

Prospects of Promoting Festival Tourism: A Case study of Khame Jatra in Bhaktapur

Lok Nath Dulal, PhD.

Associate Prof. Department of Culture,
Padma Kanya Multiple Campus, TU.
dulaloknath@gmail.com

Abstract

Bhaktapur is one of the ancient and the most famous cultural tourist destinations of Nepal. One can observe and have a wonderful experience of tangible and intangible cultural tourism products such as historical, archeological, religious and secular monuments, treasures of arts and crafts and varied indigenous living cultural activities. As the mirrors of Bhaktapur; tangible and intangible cultural heritage reflect the folktales, music and dance, history and traditions, way of life, religious beliefs, costumes and customary laws, dress/ornaments, social harmony, joys and fears, dreams and sorrows, and the feeling of unity in the diversity of people. The people of Bhaktapur annually celebrate different colourful festivals and Jatras on the special auspicious days. Rest of them, Khame Jatra is a renowned cultural heritage and a very important cultural tourism product. Khame is a male buffalo which is taken out in Open Street for the procession during the ninth day of Dashain festival. It is an archetypal Jatra which is considered a hallmark of indigenous cultural identity and a popular cultural tourism product of Bhaktapur. But, this Jatra is still unexposed; hence it is a hidden or veiled festival. It is necessary recognizing the prominence of Khame Jatra as a prominent tourism product and a prodigious agent for preservation of traditional culture and an effective means of cultural renovation, national identity building and economic growth. The concerned stakeholders and the governing bodies should pay adequate attention for the protection and promotion of this Jatra as a prominent tourism product.

Keywords: Festival, Khame, Animal Sacrifice, Cultural Tourism, Tourism product

Introduction

The term festival has been used for hundreds of years that can be used to a multitude of events. The Policy Studies Institute (PSI, 1992, p. 1; in Bowdin, Glen, Allen, O' Toole, Harris & Macdonnel, 2011, p. 19) note that a festival is traditionally a time of celebration, relaxation and recuperation which is often followed by a period of hard physical labour, sowing or harvesting of crops. The essential feature of festival is the celebration of reaffirmation community or culture. The artistic content of such event varies and many have a religious or ritualistic aspect, but music, dance and drama are the important features of any celebration.

Falassi (1987, p. 2; in Page & Connel, 2014, pp. 27-46) says that in social science, festivals denote... a periodically recurrent, social occasion in which through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, direct or indirect participation, and to various degree, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, share a worldview. Both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festivals are closely related to a series of overt activities that the community recognizes as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival, which is ultimately what festivals celebrate (Getz, 2012, p. 31; in Page & Connel, 2014, pp. 27-46).

Festivals celebrated in a particular location from small villages to large towns aims to bring people together to celebrate their local area. These festivals are subdivided into different groups viz. those run by voluntary groups and those run by local authorities. Today, although many festivals aim to cater primary for the local community, they succeed nevertheless in attracting tourists, and around 56 percent of all festivals are created with a tourist audience in mind. Festivals have a higher concentration of visitors in areas of the country that are already established as tourist destinations, and the majority of festival organizers therefore design the programme content with the attraction of tourists in mind (Smith, 2003, p. 140).

Festivals can provide the heart of a community (Wheatley & Kellner- Rogers, 1998, p. 14; in Derrett, 2003) as their celebratory nature provides residents with conditions of freedom and connectedness rather than a fixation on the forms and structure of the community (Derrett, 2003). Festivals reflect the dynamic value systems of individuals united by the same customs, images, collective memory, habits and experiences. Festivals can be replicated and each generation can pass on something of its content to the next (Derrett, 2003, p. 51). Because of the close association with culture, festival tourism is the subset of cultural tourism.

As suggested by Lips (cited in Wood, 1992; in Derrett, 2003, p. 52), cultural tourism is the art of participating in another culture, of relating to people and places that have a

strong sense of their own identity. It is an approach to tourism that gives tourists the credit for intelligence and promises them some depth of experiences and real-life layering that can be explored on many levels (p. 4; in Derrett, 2003). Festival tourism is an important element in 'event tourism', so much so that the term 'festivalization' has been coined to suggest an over-commodification of festivals exploited by tourism and place marketers (Quinn, Richards, 2006; in Getz, 2012, p.38). Indeed, a marked trend towards treating festivals as commodities has emerged. In this approach, drawing heavily upon consumer behaviour and other marketing concepts, motivations for attending festivals have been studied at length, and more recently the links between quality, satisfaction, and behaviour or future intentions have been modeled (Getz, 2012, p. 38).

