the diya. Apart from women other clan member are prohibited to enter the *bharar* or *Gadhighar*.
- Once the daughter is married she is not allowed to involve in any of the activities related to preparation of ritual of *Dewali*. She is been treated as a guest in the family.
- *Dewali* upholds practices with combination of Hinduism and Animism. Before making a sacrifice to the *kul*, Rudri puja is initiated which is a headed by purohit/ Brahman. This practice of Rudri puja as pre- sacrifice ceremony is found common among all the three clans.

ii. Differences in Rituals among three Clans

There are certain things in the process of rituals, which differ from one another. Every clan holds their own *Masta (kul)* and *dhami* which is a form of difference. There are certain other forms of differences that can be witnessed in terms of practices such as:

- **Mechanism of placement of *kul*:** *Kul* diya at the *bharar* is placed in different ways. Such as among Adhikari, Deity lamp is kept in the right side, *Brindavasini devi* in mid and Kshetrapal devta in the left. Among the Khadka such placement of Devi, *kul* diya and Kshetrapal is not designed and place only....?. On the other hand Basnet has two diya i.e. *masta* diya which is placed in right and *bhanja* diya kept in the left side.
- **Mobility of *Kul*:** On the day of *Dewali*, mul diya is carried by the elder daughter-in-law of the family among the Khadka and Basnet. Whereas among

Khabatari Basnet, the *kul* is carried by the couples from gadhighar to the venue where ritual is performed and brought back in a same manner.

- **Dates of practicing the ritual:** the dates of practicing the ceremony vary among the clan based on their *Vanshavali* (genealogical text). This year it was celebrated among Khadka, whereas coming year it will be celebrated among the Adhikari.
- **Women's involvement in the rituals:** Among the Khatri Adhikari, women are not allowed to enter the premises where *rudri puja* is performed, whereas it not the same among Puwar Khadka and Khabatari Basnet.

Over all, the faith and beliefs towards the *kul* is similar among all the clan members, even though they have different *kul* to worship.

Despite the creeping of modernization, the discussion revealed that people are still very keen to attend the *Dewali* of other clans, and such celebrations have become center of attraction for all people of Gaurada.

III. DEWALI RITUALS: CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES

The ritual of *Dewali* is celebrated since primordial time; the specific date or century of its beginning is not known. The rituals still continue to hold importance even in the 21st century although it is challenging for various reasons; it is still considered as the primary ritual of Chettri community. An in-depth interview with the respondents revealed that there are many aspects of continuity as well as changes in the rituals and ceremony. Following section contains Continuity and Changes, which is divided into 2 segments.

Continuity

- ***Dewali* Rituals act as a source of solidarity at clan level** – The ceremony always had a pivotal function to bring the family together. On the day of *Dewali* all the clan members gather at the venue, perform rituals, consume prashad and move towards the house for the supper. At the evening the female member of the house prepares delicious food and meat from the sacrificed goat. The male member of the family enjoys the meat with liquor and shares their past and present life with each other. Many respondents recalled their memories. The youth interaction also revealed despite all the practices, they admire the family get together the most, which otherwise would have been very rare in this busy modern world.
- **Main rituals and practices** - The major practices of *Dewali* still continues without any changes such as conducting Rudri puja which is one of the important pre- sacrificial ritual, the role of *dhamis* and their costumes in white dhoti. The sacrifice of sheep and uncastrated He goat has not yet been replaced.
- **Gender roles** - The gender division of labour in the ceremony from the beginning to the end of the ritual remains same. Only the male figure plays an important specifically in sacrificial ritual. The females are helping hands, their primary duty is to clean the house and provide hospitality to the guest. In some clans like among Khadka and Basnet, they are allowed to enter the premises where other ceremonies are performed except for the sacrificial one. Therefore there are not many changes in the role of women in the ceremony throughout the centuries.

