

Manjusri in Nepali Context: A Case of Chobhar

Gopal Prasad Sigdel¹, Bidhya Shrestha², and Tara Lal Shrestha³

Abstract

This study explores the historical and religious background of the Kathmandu valley with mythological association of Manjusri, who is regarded as creator of the valley. It elucidates the origins of Manjusri and his significance across Buddhist traditions Mahayana, Vajrayana and Theravada along with key sutras. Employing descriptive qualitative method - literature review as a secondary source, key informant interviews, consultation with local residents and direct observation at Chobhar, the site associated with the legendary draining of the lake (Nagarhada or Kalidaha) - it investigates different perspectives on inner Buddhism, Sakyamuni Buddha, Saraswati (in Hindu myth) and Manjusri that appear as myth within Buddhist and Hindu worldviews. Despite being regarded as a distinguished and honorable figure often assumed to be a god of wisdom, creator and power in various places exact identity of Manjusri remains a subject of dilemma. This study contributes to understand the interplay of myth, history and religious identity of Manjusri in Nepali cultural landscape.

Keywords: Manjusri, Mahayana-Vajrayana, Myth, Chobhar, Kathmandu valley

Introduction

Manjusri is renowned for his mellifluous speech, and many of his titles and epithets highlight the quality of his voice. He is also famous for *Avalokitesvara, Bodhisattva of Mahayana Cosmologi, Ksitigarbha and Samantabhadra* (Goodson, 2021). Among these, the best-known names are *Manjughosa*, ‘Sweet-voiced’, *Manjuvara*, of Sweet-Sounds’, *Vadira*, *Vagisvara* and *Gispati* ‘Lord of Speech’ along with *Panchasikha* related to interlocutor and eternal god (Tribe, 1997). According to Apple (2017), Manjusri is known as *kamarabhuta* (evergreened crown prince and youth personality as live 16 years old in every time of period) which means youth and in Sanskrit his name refers immortal god, monarch or virtue.

¹ Independent researcher, Email: gpsigdel2025@gmail.com

² Corresponding author, Lecturer, Central Department Population Studies, Tribhuvan University.
Email: bidhya.shrestha@cdpl.tu.edu.np

³ Lecturer, Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University.
Email: taralal.shrestha@cden.tu.edu.np

Manjusri is one of the oldest Bodhisattvas, the devotees of Mahayana and Vajrayana who is worshipped and adorned in various forms, names and epithets in different places and cultures (Pullen, 2021). The folklore of Nepal is believed that the creator of Kathmandu valley, Manjusri, is a traveler from Chinese five-peaked mountain, Wu-Tai Shan (Shakya, 2004, p. 9). Most of the Chinese call Manjusri 'Wenshu' in their local language. And they believe that Manjusri (Wentsu) raised from the mount Wutai-Shan (the place and position of awakening/bodhisattva) that lies in Shanxi Province, China which is renowned a sacred mountain within other three peaked mountain called Putuo (Avalokiteshvara/compassion), Mt. Emei (Samanta bhadra/practice) and Mt. JiuHua (Ksitigarbha/vow) respectively. He is also known interlocuter of Buddha. Similarly, in Japan he is known as 'Monju' and in Korea 'Munshu' respectively, as an emblem of 'Bodhisattva of Wisdom', charity and guardian based on his strong association with *Prajna* (Silk, 2019).

Kathmandu Valley is renowned as one of the oldest culturally rich and religious hubs and beautiful landform. Within this valley lies the three major cities- Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur- each contributing to its historical and cultural heritage. In his reverence, the local of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur chant *Namasangati* (homage songs that are chanted) in Buddhist temples, monasteries and stupas each day in the morning, one of the attendants describes (Kansakar, personal communication, December 20, 2025). Further, in honor of Manjusri, who is mythologically believed to have created the valley by draining the lake (Kalidaha), the local community (approximately 300 households) with the coordination of Jal Vinayak Upabhokta Samiti (Jal Vinayak User's Committee) built Manjusri Park and established his statue. Around 100 toned carving statue lies in the middle of the Manjusri Park spreading to 6.538 hectares (Khadka a local people and Maharjan member of Jal Vinayak user's Committee at Chobhar, December 17, 2025).

Sukra Sagar Shrestha is the pioneer writer, culturalist, archeologist and scholar of Nepal mandal played vital role in conceptualizing for establishment of the monument aiming to conserve, promote and introduce archaeologies, Nepali historical artifacts and cultural varieties in the world (Maharjan, personal communication, December 17, 2025).

Manjusri is believed to settle Kathmandu valley draining the historical *Kalidaha* (big pond). In his remembrance, the local established the Manjusri Park and his statue (Bajracharya, personal communication, December 24, 2025). The statue is situated in the southern part of the Kathmandu Valley, Kirtipur-6 Chobhar. The 33-foot-tall stone sculpture was prepared by veteran artist Chandra Shyam Dangol (Dhakal, 2020).

Manjusri monument embodies as the Mandala conception encompassing symbols and emblems of Buddhism along with ancient myths about Manjusri and his glorious and miracle jobs. It is a distinguished sculpture deeply rooted in local mythology and cultural

heritage based on various resources available that delve to its significance and historical roles. But the lack of promotion and good governance of local and central government, expected visitors and researchers look meager at Manjusri Park.

There are piles of arguments about the character Manjusri's origins, roles, significances and his deeds. Nevertheless, his identity and origin remain embedded in historical myth and are not empirically confirmed, which makes it a mesmerizing issue for research. The main focusing of this paper is to reverberate about the Manjusri and his mythical figure. His historical personality and stories about the creation of Kathmandu Valley is mythically recognized. It is essential to investigate who Manjusri was and where he came from. In this regard, this study explores how the mythical figure is adorned by Mahayanist Buddhists, both in Nepal and beyond, which obviously links his veteran role in shaping Kathmandu valley.

Methods

This paper tried to portray the historical, geographical, social and cultural landscape of Kathmandu valley along with the mythical figure Manjusri and his contribution. The methodology combines both secondary resources (published documents like books, journal articles and thesis etc.) and primary sources. Primary data were collected to complement and validate insights derived from the secondary sources, providing a deeper understanding of the living reality associated with Manjusri. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with three key informants, three local people, one each school principal, school students, lama and nun. Additionally, field visits of different shrines and observations of the Manjusri Park were carried out to incorporate lived experiences.

Discussion

Myths of Manjusri

Long ago, there was a magnificent lake called *Nagarhada* with fourteen miles stretched at length and breadth surrounded by four magnificent mountains called *Jatamatrakcca*, *Dhyayanocca*, *Phulocca* and *Siddhiphullocca* at four cardinal directions of current Kathmandu Valley before origin of Glorious *Svayambhu Jyotirupa* (Shyakya, 2004). In those days, current Kathmandu valley was covered with water within beautiful lake, according to the various mythical elaborations. The four peaks of Kathmandu *Shivapuri*, *Nagrjuna*, *Chandragiri* and *Phulchwoki* can be related to the chinse five peaked of *Wutai-shan* Mountain range Manjusri appeared first there and arrive near Kathmandu.

Manjusri wished to develop resident for sentient beings and gods drying the *Kalidaha*. According to the historical book *History of Nepal 100 Years Ago* by Daniel Wright

Manjusri entered in Nepal Mandala from China. He arrived on eastern hill of Bhaktapur (Nagarkot) and spent three nights there. He noticed Swayambhu's splendid and brighten light so that he went to near the light. Because of the bizarre scenery in the lake Manjusri decided to drain that *Nagadarha*. He cut off the Chobhar gorge (School student, Kiritpur, December 17, 2025) so that the water of the lake gushed out and became the suitable place for residential. That is why the people of Kathmandu valley believe and hold this tale in high regards as it continues to shape religious practices, pilgrimage, and as the Nepali identity, weaving together legend and landscape in a profound expression of spiritual heritage (Wright, 1887).

The above statement of Wright elucidates that the cultures and the modern civilization of Kathmandu valley began since the period of the venerable Manjusri. In other word, he is the innovative and pioneer guy to make foundation for sentient beings in Nepal Maha Mandala. Swayambhu Maha Caitya preconizes, "A great Bodhisattva named Manjusri will come to this place from Great China of the north. He drained the water of this lake, make this place habitable, and many gods and goddesses will come to reside here" (Shakya, 2004, pp. 3-4).

Swayambhu Maha Caitya passes out the other mythology that when Bodhisattva Manjushree was about to drain the great lake, he wanted to measure and gauge the lake's depth. He shot his arrow into the lake three times as a result it went to be three places *Ason*, *Lvahamasula* and *Jagati Dvahan*. *Swayambhu Maha Caitya* further remarks that Bodhisattva Manjusri rod merrily upon a lion and arrived near *Nagarhada* lake area and travelled toward south *Kapotala* Mountain, maybe current Chobhar, periphery intending to cut the gorge and drain the water of the lake (Shakya, 2004, p.10). The *Swayambhu Puran*, translated by Dan Bajra Bajracharya, explicates that Manjusri Bodhisattva was an omniscience that is why he became aware about the existence of Nepal Valley and the *Nagavasahrada* with Holy place Swayambhu Dharmadhatu surrounded by dazzling light with the help of *Lokasaundar sanasamadhi* meditation that was already predicted by *Viswabhu* Tathagata.

There is a myth that Manjusri came Nepal valley within his two wives and disciples. He circumambulated all around the valley and decided to cut the gorge of Chobhar by his tantric sword Chanda Hasa. As a result, the Lake gushed out roaring with huge sound (Smith, 1978). Meanwhile, some locals of Chobhar area elaborate referring their ancestor's proverb that Manjusri is family deity (Kul Devi) of first king of Gopal dynasty named 'Dharmakara'. As the dynastic goddess, he used to go to adorn the current Vajaryogini temple of Sankhu, Kathmandu, every morning. But that cannot attest as if he is the ancestor of any cast or tribe of Nepal.

Even though it is believed that Manjusri, who made draining the *Nagarhada* to have founded the city of *Manjupatten* and installed his disciples as rulers, the sacred site associated with Manjusri in Kathmandu are *Swayambhunath* that symbolizes the primordial Buddha and wisdom, Chobhar Gorge related to Manjusri's Sword symbolizes the cut off ignorance and White Machhendranath Temple association with Valley appear a shaping act. Newar designated monasteries and stupas have Manjusri's statues or painting in many forms and gestures that picturize the guideline of Manjusri's priceless virtuous deeds. *Namasangiti* chanting tradition has most probably begun since 11th century (Shakya, 2019), dedicating for the names of noble assuming almighty god Manjusri who is the most important Bodhisattva accordance with Vajrayana/Mahayana Buddhist philosophy.

Manjusri in the Eyelid of East Asia

Located in Shanxi Province, Mt. Wutai was identified by the Tang dynasty as pure land of Manjusri. It was believed that in the period of the decline of the dharma, Manjusri would reside on this mountain. This is followed by a prediction made in the Manjusri Parinirvana sutra, Manjusri would appear at the "Mountain of Snows" four hundred and fifty years after the Parinirvana (death) of Sakyamuni Buddha. Although this mountain must originally have been conceived as one located in the Himalayas, Chinese monks gradually came to identify Manjusri with Mt. Wutai in China, perhaps, the mountain was known to be snowy even during the summer heat (Wang, 2016). Many Chinese translations cast Manjusri an awakened being, as in his famed encounter with Vimaklakirti in *Vimalakirti nirdesa*.

The popular *The Great-Sutra (Prajanaparamita sutra)* reveals Manjusri as the god of death (*yamantaka*) showing his appearance within six faces, arms and legs sit on a water buffalo. On the other hand, the *Lotus* and *Vimalakirti Sutra* expose Manjusri only one of the greatest disciples of Buddha who goes and debates and propagates with the layman bodhisattva Vimalakirti about the wisdom of emptiness and cycle of sutra playing the protagonist role so that avoid ignorance and produce realization of wisdom in east Asian culture (*prajna*), (Goodson, 2021). In northern-eastern hemisphere of Asia like China, Japan, Tiawan, Mongoliya and Korean peninsula, Manjusri has regarded the God of protection from outsider and invader. The cultural cohesion of these countries has been remaining to venerate Manjusri as the all doctors to eradicate all type of poverty, afflictions, all diseases, the leprosy and all kind of skin diseases and problems. They believe Manjusri as the teachers of all buddha and campaigner of removing celestial catastrophes and ensuring rebirth in pure land after death (Silk, 2019).

But the character Manjusri does not have any particular labs, manifestations, scientific/carbon dating proofs and original written documents to justify as if he is the living god. The *Manjusri Parinirvana* sutra is not clear about Manjusri; who is he? On the one hand Lotus Sutra highlights Manjusri was the Vairocana or primordia cosmic Buddha who taught the Sakyamuni Buddha protecting all sentient beings, on the other hand, accordance with Manjusri Parinirvana Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha had predicted that Manjusri would present on Wutai-Shan after four hundred fifty years Sakyamuni's Death. The paradoxical claiming of these sutras should be tested these overrated statements what are the truths. But we can analyze that Manjusri was the disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha from India to East Asia as religious missionary in various forms (Guruma at Thai-Kiriti Bihar, personal communication, January 9, 2026).

The *Manjusri Prinirvana* sutra is a brief text, extant only in Chinese translation traditionally attributed to Nie Daozhen and accordingly dated circa 280-312, when Nie Daozhen was said to have worked with the more renowned translator Dharmaraksa c. 230-316. It is often viewed as one of the testimonies of Manjusri cult. However, it is dubious, and the scripture more likely dates to the 5th century. The testimony the sutra provides to Manjusri cult at the time of its composition may merely be literary and prescriptive, but its contents are nonetheless vivid and were used by later proponents in diverse ways. In the sutra, in response to Bhadrapala's request for a prediction of *Manjusri Parinirvana*, the Buddha provides a mini biography, beginning with Manjusri birth in an Indian village and culminating with his attainment of the *Surangamasamadhi*. Through the power of this Samadhi, Manjusri repeatedly manifests throughout the ten directions enters *Sarinirvana* and benefits sentient beings (Tribe, 1997, pp. 54-95).

The *Manjusri Parinirvana* sutra is a short but fascinating Buddhist scripture that survives today only in Chinese translation. However, this sutra also signify that historical Manjusri's origin was India and traced the journey toward ten directions and generated immense spiritual benefits for sentient beings. It is believed Manjusri had omnipresent nature (Priest at Chobhar Aadinath temple, December 30, 2025). But he is not beyond the Sakyamuni Buddha as intercalator. Manjusri is an important person who helped to personify Buddhist principles playing central role in the Mahayana Buddhist world. On the other hand, Manjushree was one of the role models to spread Buddhism toward the eastern hemisphere. We can analyze that he was also beginner of human civilizations making advantages for all sentient beings in those areas. The Buddha had already predicted about the Manjusri who will preserve the *buddha*, *dharma* and *sangha* as a representative of Sakyamuni Gautam, the sutra indicated.

Another text *Lotus* sutra establishes Manjusri's deep roots in Indian Buddhist tradition; it is entering the dharma realm (*Gandavyaha*) section of the *Avatamsaka* sutra that provides the most influential story for his devotional cult. This explanation also proves that Manjusri is no more than Indian origin, he has played the vital role to preserve the buddha, dharma and Sangha in the eastern-northern hemisphere making the ten thousand disciples (especially in China, Japan and Korean peninsula). The *Lotus* sutra mentions Manjusri's jobs and activities who disguised as monk to preach the religious rules and regulations and wore triads with royal groom to save the sentient beings. Manjusri is an Indian origin who went Wutai-Shan the five peaked mountain to propagate the Buddhism so that the Dharma distributed those places mainly in Japan. Related with Wutai-Shan, Manjusri also responded in Japan major savior of the Buddha religion and its principles guiding the socio-cultural phenomena (Silk, 2019, pp. 592-598).

Manjusri Bodhisattva is related to Mahayana Buddhism that developed in Indian sub-continent and spread in China, Korea and Japan since 4th to 9th centuries. Wutai-Shan is not origin of Manjusri but one of the major stations of propagating of the Manjusri cult in East Asian countries like China, Korea, Mongolia and Japan with helps of different rulers in various periods. Perhaps most pressing, however, is the need for more research on Manjusri's cult. Further study about Manjusri should require the historical Manjusri and his genuine role. "Theravada Buddhism does not know about Manjusri; Vajrayana and Mahayana Buddhism do not believe the superstitions of those genres", says a nun of Kirti Vihara (Personal communication, December 28, 2025). Even though we can assume about Manjusri's origins trace back to India and his cult spread through from China, Korea and Japan. So dubious conceptions about him are the subject to further reliable research.

In sights of Western Buddhist

Manjusri has been regarded and valorized him as the center figure of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist philosophy. The origin of Manjusri is believed in the second centuries before the Mahayana sutra's development that evolve 7th to 8th century. He is presented as the gentleman and his name and fame as a source of inspiration, teaching and protector for all types of catastrophes and sorrows. Manjusri is also renowned as preach of devotion and meditation spread from India throughout the whole classical Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist world particularly China, Korea, Japan and Tibet. His popularity goes on not only within traditional Buddhist communities and culture around the world but also in forty-eight contemporaries 'western' Mahayana Buddhist traditions too. According to Tribe (1997, pp. 50-90), American, European and Australian Buddhists often visualize Manjusri, chant his name as *Namasangati* and practice as effective means

of developing the insightful awareness (Prajna) which is the heart of the Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist perspective.

Whereas, the conception of western Buddhist notions about Manjusri are clear that he was the master of Buddhist world and taught the devotional and meditative world inspiring the devotees to follow compassion, love, harmony, peace and prosperous society. So that Sakyamuni's Buddha's four Noble Truth, five principal precepts and eightfold path and the Manjusri's notion and motion are the two parts of a coin. To say in gist point, the bodhisattva Manjusri, as the representation of wisdom, has remained a central figure of devotion and practice in Mahayana Buddhism for 2,000 years, originating in India. From its Indian roots, the tradition spread across East Asia and then into contemporary Western tradition too (Tribe, 1997, pp. 50-90)

For instance, in Hindu Puranic literature, Brahma's consort is said to be the goddess Saraswati patroness of the arts and of learning. Saraswati was an important figure in the Vedic period well before her connection with Brahma and in some Buddhist contexts she is found as Manjusri's consort. As the goddess of the river along which Vedic learned developed, she became the inspirer of eloquence and was known as Vagdevi, Goddess of Speech. In the post-Vedic period Sarasvati's role was not fixed: sometimes she is depicted as Visnu's consort, sometimes as Brahma's daughter as well as his consort. It is not clear, therefore, that her role as Manjusri's consort is calqued on her relationship with Brahma.

Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of wisdom, learning, music, and eloquence, shares a striking resemblance to Manjusri. She, too, is associated with the power of knowledge to dispel darkness. Both are invoked by students and spiritual aspirants seeking clarity and understanding. In fact, in some Newar Buddhist traditions, Saraswati is honored alongside or even identified with aspects of Manjusri. A ninety-six years old woman of Dallu Swoyambhu, Kathmandu narrates how Manjusri is worshipped as Hindu Goddess during Sripanchami (Personal communication on 4 January 2026). However, it should be noted that Saraswati only seems as Manjusri's consort within the context of a later, tantric phase of Buddhism, so that if there is any influence from Brahma here it comes after the formation of Manjusri defining role and status as the bodhisattva of wisdom (Tribe, 1997, pp. 58-59).

The above mythical projections valorize the Manjusri as one of the Hindu Goddess Saraswati showing the relation with the creator God Bramha. According to Hindu myth and genres mention three major Gods Bramha, Visnu and Maheshwara categorizing their jobs as creator of the world, ruler or savior of the world and cleaning up the beings. Manjusri's characteristics resonate with certain other deities along with Saraswati in

Hinduism, reflecting the deep cultural and spiritual syncretism across South Asia. Shiva, in his form as Dakshinamurti, is the silent teacher who imparts wisdom through stillness. Like Manjusri, *Dakshinamurti* dissolves ignorance not with verbal instruction but through deep, intuitive transmission. The third eye of Shiva, symbolizing inner vision, parallels the penetrating insight Manjusri bestows upon meditators. Skanda (also known as Kartikeya or Murugan), the Hindu god of war and divine strategy,

Similarly, Skanda is also a guardian of esoteric knowledge, much like Manjusri is the embodiment of transcendental insight in Buddhism. Manjusri's magical powers are generally exercised for the purpose of converting beings and increasing their faith. His conversion of Jains through the creation of illusory disciples, (*Ratnakaranda Sutra*-Part II, vol. 1.2)) and his conversion of a prostitute by appearing as a handsome young man (*Manjusri-Vikridita Sutra*) has been mentioned earlier in some Tantric interpretations, Use of magical powers can also be seen as a way of demonstrating the essential emptiness (sunyata) of phenomena, if nothing has any permanent and independent self-existence, then the boundaries of things are not fixed in the way that we usually take them to be. The material universe can be traversed and transformed at will by an advanced bodhisattva who has realized the truth of Sunyata. Manjusri, as a supreme exemplary of Buddhist wisdom should be a master of magical power on a grand scale (Tribe, 1997, p. 85).

As iconic person, Manjusri has been picturized as grand magical fellow who had miracle power to hypnotize the opponent easily. He would transform the religion of opposite demonstrating the magical power. Even he would metamorphosize as handsome and attractive personnel in front of prostitutes to capture attention in good religious way and made nuns or laywomen to follow *buddha, dharma and sangha*. According to Tribe (1997), son of heaven is this your understanding of Manjusri's miraculous power. As I understand it, if Manjusri wishes, he can gather all the merits and magnificent attributes of Buddha-lands as numerous as the sands of the Ganges and cause them to appear in one Buddha land.

As Tribe (1997) highlights, Manjusri's magical capacities appear elevated in such a way that the Buddha himself elaborated responding him as son of heaven accordance with Mahayana Buddhist genre. The Buddha has praised Manjusri who attributed to expand the Buddhism and its merits and magnificence.

Manjusri in Nepali Context

We discoursed who is Manjusri from different angles. The notions of western eastern Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhist elaboration absolutely differ from Newar Buddhist and

Nepalese context. The local resided in Kathmandu and some contents about Manjusri in a bit of available Nepali's books, booklets newspapers along with proverbs or myth claim that Manjusri is the hero of modern human civilization came from China.

According to evidence in the *Svayambhupurana*, Manjusri is said to have left Mount *Pancasirṣa* (the hill of five peaks) in China and cleaved apart mountains with his sword to release the waters of Lake *Kalihrada* and to drain the Kathmandu valley, which owe its creation to Manjusri, as advocated by Gail. According to a local teacher at Adinath Secondary School and tribals of Chobhar, "Manjusri is believed to have come from Tibet and cut through the Chobhar gorge then appointed Dharmakar as the first king of Gopal dynasty and ruler of Kathmandu Valley" (Personal communication, December 29, 2025). Supporting this version, the priest of Aadinath temple explained,

King Dharmakar used to adorn Manjusri assuming the creator of human civilization and first God of all or the first Buddha. Believing him one of the gods of creator, wisdom and savior, Adinath Temple structured in Lichhabi period at the peak of Chobhar and worshipped Manjusri thinking supper god (Personal communication, December 29, 2025).

This act is also documented in literature that notes that Manjusri cut off the Chobhar gorge with a powerful sword and gushed out the water and developed residential sites in Kathmandu (Lall, 2007). The legendary act continues to inspire cultural practices and religious devotion, for instance, a teacher at local Adinath Secondary School has created and recorded a school song respecting Manjusri and sing every day before beginning the classes (Principal of Aadinath Secondary School, Chobhar, personal communication, December 29, 2025). Similarly, rewarding Manjusri's unforgettable and glorious contributions, most of the monasteries in Nepal, related to Vajrayana Buddhism, chanting names of Manjusri that is called Manjusri *Namasangiti* has been operating since long period ago.

Likewise, a scholar of post-graduate of Sulanchhan Kirti College, Chobhar talks about the Manjusri accepting him the god of wisdom among the three gods Manjusri, Vajrapani and Avalokeswora symbolizing body (*kaya*), speech (*baka*) and mind (*chitta*) in Himalayan Buddhism or god of trinity wisdom, heart and power aligned with *buddha*, *dharma*, *sangha* (Lama, personal communication, December 30, 2025). According to him Manjusri is honored omniscience, omnipresent and omnipotent came from China and broke Chobhar gullet. In Hinduism Manjusri responded as the god of wisdom or Saraswati so that they worshipped him in Shree Panchami (a kind of Nepalese that lies in begging day of autumn season) in Swayambhu Nath where the Manjusri's small statue is situated. As a superpower god and creator of Nepal's civilization, the local people have

constructed a statue in Chobhar within the vision of Sukra Sagar Shrestha and faith and funding of a Japanese citizen along with Nepalese activists/scholars (Personal communication with a member of Jal Vinayak Users' Samiti, December 25, 2025).

The story of Manjusri and the creation of the Kathmandu Valley can be regarded as a myth or even an allegory; a didactic tale meant to entertain and yet educate in much the same way as the myths of Ancient Greece or even the biblical book of Genesis which chronicles the creation of the world and all that is in it in a mere seven days. It is not easy matter to attempt to put the key events in context or even in order, to verify the accuracy, to distinguish fact from fiction (Kamal, 2023). The practitioners of Theravada do not know the character, Manjusri. One of the gurumas of Thai Kirti Vihara says, "We do not believe in any kind of embossed, fancy, imagined and magical or tantrik Buddha beyond Sakyamuni Buddha" (Personal communication with a nun, December 27, 2025).

Different people of different religions assume Manjusri through different perspectives. Hindus worship him as God of Saraswati, Shiva or Vishnu. Himalayan and Vajrayana Buddhist valorize Manjusri as the god of wisdom or categorizing Kaya, Baka, Chitta (mind, power and heart) (Lama at Sulochana Kirti Campus, December 17, 2025).

Buddhist in the east and west is conceived as accordance with Mahayana perspective. So, it requires further studies to clarify who Manjusri exactly was/is. The paper also identifies a clear research gap that while the myth is vibrant in local Nepali tradition, there is a scarcity of critical historical and archaeological studies within Nepal that reconcile the beloved local narrative with the figure known in broader Buddhist canon and history. Furthermore, the potential for the Chobhar site as a hub for cultural tourism and inter-religious dialogue, given Manjusri syncretic links to Hindu deities like Saraswati, remains under development. There is no recent research available on historical and mythical figure Manjusri in Nepali context.

Conclusion

This study explored the multifaceted figure of Manjusri with a particular focus on his significance in the context of Nepal and embodied by the statue in Manjusri Park Chobhar, Kathmandu, Nepal. The research reveals that Manjusri's complex identity and narrative shaped by diverse religions, cultures and geographical lenses lacks seriously. He is unequivocally revered as the godlike mythologizing a creator of the Kathmandu who drained the lake. It is deeply embedded in local's hearts that the local people sing the praise song of Manjusri as a source of inspiration. Moreover, in Newari culture, the people of Newar community recite *Namasangati* (the local song of elaboration glory of Manjusri) in local identity and participate in various religious practices hoping to preserve cultural heritage of Manjusri. The myth submitted about Manjusri serves to

sacrifice the landscape, connecting the Valley's physical geology to a divine act of wisdom and compassion meant creating a habitable space for sentient beings. However, a historical and doctrinal analysis presents a different origin. Scholarly research traces Manjusri's root to Mahayana sutras in India (1st -2nd centuries CE). He emerged primarily as a Bodhisattva of wisdom (*prajna*), an interlocutor of Buddha and a central figure in text like *Lotus* sutra. His cult subsequently spread across Asia with mount Wutai in China becoming his most famous earthly habitation. This analytical research embodies the Nepali myth of Kathmandu valley creation as localized interpretation overlooking Mahayana and Vajrayana tradition about Manjusri worldviews. The exploration of Manjusri's dual identity as both universal Bodhisattva of wisdom and local mythic foundation highlights dynamic process of religious localization. Future research could fruitfully examine the historical co-emergence of the myth and Buddhist institutions in the world. The paper hope to conduct comparative further studies with other locations in other Asian and localizations about Manjusri analyzing the contemporary socio-political uses of these foundational narratives.

References

Apple, J., & Apple, J. B. (2017). Manjusri. In K. S. Sarao, J. D. Long, & S. Arvind (Eds.), *Buddhism and Jainism* (pp. 743-745). Springer. Retrieved from <https://shorturl.at/bSbu0>

Apple, J. B. (2017). Manjusri. In S. K.T.T., L. J.D, & I. S. S. (Ed.), *Buddhism and Jainism*. Encyclopedia of Indian Religion. Springer.

Dhakal, R. (2020, September 20). Manjusri sculpture claims to be the world's tallest monument. Retrieved from <https://shorturl.at/Ue5LJ>

Goodson, M. (2021, Apr 27). Manjusri: The way of devotion. p. 1. Retrieved from <https://www.thezengateway.com/>

Kamal, L. (2023, March 2). The creation of Kathmandu Valley & Manjusri myth. Ask Me About Nepal. Retrieved from <https://shorturl.at/Nz0b8>

Lall, K. (2007). Legends of Kathmandu valley. Nepal Bhasa Academy.

Pullen, L. S. (2021, June). Re-interpretation of Manjusri in Central and East Java. *Humantiora*, 33, 157-168. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.66294>

Shakya, M. (2019). The worship of Manjusri in Nepal. In M. V. Tu, & M. V. Tu (Ed.), *Buddhist studies: Contemporary approach* (pp. 501-513). Religion Publisher.

Shyakya, H. R. (2004). Sri Svayambhu Mahacaitya (M.B. Shakya Trans.). (p. 1). *Svayambhu Bikas*.

Silk, J. A. (2019). Manjusri in East Asia. In R. Bowring, V. Eltschinger, & M. Radich (Eds.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (Vol, II pp. 592-598). Retrieved from <https://www.brill.com>

Smith, W. W. (1978). Mythology history of Nepal Valley from Swayambhu Purana (M.B. Bajracharya Trans.). Avalok.

Tribe, A. (1997). Manjusri: Origin, role and significance (Vol. 02). Western Buddhist Review. <https://www.westernbuddhistreview.com/archive>

Wang, M. C. (2016). The thousand-armed Manjusri at Dunhuang and paired images in Buddhist culture. Duke University Press, 66, 81-105.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/aaa.2016.0013>

Wright, D. (1887). History of Nepal. (D. Wright, Ed.) Cambridge University Press.