Festivals, *Jatras and Mela* as the heritages of the nation can establish a separate identity of the countries of the world. Every year in certain auspicious day and time with certain mottos people venerated to the gods and goddesses they can observe different festivals and *Jatras or fair*. Falassi (1987, p. 2; in Getz, 2007, p. 31) said that festivals are a social phenomenon found in virtually all human culture. In modern English the term fair has several meanings: a sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observation; the annual celebration of a notable person or event, of the harvest of an important product; a cultural event consisting of a series of performances of works in the fine art, often devoted to a single artist or genre; a fair; generic gaiety, conviviality, cheerfulness. Rites and rituals are also full of cultural meaning and can also be viewed as building blocks (or programmic elements of style) for event programmers. Rituals and rites are 'patterned forms of behaviour' or prescribed ceremonies (Mitler et al. 2004, p. 293; in Getz, 2007, p. 52). Many rites or rituals have religious or mythological significance, while others relate to politics and group identity. The terms 'sacred' and profane, or religious and secular are therefore often used to distinguish rites and rituals (Getz, 2007, p. 52).

The *Durga Pooja* festival known as *Dashami*, is a Hindu festival in Nepal and India in which several animals are sacrificed every day to goddess *Durga* in different *Shaktipeeths*. Similarly, in *Bhaktapur*; on the ninth day or *nahami* of Dashain festival, male buffalo is sacrificed to *Brahmayani* one of the nine goddess. This *practice* is called the sacrifice of *Khame*. It is not only an event of sacrifice of animal but also an important procession of *Khame*. From the tourist and tourism perspectives, the procession of *jatra* of *Khame* is to be taken as one of the important product of festival tourism of *Bhaktapur*.

Problems and Objectives

There are several studies concerning festivals and *Jatras* but specific studies on the *Khame Jatra* of *Bhaktapur* as a new tourism product of *Bhaktapur*; has still not been conducted so far. In the dearth of proper studies and researches, several aspects of tourism product of this festival still remain unexplored. Obviously, the problems concerning this

subject always inspire the scholars to find out the facts. Consequently, the glitches entrenched with this festival, instigate the researcher to prepare this research paper with the following research question: Why *Khame Jatra* of *Bhaktapur* is known as the new cultural tourism product of the site? The motto of this study is to explore the different aspects embedded with *Khame Jatra*. The key objective of the paper is to analyze the significance of *Khame Jatra* as a new festival tourism product.

Review of Literature

The theoretical foundation is an important tool for any type of research work because it will be the lens through which a researcher evaluates the research problem and research questions as well. Reviewing the literature is only one approach of constructing solid theoretical foundation, thus in social science research it adopts as one of the major components which helps to determine what theories might be used to explore the questions in a scientific study. On the basis of above mentioned doctrine the following literatures have been reviewed in this paper.

Munakarmi's (1975) book *Hamra Saskritik Parva ra Jatraharu* (Our Cultural Festive Events and Procession) deals with different tangible and intangible cultural heritages including twenty-five festive events and *jatras* except *Khema* which have been celebrated by different communities in the special geographical regions of Nepal. Likewise, Joshi (1982) has conducted a study and published a book entitled *Hamro Chadparva* (Our Festivals) including sixteen different festive events of Nepal which are celebrated locally, regionally and nationally as well. Anderson (1988) wrote a book entitled *the festivals of Nepal* which is recognized as an important source concerning Nepalese festivals. She was the first foreign women scholar who carried out such type of scientific research. She included all together 36 festive events which are celebrated from April to March.

Chalise (2039) has written a book entitled *Hamra Chadparva* (Our Festivals) which deals with twelve festive events of different communities in Nepal except *Khema*. Similarly, Joshi (2060) has published a book *Nepalka Chadparva* (Festivals of Nepal) including different festive events of Nepal except *Khame Jatra*, which is celebrated locally only in *Bhaktapur*.

Levy (1990) wrote a book titled *Mesocosm, Hinduism and Organization of the Traditional Newar City in Nepal*. This book is based on field work which has conducted research on *Newar* community of *Bhaktapur* city. Levy has mentioned about socio-cultural, economic, religious belief, different deities, worshipping and priesthood system, *guthi* organization, music and dance as well as different types of festivals including *Khame*. His studies regarding the issue of *Khame Jatra* is very little, therefore it is not enough through the perspective of cultural tourism product.

Goodman (1994) has studied about Nepalese festivals and classified them into four different seasons such as winter, spring, monsoon and harvest. All together he has included fifty-five different festive events which are celebrated seasonally. As he mentioned sixteen celebrates during winter, fourteen in spring, thirteen in monsoon and remaining twelve during the harvesting seasons.

Kunwar's (2001) book entitled *Himalayan Heritage* shows several issues regarding the people of Himalayan region, their culture and available tangible and intangible cultural heritage. He has also mentioned different festive events such as *loshar*, *dumje*, *manirimdu*, *yartong* and so on. Beside it, Kunwar (1997) has also depicted some important tribal festivals like *Maghi* of the Dangaura Tharus and Hori (1998) of the *Rana Tharus* of mid-Western and Far-Western Terai region of Nepal.

District Development Committee (DDC) (2065/066) has published *Jilla Vikash Yojana* about the future plan and long-term strategies regarding to the development of the district and tourism as well. But there is no concrete reference of *Khame Jatra* festive event. In this respect, Pandey (2069) has coordinated and published *Bhaktapur ko Paryatan Vikash tatha Vyavasthapan Yojana 2069/ 70-2073/74* which includes available tangible and intangible heritages, but *Khame jatra* remains still untouched issue in his contribution.

Shrestha (2016) has written an article entitled *Bhaktapur ka Aitihāsika Jatra uttsabharu* (The Historical Festive Events of *Bhaktapur*) which has been published in *Ancient Nepal* no.193, a journal of Department of Archaeology. In this article researcher has described several festivals of *Bhaktapur* such as *Bisket Jatra*, *Bhoto Jatra*, *indrajatra*, *Dashain*, *Tihar*, *Yomahri Punhi*, *Gaijatra*, *Krishna janmashthami*, *Janai Purni*, *Naag Panchami*, *Gathemangal* and *Khame* festival as well.

Jadhari (2072) has published a book entitled *Mahakali Naach* (Dance of Goddess Mahakali) including different aspects associated with Mahakali dance and Kha Me Jatra as well. He has mentioned during the ninth evening of Dashain festival Kha Me Jatra is to be demonstrated and finally sacrificed it for the goddess Brahmayani in Brahmayani temple in Bhaktapur.

Kunwar & Chand (2017) have mentioned the natural disaster i.e. the earthquake of 2015 and its impacts on the cultural heritage in *Bhaktapur* core. It gives information about how the monuments fully collapsed and partially damaged due to the earthquake in the study area. Similarly, this book provides preventive measures for the safeguarding of the precious heritages by the concerned authorities. But still their contribution remains behind to explore and highlight an indigenous festival as an important cultural tourism product of *Bhaktapur*.

Silva (2015) and (2017b) has published two different articles entitled the “Spirits of Place of *Bhaktapur*, Nepal” and “*Bhaktapur*, Nepal Heritage Values and Conservation

Practices” in which he analyzed the situation of conservation and preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage of preventive measures for the safeguarding of valuable heritages. His contributions also seem to have missed the *Khame Jatra*.

Ulak (2012) has written an article entitled Heritage tourism in *Panauti* where he explored different tangible and intangible cultural heritage including *Khame Pooja* as well. He has mentioned this as being a practice in *Panauti* an ancient *Newar* heritage site of *Kavrepalanchok* district 15 Km southeast of *Bhaktapur*. According to him, unlike a *Jatra*, *Khame* is only offered a sacrifice in *puja* to the goddess in the evening of *asthami* i.e. the eight day of *Dashain* festival.

Dulal's (2019) doctoral study on cultural tourism of *Bhaktapur* explored and highlighted several tangible and intangible cultural tourism products such as royal palace, temples, *mathas*, Buddhist monuments, *Jame Masjid*, Church, dwelling house, *patis*, *pauwas* and *sattals*, *raths* and *khatas*, museums, water ponds, water spouts, *dabalis*, arts and crafts, musical instruments, dresses and ornaments, foods and drinks, oral traditions and expression, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship. His study has also analyzed the *Khame* festive event, but he still remains behind in exploration of this particular *Jatra* as a new festival tourism product.

Dulal (2021) has written an article entitled *Kha Me jatra of Bhaktapur: an intangible cultural heritage of Nepal* where he explored the concept of tangible and intangible heritage, historicity of festival and jatra, celebration process, rites and rituals and positive as well as negative impacts of Kha Me jatra. But he still remains behind in exploring it as the new festive tourism product in the destination.

Methodology

This study is based on qualitative approach because it deals with religious belief, deities, worship system, festivals and *Jatras*, socio-cultural, psychological as well as other features of individual, group, and the community as well. The qualitative data regarding *Khame Jatra* as the festival tourism product of *Bhaktapur* has been used more than the quantitative one.

The methods and procedures have been followed to explore its objectives and to generate valid data and information. Researchers have been used both primary and secondary data in this study. Field work is the main source for primary data. Primary data have been collected from the field by using observational and interview methods. The second researcher adopted participant observation approach on the particular event of *Khame* which inspired him to collect detail information about this *Jatra*. Similarly, for collecting primary data,

structured interviews were taken with the key informants. The essential secondary data were collected from journals, books and electronic versions of different sources.

Findings and Discussion

During the field survey, researchers have applied observation and an interview method for gathering primary data viz. What is *Khame*? How and when is it celebrated? Why the people of *Bhaktapur* celebrate it? Why it is considered as a new cultural tourism product of *Bhaktapur*? These are the major questions which have been asked to the local people during the field work. Similarly, during the field survey, the process, rites and rituals and participation of local and tourists have been observed.

Glimpses of Bhaktapur

Geographically, *Bhaktapura* smallest district of Nepal, is elevated from 1,372 to 2,166 meters above the sea level. In average it lies at 1401 m. above the sea level. It locates between 27°37' to 27°44' north latitude and 85°21' to 85°32' east longitude of an area of 119 square kilometers (Sharma, 1994, p. 630). The maximum temperature is 28 degree Celsius in April and the minimum reaches to 0.5 degree in January (Kunwar, 2016, p. 17). *Bhaktapur* is one of the oldest cities of Nepal. It was founded by King *Ananda Deva* in 889 CE. It is shaped like a conch shell-one of the emblems of the god Vishnu which dates back to the eighth century. During the 12th century, the King *Ananda Malla* gave *flying bird* shape to this historic city. It was the capital of the *Malla Kingdom* during 12th-15th century CE King *Yakshya Malla* heavily fortified this capital city in a bid to make it invulnerable (Dulal, 2019, p. 91).

Bhaktapur has been identified with different names throughout the ages. *Khopring*, *Khakampring*, *Makhopring*, *Khrupung*, *Bhaktagram*, *Bhaktpur*, *Bhaktpure*, *Bhaktapuri*, *Bhaktapuripattan*, *Bhaktapattan*, *Khwopa*, *Bhadagaon* are its locally known names through which *Bhaktapur* has been identified since the ancient period till today (Dhaubanjari, 2068, pp. 197-200). Out of the ten World Heritage Sites of Nepal, *Bhaktapur Durbar Square* is known as an important one which was enlisted in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1979 (Dulal, 2019, p. 103). About the culture, traditions and touristic point view Kunwar & Chand (2016, pp. 16-17) state that:

Bhaktapur is said to be the “living heritage” with a strong ‘sense of sacrality’, a strong ‘sense of community’, a strong ‘sense of historicity’ and a strong ‘sense of serenity’ where the residents understand the symbolic importance and also the importance of preservation of their heritage. It is known from different names like, ‘Living Cultural Heritage’, ‘Walking Museum’ and an ‘Open Museum’, ‘City of Devotees’, ‘City of Culture’, ‘Centre of *Newar* Culture’, ‘Durbar Square’, ‘Nepal’s Cultural Gem’ and ‘Nepal’s Cultural Capital’ in the world.

There are plenty of tangible and intangible cultural heritages such as fifty-five windows palace, lion gate, golden gate, *mulchowk*, art gallery, statue of king *Bhupatendra Malla*, *Nyatapole* temple, *Pashupati* temple, *Batsaladevi* temple, big bell, *Yakshwor Mahadev* temple, living culture, festivals, traditional musical instruments, dress and ornaments, ponds and *Pokhari* in *Bhaktapur* core especially in Durbar Square, *Taumadi* Square, *Dattatreya* Square and Pottery Square. In totality, it is believed that *Bhaktapur* holds 1 royal palace, 172 temples and monasteries, 77 water tanks, 172 pilgrims' shelters and 152 wells within its core. Among these, some had already lost their beautiful structure, some are living in very dangerous situation and remaining well preserved heritages are continuously presenting fantastic historical, cultural and architectural values of this city (Dulal, 2019, p. 194).

Every year *Bhaktapur* hosts large number of tourists in its core. During the fiscal year 2072/073 BS and 2073/074 BS *Bhaktapur* received 95056 and 181350 total tourists from SAARC and non-SAARC countries respectively. *Bhaktapur* has been preserving several beautiful cultural tourism products of different test and experience which helps to attract the tourists with different purposes such as to observe art and architectural heritage, World Heritage Site, local culture and traditions, sightseeing, recreation and research and study of the heritages (Dulal, 2019, p. 291).

All the prevailing festivals are observed to celebrate annually some events in the scriptures, to pacify the gods, to thank them for the harvest, to honor their birth dates or to celebrate some miraculous performance attribute to them (Anderson, 1988, p. 27). As per the same doctrine, the people of *Bhaktapur* celebrate *Bisket Jatra*, *Bhoto Jatra*, *Indrajatra*, *Nepal Sambat*, *Buddha Jayanti*, *Dashain*, *Tihar*, *Yomahri Punhi*, *Tamu Lhochhar*, *Sahimanaa Punhi*, *Gaijatra*, *Krishna Janmasthanami*, *Teej*, *Janai Purnima*, *Naag Panchami*, *Gathemangal*, *Ram Nawami*, *Chaite Dashain*, *Holi*, *Shivaratri*, *Shree Panchami*, *Pishach Chaturdashi*, *Byaja Chaturdashi* etc. each and every year (Kunwar & Chand, 2016, p. 18).

On the basis of structures, cultural heritage can be classified into tangible and intangible forms. These festivals have tangible and intangible connotations. Tangible cultural heritage has physical appearance whereas; intangible culture cannot be seen in the form of materials. It can only be observed by the inner feelings. The UNESCO convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage 2003 has classified intangible cultural heritage into five different domains such as (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage (b) performing arts (c) social practices, rituals and festive events (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe (e) traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO, 2003, p. 8).

Among the five domains, *Jatras* and festivals are categorized under the social practices, rituals and festive events. Nepal is an exceptional country for the researchers to study colorful and meaningful festivals and *Jatras*. As whole, Nepal celebrates several

festivals and *Jatras* within a year as the national, regional, local and community level. This paper deals with *Khame Jatra*, which is celebrated during the ninth day of *Dashain* festival especially in the *Newar* community of *Bhaktapur*. It is one of the important intangible cultural heritages and an indigenous feature and identity of *Bhaktapur*.

The Concept of Festival Tourism

Literary sources inform that, in the Eastern culture and civilization, the tradition of celebrating festivals and *Jatras* began from the Vedic period where one can find an episode that the Emperors offer sacrifice of the horse at the festival of “*Ashomegha Yagna*” (Majapuria, 1981, p. 2). The words “*Maha*” and “*Jata*” were used as the synonyms of festival and “*Jatra*” respectively in the Vedic Period. According to *Haribanshapuran* Lord *Krishna* had lifted *Gobardhan* hill, the particular event is known as the “*Girimaha*” festival. A Jain literature ‘*Gayadhammakaha*’ mentions different *Mahas* and *Jatas* such as *Indramaha*, *Skandamaha*, *Rudaijata*, *Sivajata*, *Nagajata* (Agarawal, 1964, pp. 4-5). The tradition of celebrating festivals and *Jatras* can also be observed in India. The *Viswamitra* and *Indrajatra* are very popular festivals of New Delhi (Sharma, 1978, p. 27). Regarding the *Jatra*, Levy (1992, p. 420) mentions that:

While many cylindrical events are associated with movement of people to one or another temple or pilgrimage site in a more or less haphazard manner some cylindrical events are characterized systematic and formalized movements through some unit of space. Sometime a deity is moved through space, sometimes and more rarely devotees a deity is temple or shrine or to a series of them, in some prescribed order. Both the carrying of the deity and the more formalized movements of worshipers through the city is called as it is elsewhere in South Asia, a *Jatra* (from the *Sanskrit Yatra*, a journey, festive train, procession, pilgrimage).

Jatra is a kind of event performed, when the idol is decorated and carried about gala religious procession for a variety of reasons-to honor him, give him a pleasurable outing, present him to other gods and goddesses, take him for his annual bathing ceremony or simply to allow him, the opportunity of watching some festival or ceremony with the celebrating populace (Anderson, 1988, p.26). However, a festival is an event ordinarily celebrated by a community, centering on some characteristic aspect of that community and its religion and cultures. It is often marked as a local or national holiday. Festivals and *Jatras* are religious and cultural ceremonies which are celebrated for recalling of special events, keep patience to the gods and goddesses, protection of man and animals, and for the betterment of agro-farming. As cultural events, festivals are significant because they attract tourists. Festivals are important tourist assets of a given area; they are also tourist products sustaining the tourists’ needs. Tourist movement, in which the motivation to travel is the willingness to

attend festivals is referred to as festival tourism. In the context of event tourism research Page & Connel (2014, p. 38) state that:

Event tourism as a separate discourse takes an instrumentalist approach in which the dominant themes are the production and marketing of festivals for tourism and other forms of development with a heavy methodological emphasis on marketing and economic impact assessment. The roles of events in tourism include attracting tourist (to specific places, and to overcome seasonality), contributing to place marketing (including image formation and destination branding), amazing attractions and places, and acting as catalysts for other forms of development. Dominating this discourse has been the assessment of economic impacts of events and event tourism, planning and marketing event tourism at the destination level, and studies of event-tourism motivation and various segmentation approaches. The study of negative impacts of events and event tourism is a more recent line of research.

Most research in the Western world that focuses on festivals explains them as cultural events reinvented by communities to fulfill their desire and recreational needs, for construction of their identities, and for socioeconomic development (Derrett, 2003; in Shinde, 2010). The nature of festivals in two different contexts also leads to a difference in their academic studies: homothetic approach is common in the west, while idiosyncratic approaches the studies of non-Western festivals; that is researchers in the West often are interested in spotting features that are widely observable across a range of festivals while in the East festivals are studies for their intrinsic importance (Walmsely, 2008; in Shinde, 2010).

In the context of Nepal

As a multiethnic, multilingual, multi-religious country with diverse caste, religion and races, the tradition of celebrating festivals and *Jatras* seem very old and is deeply rooted in the Nepalese society. Most of the festivals are religious and related with the procession of the gods and goddesses venerated in Kathmandu Valley. Even in the past, festivals were strictly observed by the people (Pandey, 2008, p. 231). Inscriptional records suggest that these practices existed as the *Kailash* and *Varaha Jatras* during the *Lichchhavi* period (Vajracharya, 2030, pp. 275-278). With diversifying nature, several colorful festivals and *Jatras* in different territories can be found.

Therefore, it is said that Nepal is the only unique country in the world with more festivals and feasts than the working days. Though an exaggeration, Nepalese observe numerous festivals of different natures and categories. Some festivals are celebrated on a national scale, some regionally and some only by certain communities in certain areas and localities (Amatya, 2011, p. 39). Abided by the lunar calendar, different festivals

are celebrated all the year round. The celebration of these festivals may be nation-wide, regional or just confined to the village or city (Satyal, 2001, pp. 22-23). