

Variation of *Moni Nakhah* and *Daśain*

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Abstract

Moni Nakhah and Daśain fall during the same days in the lunar calendar, both bear equal importance and relevance in their respective cultural origins. The influence of Hinduization and Sanskritization that arose with the entry of several rulers in the Nepaa Maṇḍala caused momentum forcing the identity of the ones who celebrate it to be in crisis. Festivals like Moni and Daśain with varying cultural backgrounds have co-existed and should, rather than facing a transitional merger. Moni and Daśain are both unique festivals that snowballed into bearing some similarities with time. It is noteworthy that, nowadays, using the terms Daśain and Moni interchangeably does not appear to elicit any concerns. This article aims to elucidate the differences between these two festivals unveiling the influence of Sanskritization and Hinduization.

Keywords: Daśain, Festival, Maḥiṣāsūramardini, Moni, Śakti.

Introduction

Moni is a term gradually Sanskritized to *Mohani* from (म्वःनि) *Mvanī/ Moni* or several other forms of the words sticking to the ease in the use of the word and difficulty in the correct pronunciation of the dialect. An expert on Nepal Bhāṣā, Rubin Shakya, Nepāḥ syēnāguthi Training Center, Patan says that the word मो (Mo) is a later form of the word that was Sanskritized in Nepala Bhāṣā from म्व (Evo), for ease. The etymology of the word म्वःनि (*Moni*) is based on two syllables, *mva*, and *ni* meaning forehead and purify respectively, in Nepal *Bhāṣā*. To purify means to cleanse all the stagnant energy that we have been holding on to, throughout the year. Moni is observed by the *Newārs* or *Nepāmī* whereas *Daśain* is celebrated with grandeur all over Nepal symbolizing the victory of good over evil is expressed and correlated with worshiping the deity Maḥiṣamardini, a form of Dūrgā (Slusser 310). Meanwhile, *Dussehra* is celebrated with great enthusiasm and grandeur in North India especially in Assam and Calcutta. Kullu *Dussehra* is yet another form of *Dussehra* that was established in the 17th century begins on the tenth day of the waxing moon in Autumn, the day of the Vijayā Daśamī (Berti, 2011). The celebration of Dūrgā Pūjā is an anticipated festival and about ten types of *Dussehra* are celebrated in India as per the place it is celebrated in, like *Kullu Dussehra* celebrated in Kullu. The land proximity, roots of Sanskrit culture, and commonality of the script can also be a cause for the synchronicity of the cultures of these two neighboring countries. When the term *Moni*, is Sanskritized to *Mohani* or *Mohini* or when the identity of a festival is eclipsed by another, befalling the commonality of having the same dates of a lunar calendar. Confusion as such gradually

leads to the depletion of the intangible culture of any ethnic community. *Moni* which is a festival of purification of the self, is to prepare the self for *Mha Pūjā*, a festival for the self. The objectives of the study are: to further expand the scope for unbiased and uninfluenced study on *Moni Nakhaḥ* and to shed light on the amalgamation of these two festivals that are equally important to the communities who celebrate it.

Methodology

This is a parallel study of *the Daśain* festival celebrated all over Nepal and *Moni* celebrated in Nepal Maṇḍala, which falls exactly on the same day of the Lunar calendar. *Daśain* was once a National Festival of Nepal before it turned into a Federal Republic in 2008. This is a participatory study supported by literature. The festivals, in this case, say *Daśain* and *Moni*. *Daśain* is observed all over Nepal and the way it is celebrated in Kathmandu is a bit more extensive than the rest of the country.

The researcher was born and raised in Nepal Maṇḍala and has yearly observed *Monī Nakhaḥ* which is why she takes her research incorporating her participation in this festival with literature that supports her experience. Coming from a Sakya family, she elucidates the details of the method of celebrating this festival. But the practices that the researcher also got to participate in was the way *Daśain* was celebrated in a non-Shakya family, she observed *Daśain* celebrations in Khadka, Kunwar, Shrestha, Tuladhar, Sayami, Vajracharya families living in Nepal Maṇḍala. Noting the differences that were observed, the researcher explains the ways this festival has been observed in different communities.

As a primary resource, the researcher chose the method of participation and informal interviews to fulfill the objective of the study. The secondary sources of articles, and books that explain the significance of why a certain ritual is performed have been consulted.

The primary and secondary data have been analyzed and discussed for the fulfillment of the study. History of Nepal, especially Nepal Maṇḍala, and how it has been influenced by the rulers that ruled Nepal creating a dichotomy in the culture and tradition of the indigenous people of Nepal Maṇḍala. However, more focus is given to the primary data as the researcher intends to showcase the way she has observed *Monī Nakhaḥ* as an event that is not only new to non-*Newārs* but also new to the ethnic group who do not belong to Shakyas, Vajracharya, or Udāyes. The observation of *Daśain/ Monī* as an external observer because of the lack of participation in the *agām Pūjā* of any other cast or ethnic group but the researcher did participate in the celebration of some of the ethnic groups of Kathmandu.

Background

After the introduction of Tantra in the 7th century (Wilson 13), most Buddhist festivals in Nepal Maṇḍala incorporated Tantra practice as a part of their esoteric practice. The word Tantra is derived from the syllable ‘*tan*’ in Sanskrit, meaning, ‘to spread’, it is defined as the *Śāstra* by which knowledge is spread, i.e., the *Vedāntic Jñāna* (Woodroffe 1975). The word Tantra itself means ‘treaties (Woodroffe 1975). The emanating root term for Śakti is *Sa aiksata* derived from the *Sa aiksata, aham bahu syām prajāyeya*, meaning ‘May I be many’ (Shakya, 2022). This is why many forms of goddesses can be identified. Tantra was the common bond that unified Buddhists and the Saiva (Slusser, 1998). This synchronicity

paved the path for cross-culture. Due to the influence of Tantra, Śakti worship has increased also influencing the celebration of Daśain as *Monī Nakhaḥ* by the *Nepāmī*.

The worship and celebration of Daśain are done in two, benevolent and terrifying ways. The *Mātrkāś*, or the goddess of fertility and creativity are worshiped. Whereas in the latter, the destructive qualities of the Siva are worshiped, the female counterpart of the Siva which the *Śakti* portrays, the *Navadurgas. Mahiṣāsūramardini* who is also a form of Durga, is interpreted as a literal form of a *Mahiṣa* (water-buffalo) slayer. *Dūrgā* took an iconic form in the Gupta period.

Adding on to the tradition of Daśain her the flagbearer of the one who deems victory over evil as the *Mahiṣāsūramardini*. She is the symbol of feminine power and energy when it comes to portraying, “no evil shall remain when the goddess herself comes to rescue”, a concept very common in the theology. *Mahiṣāsūramardini* is one of the earliest and an important *Dūrgā* myths, given an iconic form during the Gupta Period. This appeared in Nepal on an earlier date too according to the Palanchok Bhagavatī Temple that refers to the consecration (Magha, 503 c.) of the deity Devi Bhagavatī Vijēśvarī, where the image was offered by a householder and not Manadeva’s queen (Slusser, 1998)

The concept of mother is symbolic of earth, *dharti*, in Vedic philosophy, and the totemic representation was seen in the Middle East, Mesopotamia, Baluchistan, Mohenjodaro, Harrapan to Syria, Balkan, Crete, and Chinese civilization (Shakya, 2012). So, the concept of *Ajīmā* (Grandmother goddess) and *Mātrkā* (mother goddess), who eventually come to the rescue is not new, the psychosis thrives in compassion and protection which is the driving factor of every culture.

The Feminine Energy and the Saiva Tantra

Before the introduction of Buddhism, the pre-Buddhist phase was of Tantric worship, and after about four centuries, it bounced back incorporating Buddhism as Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism (Woodroffe, 1975). The influence of Tantrism in Nepal and the conflux with Hinduism influenced deity worship in Nepal. Also as mentioned, Tantrism is a common stratum where the Saiva and the Buddhists blended, influencing one another. Also, to be noted, *Dūrgā* is a form of *Parvatī* or *Sati*, the consort of Siva. *Sati* who immolated herself as a result of her father insulting her husband, Siva (Slusser, 1998). Hereon, the emergence of the *Śakti pīthas* and the Śākta Cult.

Śakti meaning power, force, and feminine energy is the energy that is the light and the symbol of the life-giving power of the universe making the universe a manifestation of itself (Mookherji, 1988). A cluster of such feminine deities is the Śakti and these divinities are regarded as the power of her consort gods and are often presented as superior to him (Kinsley, 1997). According to Kinsley, Śakti, a Sanskrit term inspired by Hindu feminism, is derived from *Śak* meaning ‘to be able’. It is a divine power that emphasizes non-existence (Kinsley, 1997). And *Skaṇḍa Purāṇa* recites Śakti as a counterpart of Siva. Śakti also means *Svatantrya*, meaning independence or freedom since her existence doesn’t depend on anything extraneous to herself, and *Vimasara* meaning versatile presence. She is also regarded as the substance with which all the possible objects are latent, and manifest in her

womb. In tantric cosmology the entire universe is built up in forms of dual forces, the *Prakriti* and *Puruṣa*. Hence everything existing is either masculine or feminine and as the living embodiment of Śakti, women share the creative principle. And in Śākta, these dual forces are not at war but their collective uniqueness realizes the feminine fullness of the universe (Mookherji, 1988).

The several forms of Śakti especially the *Daśa Mahāvidhyas* are the wrathful personifications of the goddess Satī (Kinsley 37). Myth has it that Śakti was initially created for drinking the blood of the demons, or the menace creators, but later on the Siva withdrew the destructive qualities. From those the Śaktis or *Mātṛkās*, the mother goddesses evolved taking on the idea of 64 *Yoginis*, and the counterpart of 64 forms of *Bhairav* who are believed to be powerless without the presence of their counterparts, the Śaktis (Majpuriya, 2011).

As declared a national festival by the kings, the ninth day of Daśain demanded extensive animal sacrifice observed in the courtyard of the palace. The actual meaning of sacrifice doesn't indicate animal sacrifices, the word *Bali* refers to food offering in Sanskrit (Wayman, 1973) and when humans learned to eat meat, the significance of a national festival in a palace demanded a huge amount of meat which often considered a delicacy during feasts and that wasn't rejoiced every day. This is why the term *Bali* became significant to animal offerings because that was what was observed every year. *Mātṛkās* being the mother goddesses that they are, always demand sacrifices from their children, like mothers, demand the sacrifice of greed, attachment, and jealousy within. The misinterpretations where writers and translators have assumed that an *Ajimā* (Grandmother), literally a grandmother would rejoice in the blood of their children.

The Feminine Energy in the Buddhist Tantra

The Buddhists stick to the concept of *Prajñā*, as the *Nairātmā*, the consort who shows the path of compassionate wisdom, is often portrayed as the consort of Heruka (Slusser, 1998). Also, the concept of feminine energy in Vajrāyāna Buddhism relates to the notion of the mother concerning the cosmic illusion, *Māyā*. According to the *Lalitvistara*, Siddhartha who was bereaved by his mother on the seventh day after his birth reveals his being detached in nature. Among the thirty-seven *Bodhipāṅkchika*- ---Dharma, a main theme is also to remain, is a requirement for every Bodhisattva. So, detachment is practiced with the kindling of the *prajñā* and intangibility. Later on, the essence was incorporated into voidness (*śūnyatā*) and soullessness (*nairātmā*). This state of mind is skillful to experience the quintessence of supreme bliss of Tantrism (Shakya, 2022). The *Pañcarakṣā*, or the five protective mothers' goddesses namely, *Āryamahāmāyūrī*, *Āryamahāmantrānusariṇī*, *Āryamāhāpratisāra* *Āryasahasrapramardinī*, and *Āryamāhāsivatī*, are a set of protective mothers of Buddhist Tantra, a practice in Nepal since the introduction of Tantra (Shakya, 2022). These protective deities have given rise to the concept of victory and longevity in the Buddhist mundane and also are the literary notion of *Dhāraṇī*. Thus, the *Prajñā*, wisdom embodies the norm of protective goddesses in Buddhism (Shakya, 2022). *Prajñā* is also interpreted as the feminine spirituality as the knowledge of voidness of Ādi-Prajñā in Tantra. Hindu *Śakti* has a

mythological base whereas Buddhist *Prajñā* is rooted in the human psyche as the ordinary ingredient of everyday thinking. (Shakya, 2012)

Moni and Daśain: Festivals Variance in accord

Various interpretations are provided in the celebration of Daśain, a few examples are the victorious celebration of good over evil that is signified by the killing of the demon Mahiṣāsūra¹, by Kālī. The killing of Rāvaṇa by King Ram also resulted in a victorious celebration. Worship of the protective mother goddesses the *Aṣṭamāṭṛkā* and the *Nava Dūrgās* who have been protecting us during this ten-day-long festival is worshiped with grandeur, hence the term Daśain comes from the term *Daśamī*, which is the tenth day of the lunar calendar. The day when Devi won her battle against Mahiṣāsūra (Juju and Shrestha, 2000). Further, the process of the Śakti worship that is a part of the Vajrayāna Tantric practice is another implication of the celebration of Daśain which is marked by the black *tikā* (*Moni*) that is interpreted as the result of the Tantric worship and is accepted on the forehead as a symbol of protection and a symbolic representation of having received the initiation of *Khaḍga siddhi* (Juju and Shrestha, 2000).

Moni begins following the end of *Sorah Srāda* and ends on *Āśvina Kṛṣṇa Pakṣa Aunṣī* (Shakya, 2022). After the purification and satiation of the ancestral spirits is done during the *Sorah Sarāda*, cleansing of the self is done during *Moni* and preparation is done for further worship. During *Mha pūja*, the body or self is worshiped. The forehead where the *ajñā chakra* (third eye chakra) is present is considered the mind, the center for insight and intuition (Sturgness, 2014). This cleansing of the mind and recharging is done. With each day bearing a significant meaning *Moni* is a fifteen-day long festival slightly contradicting the ten-day festival Daśain also known as *Daśamī* or *Vijayādaśamī* gelling with the cross-border culture. And as significantly as these two festivals fall right on the same days, it adds to the stereotypical dogma of being questioned of being the same. These two festivals can be identified by their unique way of celebration.

Monī Nakhaḥ:

Moni Nakhaḥ begins from *Āśvina Śukla Pakṣa Pratipada*, with *Nalaswāh swōnegū*, the first day of the fifteen-day-long festival. On this day barley and corn seeds are sowed in earthen basins in the *āgañ* where the tutelary deity is. These seeds are sowed in a mixture of sand² and mud and covered with earthen basins (*bhēga*). It is worshiped daily and is watered once in two days (not compulsorily). From this day on, the festive season starts, and cleaning of the house commence in full swing. *Bhutmāli boyekegū* or kite flying is a very popular pastime during this festival, so is playing *langur burjā*. These events continue till the seventh day, the day of *Āśvina Śukla Pakṣa Saptamī*. However, cleaning and shopping

¹ the Bos taurus headed demi god as the translation states. Hypothesized by the writer as a stubborn demigod who was compared to that of a taurus, who is one-pointed stubborn, often mentioned as bull-headed. Sacrificing a bull is the misinterpretation of the sacrificial act of giving up pride and ego in becoming arrogantly stubborn.

² freshly collected sand from the river bank of a clean flowing river, that is charged with the energy of growth, prosperity and cleansing energy during the dawn of this very morning.

concludes whereas kite flying is the main event on this day. Symbolically requesting for the monsoon to end.

The eighth day falls on *Āśvina Śukla Pakṣa Aṣṭamī* and is known as *Kūchī Bhwoye*, significantly the day of the fest. A lavish feast with twelve different dishes is prepared, for every feast. Four kinds of non-vegetarian dishes namely *Choela*, *Dākulā*, *Bhutan*, and *Kachilā*, and four kinds of vegetarian dishes: *Lain achār*, *Fashikwa*, *Wāuncha*, and *Kāuli*. And four kinds of grains *Tago-kegu*, *Chigo-kegu*, *Bhuti*, and *Mushyā* are cooked. In addition, three kinds of alcoholic beverages are served; *Thwon*, *Hyaun-thwon*, and *Ailā*. The name *Kūchī Bhwoye* means a feast where the staple food, i.e., *Bajī* or beaten rice is eaten equal to the quantity of one *Kūchī*. A wooden measuring utensil that measures about 250 grams so one *Kūchī* is used to measure the quantity of beaten rice to be served. Those with less appetite insert a piece of cloth inside the jar before they measure it. The whole set feast is served on a plate starting with the turmeric leaf and then the dishes. The turmeric leaf is a symbolic representation of golden cutlery. This is the highlight of *Aṣṭamī*.

The ninth day falls on the day of *Āśvina Śukla Pakṣa Navamī*, known as *śyāko-tyāko*. After a day of feasting, this day is the day for worship, worshipping the *Āgañ Cheñ*, *Śakti Pīthas*, and *Ajimā's*. It is also the last day for *Śakti Pūjā* and offerings are offered in *Śakti Pitha's* (*Phasiko Ajimā (Brahmayanī)*, *Phibwo- Ajimā (kaumarī)*, *Lunmadi-ajimā (Bhadrakālī or Mahēśvarī)*, *Nai-ajimā (Teku- Vaiṣṇavī)*, *Kanga-ajimā (Camunda)*, *Netamaru-ajimā (Nardevī or Kālī)*, *Kulanmaru-ajimā (Raktakālī)* and *Lutimaru Ajimā (Indrayani)*. *Aṣṭamātrkās* or the eight protective mother goddesses in the Newar society introduced by King Gunakamdeva are a group of protective deities who work in synchronicity with one another. An offering of duck eggs to the goddesses is a commonly seen practice and is getting popular by the day. This practice of bloodless *moni* is a popular practice among the Shakyas, Udayas, and Vajracharyas and most Newar communities where an egg as *Sagun* is given as a symbolic representation of animal sacrifice (Juju and Shrestha, 2000).

This is also the day for *Viśvakarmā pūjā* so every family worships the tools in the house that they use for earning their livelihood. The tools are not used on the very day; they are worshiped and kept unused (*gyābo-sonégu*) along with *hyangūkā*, *tū-pālumā*, *chandrās Khadga*,³ and *thapīñ*. *Bhima Dyo* or the deity related to workplace prosperity is also worshiped. People visit several temples and some of the *nalaswāñ* is harvested and offered to the worshiped deities. The same feast cooked the previous day, leftovers minus the turmeric leaf is continued, and no particularity is on the dishes. Cooking or eating rice is however forbidden.

The tenth day falls on the day of *Āśvina Śukla Pakṣa Daśamī* also known as *Chālañ*. On this day the *āgañdyo* or the Tutelary Deity is worshiped with the presence of all the family

³ Chandrahāsa Khadga represents the ultimate weapon that bears the ability to cut through ignorance and leads towards compassionate wisdom, the significant symbol of Mahāmanjuśrī.

members. It is the final day of *āgañpūjā* and is performed by the eldest member of the family and only the members of the same *kūla* (lineage) participate during the *pūjā*. As a part of Tantra *pūjā*, the black smoke emitted while burning a bundle of the wick is collected in an earthen basin rubbed in oil, and placed to cover a small utensil called the *mākachā*; is the most important part of this entire ten-day *Pūjā*, known as *Moniphegū*, literally collecting *Moni*. The *nalaswāñ* or *Jamarā* is finally harvested. After the *āgañ pūjā*, the tools that were kept isolated and unused are worshiped and used. Then the sugarcane and ginger plants that were offered the previous day are placed in the doorway of the *āgañ* room and are chopped by the *Khaḍga*. In the *āgañ* where blood sacrificed is denied, symbolic *pañcha makāra* is offered (Juju and Shrestha, 2000). Every male member and girl before entering puberty (who are considered the incarnation of Kumari) are allowed to strike with the sword on the lying plants while the other female members offer *ailā* and the *same* during the striking of the *Khaḍga* on the plants. This slaying signifies throwing away or detaching from *moha* (cravings i.e., represented by sweetness, the sugarcane) and *dveṣa* (bitterness i.e., represented by the ginger plant). This event is known as *āgañpāyā*. The *hyangūkā* that was offered to the deity is collected and is cut into strips and offered to every deity in the *āgañ*. By the end of the *pūjā*, *sinha* is offered to every member of the family according to the hierarchy of age, starting from the eldest. Red *tikā* with rice grains (*Jaki sinha*) and black *tikā* (*Moni sinha*, is the result of the entire *Pūjā* and it denotes the end of the ten-day tantra *pūjā*), *hyangūkā*, *nalaswāñ*, and *samaé* is given to all the members along with the blessing of prosperity. This concludes *Chālañ*. Then the married daughters visit their paternal homes to receive the *Moni sinha* as a blessing and as proof that no matter where they are married off to, they are always a part of the same lineage and are always welcome. Also indicating the merger of two *kūlas*. No particular dish is cooked for the day however eating cooked rice is still forbidden and *ālu-mari* (tortillas with potato filling or parathas) or other food item is consumed.

The eleventh day falls on *Āśvina Śukla Pakṣa Ekādashi*, the day of displaying sword skills. Sword dance by masked deities shows off their skill and strikes on *Bhūifasi* (white melon) after the dance. The dance of the gods (*dyopyākha*) is observed in several *dabalis* performed by masked men representing several deities. From this day to the fifteenth day i.e., *Āśvina Śukla Pakṣa Pūrṇimā*, the full moon day, or *katiñpuhni*, families invite and visit the homes of their relatives especially the married-off daughters are invited with their husbands and children, as *Nakhaḥthyā Bonegu*. The exchange of blessing and merrymaking continues which finally concludes on this fifteenth day, which marks the end of *Moni Nakhaḥ*. Relatives who are not called upon do not visit without an invitation.

Festivals observed in Nepal Maṇḍala are based on a yearly lunar calendar and these events are celebrated mostly conclude ritualistic worship and it associated with the food culture. The uniqueness of these festivities observed by the *Nepāmī* is identified with a peculiar dish that is relished compulsorily during the celebration. This is the spice culture. The rituals observed in the feast prepared and consumed are an outcome of the festival celebrated, making every festival and the food prepared significant to it while maintaining its uniqueness.

Daśain or Dussera or Vijaya Daśamī

Dūrgā, Chandī, Kālī, Tārā, and Chinnamasta are some other forms that portray the violent and gruesome character of Pārvatī. As *Dūrgā Mahiṣamārdinī* she uses the trident to destroy a demon embodied in a water buffalo (*Mahisa*). The victory of the goddess over the demonic nature is celebrated in Nepal as *Vijayā Daśamī* (Waldschmidt, 1969). The justice of the triumph of virtue over evil personifies the victory of gods over demons. Also memorable for the victory of Ram over Rāvaṇa by the graceful blessing of the goddess Dūrgā and also Ram's adoration of Goddess Taleju in the form of Dūrgā, as the tutelary goddess of Ayodhyā (Shakya, 2012). Furthermore, this festival is cohesive to the epical event of Ramayana to herald a cheerful event of Rama's revisit to Ayodhyā after a long exile of fourteen years. In the *Tretāyuga*, the victorious day for the Pāṇḍavas in the epic war, the Mahabharata that was against the Kauravas is memorized by the celebration of this festival. The celebration of *Daśain* or *Vijayadaśamī* in Nepal is done in full swing and with great zeal. It begins with *Ghaṭasthāpanā*, the ritual of initiating the sacred pitcher full of plants with seeds of maize and barley in the *Daśain Ghar*, the sanctified chamber. The festival starts from *Āśvina Śukla Pakṣa Pratipada* to *Āśvina Śukla Navamī*, nine days, deeming the *Nava Dūrgās*. The barley plants are sowed to symbolize the yielding of the farm as the bequest of devotion over the foreheads as a sign of good luck. The sapling of *Jamarā*, paddy, and barley seeds are sowed in the *Daśain Ghar*. This sapling is placed for nine days with a specific evocation of the *Dūrgā pūjā* ritual. On the seventh day, the *Phūlapāṭī* containing nine sorts of flowers (*Nava Patrika*) is endorsed with the evocation of the nine goddesses. The trend of bringing *Phūlapāṭī* from Gorkha to Hanūmān dhoka, the Malla court, for the ceremonial worship of the *Degu-Taleju* shrine. This ritual is a sign of the acceptance of the Malla's tutelary goddess as the patron of Shah Rule (Shakya, 2022). The kite flying tradition is as popular in the celebration of *Daśain*, as during *Moni*. As per the oral traditions, kite flying signifies the wishful request at the end of the rainy season. Further explanation of the activity also states the wishes for the prosperity of the family that would soar as high as the kite flies. Further, the use of *linge ping* (the bamboo swing) is also set up for the young as well as the old to play.

The eighth, ninth, and tenth day, *Māhā Aṣṭamī*, *Navamī*, and *Daśamī* (*Daśain*) are dedicated to the three exoteric forms of Dūrgā as *Māhākālī*, *Māhā laxmi* and *Māhā sarśvati* (Shakya, 2022). The worship of the *Nava Dūrgā* is also done on *Aṣṭamī* and the *Nava Dūrgās* (*Nilkanthi*, *Ksemakari*, *Harasiddhi*, *Rudraksa(gni) Dūrgā*, *Vana- Dūrgā*, *Agni-Dūrgā*, *Japa(ya) Dūrgā*, *Vindhyavasini* and *Ripumardini- Dūrgā*) are worshiped. The ninth day is dedicated to *Māhā laxmi* and therefore the tools, weapons, ammunition, vehicles, and machinery tools that are considered the apparatus that embodies the *Māhā laxmi* are worshiped. *Māhā laxmi* worship links with the worship concerning the means of livelihood. The tenth day or the day of *Daśamī* or *Vijayā Daśamī* concludes the entire offering on *Dūrgā*. As a residue, the offering as *tikā* is received on the forehead and *jamarā* (the harvested plant that was sowed on the first day of *Ghaṭasthāpanā*) is offered on the occasion. The tenth day or the *Daśamī* is a day of great rejoicing where family gatherings take place and the members of the family near and far work on coming together to receive

the offering of the prasād. The ritual of offering and receiving tika continues till the fourteenth day (the day before the *Pūrṇimā*, full moon, or *Kojāgrath Pūrṇimā*). In contradiction to the Newar community, the people from the non-Newar community visit as many relatives as possible, and the ritual of inviting relatives to receive tika is not accepted.

Findings

A good number of *Mahiṣamardinī* and the *Sapta Mātṛkā* images prove that the cult of Śakti was well established during the Kushana Period. The earliest image (1st c.) of *Mahiṣamardinī* was found in Nagar (Rajasthan) (Ghosh 11). The history of worshipping the goddess isn't fairly a new concept. Also, the study of *Daśain* or *Moni* without the mention of Kumārī makes it incomplete. Kumārī is considered a manifestation of *Dūrgā* a Brahmanical deity that is worshiped in a Buddhist body in a Buddhist Vihara (Slusser, 1998). The tradition of the Kumārī institution can be traced to Sivadeva I (590-604 c.) who placed four Kumārīs at the crossroads of Deopatan (Slusser, 1998). During the reign of Jayaprakash Malla (1735-1766 c.), a virgin girl Shakya girl claimed to be possessed by *Dūrgā* died due to sexual assault by the then kin, prevented a curse and doom after agreeing to establish a shrine and annual chariot procession (Slusser 1998). This is how *Kumārī Ratha Jātrā* began, and the attendance of Kumārī was made compulsory during *Daśain*. The Saiva and Vajracharyas both offer *nitya* Pūjā to Kumārī during *Daśain*. However, Kumārīs does not accept blood sacrifice (Slusser, 314).

Further, the means and method of celebrating any festival vary as per the availability of tools that support any festival, expecting a stringent method of celebrating a festival is dogmatic. For example, the Tamang, Rai, and Limbu celebrate *Daśain* too, but the way of their celebration is different from other ethnic groups, the Brahmins, Kṣētrīs, or even the *Newars*. The use of red vermillion in the Tika which is supposedly identified to be a symbolic representation of blood and sacrifice is rejected by the above-mentioned ethnic groups, which is why they offer white tikā (rice grains mixed with yogurt and butter). Likewise, the extensive use of red Vermillion by the North Indians during *Dūrgā* Pūjā, the use of rice mixed with red Vermillion in Nepal. Since rice is and was the earliest form of food in the *jambhudvipa*, in the east. Rice and the cultivation of rice which is considered the most superior kind of food is a matter of pride for us, with the background of rice culture. Hence, rice grains mixed with curd, red vermilion, puffed rice, and water⁴ are offered to the forehead on the day of the *Daśain* (*Daśamī*). The portrayal of rice culture and the ability and skill of sowing rice and sustaining a livelihood is displayed on the forehead. The scarlet red paste (*sinha*) used attributes to the symbolic representation of victory in socio-cultural symbolism for the blood of the defeated (Shakya, 2012). The Newārs Buddhists of Nepal also celebrate *Daśain* to rejoice the day King Ashoka decided to abandon the path of violence (Vajracharya and Pakhoutova, 2019)

⁴ These five elements are the symbolic combination of the five natural elements, earth, space, fire, air, and water.

Discussion and Conclusion

The celebration of Moni which begins from *ĀśvinaŚuklaPratipadā*, also coincides with Daśain. Both festivals harbor wishful manifestations of well-being. Moni is a fifteen-day esoteric Vajrayana ritual orbiting on the tenth day when the esoteric worship takes place. Very similar to Daśain which also prioritizes the tenth day, *Daśamī* too, implying the name *VijayāDaśamī*. Similarities as such do lead to confusion and misinterpretations, but facts and the historicity of these varying cultures cannot be neglected because they are embedded in the roots that identify the culture of any socio-cultural background. How an individual chooses to observe any festival is a matter of personal choice but when the country is involved, the authenticity and precise data and information are expected. An amalgamation of these two festivals is because of the coinciding dates, some common deities venerated, and common socio-cultural background.

As per Article 31, C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), the Omission of government constitutional duty and international commitment states that Educational measures will be among all sections of the national community. Especially with those who are in direct contact with the people concerned bearing the objective that harbors respect for identity. So efforts to ensure the education system, especially the textbooks provide a fair, accurate, informative portrayal of the societies and cultures of these peoples. The authenticity of any festival, cultural event, monument, or historic event is expected to be interpreted as-is, or else the interpreter is at fault, in religious terms often called as *daitye*; the malicious intruder (Juju and Shrestha 41). Choosing how to celebrate a festival is an independent choice, however, academicians contributing to history are bound to stick to the tangible bases to support their findings.

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Glossary

<i>Āgañ</i>	the sanctum where the tutelary deity is worshiped
<i>Āgañpāiyā</i>	the event of chopping sugarcane and ginger plants using the Khaḍga that was worshiped during the festival.
<i>Ailā</i>	distilled rice alcohol
<i>Āśvina</i>	sixth month of the Nepali calendar (Vikram samvat)
<i>Aṣṭamī</i>	the eighth day of the lunar calendar
<i>Bhutan</i>	pan-fried dish that includes parts of the intestines
<i>Bhuti</i>	black-eyed soybean
<i>Bhwoye</i>	feast
<i>Candraharāsa Khaḍga</i>	the sword used by the Mañjuśrī, forms that indicate/represent the Khaḍga.
<i>Cheñ</i>	house
<i>Choela</i>	a dish that involves animal flesh that is boiled and marinated
<i>Dabalīs</i>	open community stage
<i>Daśamī</i>	the tenth day of a lunar calendar
<i>Dyakulā</i>	a dish that involves animal flesh that is made in curry form
<i>Ekādasī</i>	eleventh day of the lunar calendar
<i>Fasikwa</i>	curry made of pumpkin
<i>Haki sinha</i>	mixture of rice grains, curd, puffed rice, water, and red vermilion that represents pañcha tattva, used in rituals, a small amount as big as a coin, offered to be put on the forehead.
<i>Hyangūkā</i>	red thread used by cutting a piece of cloth into strips
<i>Hyaun-thwon</i>	fermented red wine
<i>Ichigo-kegu</i>	lentil
<i>Jambudvīpa</i>	land of the Jambhu trees, the land of the Indo Aryans, Modern-day Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri-Lanka and Maldives.
<i>Jyābo</i>	working tools
<i>kachila</i>	a dish that involves animal flesh that is marinated and

	eaten uncooked.
<i>Katiñpunhī</i>	the full moon of the seventh month of the Vikram Samvat calendar
<i>Lain achār</i>	radish pickle
<i>Mākachā</i>	a small earthen tool made in the shape of a monkey sleeping upright on its back. this is used to place a burning wick on the stomach area that is made hollow. the four hands that are made upright, hold a small earthen vessel that collects the smoke that is emitted from the wick.
<i>Monisinha</i>	the carbon collected from burning the wick in the <i>mākachā</i> , used as an offering of <i>tika</i>
<i>Mushya</i>	black soybean
<i>Nakhaḥ</i>	festival
<i>Nakthya bonegu</i>	invitations sent to daughters to participate in family festivals, rituals, and feasts afterward
<i>Nalaswāñ swōnegū</i>	sowing of grains, corn, barley, and wheat to initiate the festival
<i>Navamī</i>	the ninth day of the lunar calendar
<i>Śukla pakshye</i>	the fortnight of the brighter side of the moon
<i>Samaé</i>	a mini feast that has 5 basic food items served with
<i>Saptamī</i>	the seventh day of the lunar calendar
<i>Sonégu</i>	beaten rice and puffed beaten rice as the staple.
	to keep items unused and aside after worshiping as a part of a ritual to activate them
<i>Sorah sradha</i>	a month-long period that begins after <i>Āśvina Kṛṣṇa Pakṣa Aunśī</i> , the time is used to perform rituals for the dead family members or ancestors in general
<i>Śyāko-tyāko</i>	means everything you kill you win, symbolizing victory over evil
<i>Tago-kegu</i>	lentil family, peas
<i>Thwon</i>	fermented rice wine
<i>Tretāyuga</i>	the age after <i>Satya Yuga</i> and before <i>Dvāpar Yuga</i> .
<i>Tū-pālumā</i>	mythical categorization of the age of human civilization
<i>Viśvakarmā</i>	sugarcane and ginger plants
<i>Wāuncha</i>	the god of tools
	green vegetable