- **Role of Shamans** – Till today *Dhamis*/Shaman plays an essential role and are mediator in the ceremony, as it is only through him an individual can connect to *kull*/god. Only the Shamans from within the clan can suck the blood of uncastrated goat and perform the ritual. The Shamans from outside the clan is prohibited to enter the premises.
- **Period and day of celebration** - The gap of conducting the ceremony is common and intact among all the clans. By any circumstances if the clan fails to worship on the specific day, then it is conducted next month or year after consulting the committee members of *Dewali*.
- **Other form of continuity** - The sacredness and purity of the ceremony is still maintained. The participation and entry of people from other communities or clans are rigidly prohibited.

Changes

Due to acculturation, slight modification or minor changes can be witnessed in terms of practices such as.

- *Dewali* among all the clans was celebrated on the day of Purnima throughout the year as the day is regarded as sacred by Hindu belief system. But in the recent years *Dewali* is celebrated before or after Purnima, as the *Dewali* date always falls on the month of Buddha Purnima. The head member of the clan decided not to perform any sacrifice on the day of Buddha Purnima who is regarded the symbol of peace. Thus with this concern of all members, the date and day is shifted.
- Shortening of rituals period - It is one the changes that was highlighted during the fieldwork. It was reported that rituals for *Dewali* used to begin five or

seven days before the main ritual. Whereas as today it is shorted down to three days. The earlier practice of compulsory fasting of every person of the household at least for three days prior to the main ceremony has been replaced by fasting of one member of the family. The respondents revealed that, fasting is a difficult task especially for the small kids, school/ college going youths, the member who works outside the house and for the sick members of the family. Thus only the healthy person of the family or the head member does the fasting, which is now accepted phenomena.

- Procuring the object of sacrifice - Among Khada, the sacrificial rites begins with “*Sunn Bhedo*” i.e gold colored Sheep, once the sheep is offered to *bhanjo dhami* the sacrificial ceremony is take further. But today, it is time consuming to find the sheep of appropriate color which sometimes is unfeasible, thus they agreed on sheep of different color on enquiry; it was found that Khadka clan of Gaurada has no *dhami* for *bhanjo*. Thus the offering of sheep is done by *dhami of masta*.
- Flexibility in the terms of observation and participation of other community and clan members - The premises where *Dewali* is conducted is bordered with walls, as to avoid direct contact with people from other clan or community. In ancient days people outside the clan were forbidden to touch walls and were only allowed to witness the ceremony from distance. But today, we can observe number of kids, women and men including the adults leaning on the wall and taking a clear view of the ceremony from close.

In short we can assume the main ceremony of *Dewali* is kept intact and pure, but is celebrated in more flexible way. In fact there are some clans who have banish the *kul* along with the items related to the practices for the betterment of the family, Bista is

one such clan. According to Bal Bahadur Bista 99 year old man “*kul dherai badmash bhayo, manaunu garo huntheyo*” in ancient days it was really difficult to meet up-to the expectation of Bista’s *kul*, on other hand the male member of family were dying at the age of 26, because of which the elder member and *dhami* of the clan gathered and found a conclusion to banish *kul* in the river saying “we could not keep you happy, please excuse us”. Since then the Bista has stopped worshiping *kul* and as a result the male member of the family started to exceed the age of 26.

IV. PERCEPTION OF YOUTHS

Dewali as a ritual is still preserved and practiced by Chettri of Gaurada. It is a social fact which is constraining to all clan and community member. Due to structural change resulting in terms of out migration, spread of education and people’s shift from agrarian to service sector and impact of other exogenous factors like globalization and modernization has brought many changes in the community setting to large extent. However the enthusiastic participation of *Dewali* celebration and motivation during field work drew attention of the researcher and yet holds importance even for the younger generations.

Therefore the section includes the youth perception on the ritual, significance of ritual, how they value and perceive it or is it simply notional. To substantiate the changing aspect as well as continuity, the following opinion of youth become meaningful.

A 20 year old (male or female) from Basnet clan shared that since very young age “we have been raised with the story of how *kul* has punished when not worshiped, how *kul* has helped and protect people in bad days, all these story made us to

believe in *kul*". Similar perception was given a young boy from Adhikari clan. In addition he asserts that "we just know that he is our god who needs to be worshiped".

Another perception was by given by a youth from Khadka and Adhikari clan who finds *Dewali* ritual to be unique and important, thus they specifically observe every part of ritual, follow their father's footsteps of the ceremony and tries to learn and understand every rites and rituals related to the ceremony. They further acknowledge that one day the responsibility to perform rituals comes to them, so must learn about the process and practices. Siblings Rekha Khadka 22 and Prabin Khadka 25, they also happen to be a child of *dhami*, and claims that "today although we are educated but our perception and respect to our *Kul* has not changed. Since our birth, *Kul* protected us and our family", Rekha further says that "today whatever I and my brother have achieved is the blessings of *kul*".

Abhisek Adhikari 17, and Bikram Adhikari, 22 claims that for them *Kul* is like every other deity of Hindu religion, therefore they respect and worship them however have a little knowledge of its importance. Abhisek very honestly said "I just know that we are supposed to respect the *kul* as we are asked to do so. I might not be much aware of the ritual but once I become a young man like my father, I have to take the responsibility of nurturing the *kul*. The knowledge and importance will come along with time" and he does not deny to learn that.

Dibesh Adhikari 24 says that he has a true faith in *Kul*, and in every *Dewali* he likes to help his father with the arrangements. He also asserts that he likes to accompany his father to the *Dewali* of other clans. On other hand Karan Khadka 19 young boy having a little knowledge about the puja says that, my parents have a great faith on

kul. Apart from that I enjoy the gathering at home, i get to see our cousins after a long time. Beyond that I don't know much. However, it is time for celebration.

Sugham Basnet 23, Ankita Basnet 19 and Sabita Basnet 22 giving a similar opinion asserts that their duty during *Dewali* is just to help mothers, when needed otherwise they don't have much involvement in it. Sugham says that "I don't even watch the sacrifice ceremony; it is quite horrible which I am afraid off". 20 year old Subham Basnet proudly claims that, "I observe my father performing the rituals as one day I have to lead these rituals".

All the above youths are school or college going students, except for 26 year old Milan Khadka, who happen to be working in Dubai since 2 years. According to him this is his first vacation to come home and he has reserved the vacation especially for *Dewali*, he further states that "no matter where we live our *kul* will bring us back home". He was of opinion that, *Dewali* should be preserved and it is our duty to protect and flourish it.

Some elder member of the family opines that the adults are better versed regarding *kul* as against the kids. Kids are more focused on studies and the one who are done with it are running after job. As compared to us, they have no time to get indulged with our customs, rituals and traditions.

Gobinda Bahadur Basnet 59, a Graduate opined that, the English educations and gadgets have brought gigantic effect on our culture and tradition. Modernization is in trend, kids are send to good English school, this way they adopt English habits which is leading to an extinction of our culture. Thus, it the responsibility of parents to raise kids within once tradition and practices. If a kid is not well aware of our society and customs, it is the parents who are responsible for extinction of the culture.

Through the observation, it was revealed that few youths from age 15-20 were unaware of some of the rituals related to *Dewali*; more over some of them didn't even know the name of their respective *kul*. On other hand some youths from age group had full respect and fear to annoy *kul*. The youth from 20- 29 of age group was more knowledgeable about *kul* and *Dewali* rituals. Thus the interaction with youth revealed that, it is upon the socialization pattern of family, to make younger generation aware of their traditional rituals.

Apart from education, Job aspiration is another factor which keeps youths occupied and away from home. Nepal is the country where numbers of youth and adults have migrated out in search of job facilities. Through the fieldwork, few such individuals came in contact. Deepak Khadka, 43 years old man holding a Bachelor degree runs a private Business at Katmandu, where he lives with his wife and son. On the other hand, 48 year old Chandra Khadka working in Mumbai in a Bank, along with his small family. Both of the interviewee claims to be actual inhabitants of Gaurada ward no. 3. Due to their service they cannot make a usual visit to their village, but during the year of *Dewali*, they visit one month earlier to contribute towards the arrangements/ preparation of the ritual. They assert that despite living in urban area or *pardesh* (other country), there is no decline in their belief, reverence and love toward there *kul*. In fact they aspire to become *dhami* one day, with heavy heart they assert that it is not in everyone's fate to become a *dhami* as it is *kul* who choose an individual *dhami*.

Hari Khadka a 38 year old man, got scholarship from government to study in Canada, after which he got job and married with a women from his home village and further settled down in Australia with his two sons. He claims that he missed his previous *Dewali* as he could not manage leave from office. Thus he asked his parents back in

Gaurada to offer a goat from his side as a gift to *kul* as thanks offering for good and healthy life of his family member. He also sends some amount of money to the organizer for smooth conduction of the ceremony.

The discussion shows that the education system, job facilities and the process of modernization definitely impacted the process of socialization and so the process of rituals to some extent. Despite this, it was also understood that with time and age, young are getting involved in the rituals and practices, and adults are managing time to celebrate *Dewali* with same traditional fervor and essence.

V. SUMMARY

Summing up, that there are certain inter-clan variations in *Dewali* ritual among different clans, however, there are lots of similarities too. The essence of masto as the ancestral deity has remained still intact among all clans. Due to social and structural transformation, there has been some relaxation in the rules and the process; however the sanctity of rituals has remained among the community. The youth are also in one way or other, are aware of the significance of *Dewali* as a marker of their culture.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

I

Human beings are inter-dependent by nature; they seek solution to different problem through various means, one such way is through religion (lama, 2017, p. 2). During primitive time, people used to seek for the solution from their close ones then if the problems could not be solved by any mortal being, the search led to some supernatural force that is above mankind. This search has made human to develop a way to connect to the supernatural being through prayers and performing certain rituals.

Ancestor worship is one of the religious phenomena that deal with human insecurity and uncertainty; it has emerged much earlier than the concept of god and human civilization. Frazer states that, before the evolution of god, primitive men were nature worshiper (poyil, 2006, p. 293). Taylor viewed the worship of the ancestor as the first and important branch of religion (poyil, 2006).

During primitive days, ancestor worship was found almost universal. In the present 21st century, despite the fact that science and innovation have assumed control over everything and has profoundly changed the outlook of the world. Yet in different parts of world ancestral practice still is prevalent and plays a primary role in the lives of people. Through prayers and religious practices they find means to deal with their stress and mental illness (lama, 2017, p. 1). Religion have gone through many phases, yet the old aged ancient ancestral practices tend to exist in the present era across many

frontiers, cultures and societies such as Asia, North America, Africa, Australia and Oceania (Bae, 2007, p. 19) and is known by different forms and names, *Dewali*/Masta puja of Chettri community of Gaurada Nepal is one such living examples of such practices.

II

The Chettri of Nepal are believed to be the descendents of great Khasa war tribe of Aryan origin, who happened to be Shamanist by nature. Later after migrating to Nepal they adopted Hinduism, which also gave them higher position in caste hierarchy. Even after adopting the Hindu religion, they adhere to their traditional practices of ancestor worship. This practice of *Dewali* marks a cultural identity of the Chettri community which is still rigidly followed in some parts of Nepal including Gaurada Nagar Palika of Jhapa district.

Gaurada is located in the 1st Province of Mechi zone of Eastern Nepal. It is a newly formed Municipality, after merging 5 Village Development Committee (V.D.C); which has a total population of 53,033 (2011 Census study). Gaurada is still traditional society and people are mostly simple and traditional by nature; they live in traditional houses and are engaged in traditional economic practices like farming.

Gaurada Nagar Palika is a Heterogeneous village in terms of caste and ethnic diversity. People of diverse communities and cultures are found in the land of Gaurada. Amongst them, Chettri and Bhaun are the dominant castes group with respective figures of 22.3% and 24.9% of total population. There are various festivals and rituals celebrated in the vicinity of Gaurada. *Dewali* among the Chettri is one of

them. Chettri is divided into wider clan groups, among which Khadka, Basnet and Adhikari were selected for the research purpose to meet the objectives of the study.

III

Dewali is practiced after every three years, specifically at the day of Purnima, as the day is regarded as sacred according to Hindu mythology. The sacrifice of uncastrated goat, sheep and female goat is the primary features of the ceremony. The sacrifice is made to the *kul* (ancestral house hold deity), also known as Masta/ Masto. Masta is known by different name in different clan as *Adhi masta*, *Rumal masta*, *Darhe masta*, *Khappar masta*, *Theghi masta*, *Mandali masta*, *Dhudhe masta*, *Ladhe masta*, *Mundda masta*, *Rudra masta*, *Kaile masta* and *Kala masta*. (Karki, 1996, p. 52). There is no structure or image of it, therefore diya is seen as its representative of *kul*.

Every house of Chettri holds a deity lamp in their bharar (puja room), which is lit and worshiped every day by the male member of family; women are not allowed to touch or see the lamp. The main diya which is worshiped and brought to the *Dewali* sthaan during the occasion is kept in gadhighar (house of elder member of family), this lamp is only opened and lit during the ceremony whereas rest of the years, it remained closed.

Dhami (Shaman) is the most important man of this entire ceremony; he is the one who connect human with the super natural being. It is not in the hand of ordinary man to have a direct contact with the *kul*/god, and can communicate with ancestral spirit only through *Dhami*. *Dhami* is usually a clan member, who is blessed with the divinely power, which is not always transmitted hereditarily, but anyone within the clan can

possess the power to become a *dhami*. During *Dewali* ceremony, a *dhami* invites the *kul* into his body and takes the offering of blood by sucking it.

The ritual of *Dewali* is a blend of Hinduism and animistic practices. As the rites related to sacrifice is only initiated after performing some series of Hindu rituals like worshipping lord Shiva. The Hindu practices are always firm regarding the principle of sacredness, and so in *Dewali* there are couples of rules that are maintained to keep the ritual purity and sacredness. Touch of lower caste people is regarded as profane; individuals outside the community or clan, including the married daughter and outer caste daughter-in-law has no role to play in the entire ceremony; even the women within the clan are not allowed to enter the sacrificed place; menstruation taboo is strictly followed. It is only the male clan member who is involved in the ceremony of *Dewali* sacrifice. Later friends, far relatives and villagers from all the communities are invited as a guest to consume prashad and witness the ceremony from a distance of *Dewali* sthaan.

The entire ceremony of *Dewali* is initiated after a thorough proper plan and arrangement made by a *Dewali* committee and its sub organizing committee. The planning committee is set by some elder and educated member of the clan, headed by body of nine members. The office bearers contain *Adakshya* (President), *Sachive* (General Secretary), *Koshadakshya* (Treasurer) and 6 *Sadasiya* (members of clan). The main motive of the committee is the smooth functioning of the ceremony.

As *Dewali* is the sparkling event for the people of Gaurada, the celebration and excitement of *Dewali* is not just confined among the community people, but it is collectively shared by the people of different castes and communities residing in Gaurada. One of such community people is Adivasi, who figure out different means

to earn through it; they open stalls outside the vicinity of ceremony, they get Rs. 500 for cleaning and shaving of goat after the ritual. People/ guest from nearby villages also participate in the ritual.

The three clan viz. Basnet, Khadka and Adhikari worship different *kul*, and celebrating *Dewali* in different dates. Some minor changes were discovered during field; such as placing of *kul* in bharar, object of sacrifice made to the deity kept along with *masta*, and involvement of women etc. Apart from these minor changes, the main and important rituals were found similar among all the clan such as, performing Hindu rites before sacrificial ceremony, notion of purity and pollution and men's involvement in the ceremony.

The role of Gender and age in the ceremony cannot be over- looked. In the entire ceremony, male has primary role to play, the deity who is worshiped is male, *dhami* who represent god is male, diya of *kul* is lit by eldest male member of clan, the sacrifice is done by male and the committee who supervises and organizes the ceremony comprises male members. Overall it is the ritual of male members of clan and conducted by male members themselves. Women on other hand, have a secondary role in the ceremony, like cleaning, cooking and providing hospitality to guest. During fieldwork, it was found among youth, boys were quite keen and excited about learning the rituals and following them, whereas girls were quite and less excited as they have least role to play in the ceremony.

IV

The study in Gauradaha inhabitants revealed that, the importance and significance of *Dewali* is known by all the ages and gender. For those educated people, who believe in ancestor worship, development of science and ancestral practices goes hand in hand. The study revealed that a good number of youth was devoted to their ancestor, and one of these reasons behind this is the socialization of child. Son and daughters of a *dhami* (shamans) are well aware of the entire ritual and practices of *Dewali*. On the other hand Children of educated man had comparatively little knowledge of the rituals yet they have faith and are devoted to *kul*/god. However, there were some teenage boys belonging from nuclear family, who was not much keen about the ritual, and saw *kul* as every other Hindu deity. Like him some youth are found to be worshiping *kul*, just because their parent does so, without knowing its importance, thus it can be understood that family type also plays an essential role in transmitting the knowledge of *Dewali*.

Through in-depth interview, it was also discovered their belief that knowledge and significance of one's tradition and customs come with right time and age. Apart from youth, there are some of adults who are residing in different parts of world for occupation or education. Despite their busy life, they always made time to come back to their root during *Dewali*, or else they send some amount of money as a donation for the ceremony. This is how they show love and reverence to their deity.

Kul still holds an important position in the life of devotee and consequently it has profound effect in their life, they perceive that every aspect of their day to day life is a blessing from *kul*. Few people came in contact during the fieldwork, who has something different while defining *kul* and its impact in their life. To them they have

come over with their pain and suffering after worshiping *kul*. They reported blessings like conception after several miscarriages, recovery from sickness, disaster, good production from agriculture and much other solution to their problem. Thus such faith and incidence made them adhere to the deity.

As a source of solidarity, the ritual also plays a crucial role to unite the family and clan members together. Far relatives, married daughters and son-in-law are invited this day and are provided with good hospitality, this how the solidarity with the family is maintained. On other hand, other community people are also invited to witness the ceremony and enjoy supper at home, despite the socio cultural boundary that is maintained to keep the purity during ceremony. Through such collectiveness people become a part of each other's community.

As mentioned above, these traditional practices have crossed many boundaries in human experiences. With the passing of these generations, some minor changes or modifications are found in terms of ritual such as; shortening of the ritual period from seven to three days, notion of fasting which was mandatory for entire family members now has become flexible and only one member of family does the fasting now, flexibility in terms of observation and participation of other community, shift in the date of practicing the ceremony, as recent *Dewali* is being conducted one day earlier or after the Purnima, which in fact always happens to fall at the time of Buddha Purnima. In order to avoid making sacrifice at the day of Buddha Purnima, such initiative is taken by some clan of Chettri such as Basnet, Khadka and Adhikari, which shows strong impact of Hinduism

Despite these slight flexibility and changes in terms of practices, the importance and sacredness of ritual is still continued in this 21st century. And without any second

thought, the traditional practice of *Dewali* is still perceived as a main ritual amongst all with due respect. The empirical evidence revealed that despite all the structural changes and creeping of modernization having its ramifications in socio- economic life of the community, the rituals has still retained its traditional essence among Chettri of Gaurada. Although, the intellectual and educated have become broader in their thought process, they still have retained their faith and reverence to their traditional practices of ancestor worship.

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GLOSSARY

Dewali	Ritual of Ancestor worship among Chettri, also known as Masto puja.
Pagomboh	Ritual of Ancestor worship Sama Dilaut people of Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia.
Caru	Ritual of Ancestor worship in Bali (Indonesia)
Taxilag	Ritual of Ancestor worship in Inner Mogolia
Trishul	Trident
Kulpuja	Ancestor worship among Mangar
Chandi Bahara	Ancestor god of Mangar
Bhowmka	Shamans of Thakur Gonds (Madhya Pradesh)
Gabru	Shamans of Tharu (Nepal)
Masto God	Name of Ancestor deity of Chettri
Vanshawali	Genealogical text of Chettri
Mulukin Ain	Legal code of Nepal
Khasa	Chettri is known as Khasa
Tagadhari	Twice born group

Matwali	Alcohol drinking group
Dharma	Duty
Dashain	Festival of Nepali community
Ghatasthapana	Installation of pot done which begins of Dashain
Fulpati	Festival celebrated on 7 th day of Dashain
Maha Ashtami	8 th day of Dashain
Maha Nawami	9 th day of Dashain
Vijaya Dhasmi	Victory celebrated on 10 th day of Dashain
Kojagrat Purnima	Last day of Dashain
Acheta	Red traditional tika of Chettri
Tihar	Diwali of Nepali community
Saipatriphul	Marigold flower used in rituals
Kaag Tihar	Worship of crow
Kukur Tihar	Worship of dog
Gai Tihar	Worship of cow
Goru Tihar	Worship of Ox
Bhai tika	Women worship her brother this day

Manghe Sankrati	Festival of sun god, practiced by Chettri
Selroti	Tradition food of Chettri
Baisakh	April- May
Mangsir	November- December
Ubhauri - Udhauri	Cattle shifting occasion
Tij	Festival of women, for the long life of husband
Vaishaki	New Year of Nepal
Loshar	Festival of Buddhist
Chasok Tangnam	Festival of Tamang
Puran,, & Manusmriti	Mahabharata Ancient text of India
Jetha - Jethi	1 st son and daughter of family
Maila-Maili	2 nd son and daughter of family
Saila- Saili	3 rd son and daughter
Kaila-Kaili	4 th son and daughter
Thaila- Thaili	5 th son and daughter
Antarey- Antari	6 th son and daughter

Jantarey- Jantari	7 th son and daughter
Khantarey- Khantari	8 th son and daughter
Mantarey- Mantari	9 th son and daughter
Lakhantarey- Lakhantari	10 th son and daughter
Thula Kancha- Thuli	11 th son and daughter
Kanchi	
Kancha- Kanchi	12 th son and daughter
Didi/ Baine	Sister
Daju/Bhai	Brother
Juwai	Husband of younger sister/ son-in-law of family
Bhenaju	Husband of elder sister/brother
Nanda	Sister of husband
Bura- Buri	Husband- Wife
Bhauju	Wife of elder brother
Buhari	Daughter-in law/ wife of younger brother
Chora-Chori	Son- Daughter
Hajurbaa- Hajur aama	Grandfather-Grandmother

Baba- Aama	Father- Mother
Bara- Bari	Father's elder brother and wife
Kaka-Kaki	Father's younger brother and wife
Phupa- Phupaju	Father's sister and husband
Thulo aama- thulo baba	Mother's elder sister and husband
Sano aama- sano baba	Mother's younger sister and husband
Mama-Miju	Mother's brother and wife
Sala- Sali	Wife's younger brother and sister
Dewar- Dewarani	Husband's younger brother and his wife
Amaju – Amaju Daju	Husband's elder sister and her husband
Jethaju and Jethani didi	Husband's elder brother and wife
Nanda and Juwai	Husband's younger sister and husband
Susurali	Husband's house
Saasu - Saura	Father & mother-in-law
Jethan- Didai	Wife's elder sister and her husband
Chhit saree, cholo,	Traditional dress of Chettri women

kamlo, pauro and patuki

Daura surwal and

Traditional dress of Chettri men

Topi

Kul Devta

Another name given to Ancestral deity

Sanskar

Rites of passage

Navran

Naming ceremony of child

Acchut

Untouchable

Bartabanda

Thread ceremony of boy

Vivah

Marriage

Baishak-jhet

Mid May-min July

Mangsir

Mid November- mid December

Magh- Phagun

Mid January – mid March

Thar

Clan of Chettri sub-group

Gotra

It derives ancestor rishi

Sindoor- potey

Vermilion and necklace which determines a married life
of women

Kriya

Death ceremony

Boka

Uncastrated goat

Bhedo	Sheep
Mul boka	Main uncastrated goat
Dhami	Shaman of Chettri
Kul diya	Main diya which represent deity
Mul thalo	Native place
Bharar	Worship room of the house
Diya	Represent kul deity of Chettri
Ghanta, Chamar &Kalash	Equipments used by shamans
Mul dhami	Head shaman
Gadhigar	House where main deity lamp is kept
Rudri puja	Worship of lord shiva
Dewali than	Place where Dewali ceremony is organized
Goth- dhup	Ritual for upbringing of cattle
kheer	Sweet dish
Babar	Traditional buckwheat pancake
Brindavasni	Goddess

samiti	Committee
Mangsir purnima	mid November- mid December
panchami	
Maghey purnima	mid January – mid February
Panchami	
Fagun purnima	mid February- mid March
panchami	
Gauth	Cow urine
Tilai pani	Sesame water
Gobar	Cow dunk
Pancha baja	5 instrument of nepali
Banjo	Is one of the deity kept with kul
Sun bhedhoo	Golden color sheep which is offered among Khadka

APPENDIX I

Dewali Through Sociological Lens: **Ancestor Worship among the Chettri of Gaurada in Nepal**

Name of the surveyor: Rachana Bista

Name of the Supervisor: Dr. Sandhya Thapa

Name of the programme: M.Phil, Department of Sociology, Sikkim University,
Gangtok, Sikkim, India

1	Profile of Respondent
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1.1 Name :

1.2 Age: 15-29

30-44

45-64

65 and above

1.3 Gender : Male

Female

1.4 Address :

1.5 Education Qualification:

1.6 Occupation:

1.7 Category /clan/ sub clan:

1.8 Marital status:

1.9 Type of Family: Nuclear Joint Family

1.10 Income : Less the 5000

5000 – 10,000

10,000 – 15,000

15,000 – 25,000

25,000 and above

1.11 Land : No land

1 – 2 bigha

3 – 4 bigha

4 and above

2	Background of Dewali
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2.1 What is Dewali and why is it celebrated?

.....
.....

2.2 What is the cultural significance of Dewali?

.....
.....

2.3 What is your contribution to the ceremony?

.....
.....

2.4 How are the preparations that are done for celebrating Dewali?

.....
.....

2.5 Who are the Dhami / Shamans who perform the rites? And what are their roles?

.....
.....

2.6 What role does the senior member of the family plays in the rituals?

.....
.....

2.7 What role does female member of the family play in the ritual?

.....
.....

2.8 Is there a restriction, if the daughter in law belongs to other community of caste?

.....
.....

2.9 Who are the people who participate in the Ritual?

.....
.....

2.10 Are the other community members invited to the ceremony?

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.....

2.11 Are the younger generations equally aware about the rites and the rituals?

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2.12 Does the younger generation steadily contribute to the ceremony?

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2.13 Is there any form of differences/similarities in term of practices of ritual amongst the clans of Chettri? If yes, then what are they?

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2.14 Is there any differences in the celebration of Dewali as compared to past days?

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2.15 Does the ritual is celebrated with the same amount of enthusiasm like it did in the past days?

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2.16 Do you still believe in the rituals of Dewali?

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2.17 What is the reason that made you believe in masto god and masto puja?

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2.18 How is the ritual different from other Hindu rituals?

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2.19 Does the out migration; in terms of education and job opportunities has affected the traditional ritual of Dewali?

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2.20 Are the rituals of Dewali and its importance are weakening? If yes then why?

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2.21 Is there a cultural change in the food items that is been served to the guest or the family members at the supper?

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3	Questions asked to the organizing committee member of Dewali
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3.1 How many members does the organizing committee have?

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3.2 On what basis are the members elected? And who elect them?

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3.3 What role does each member of the committee plays?

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3.4 How many days before the planning starts? And how it is done?

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3.5 How is the fund for ceremony raised?

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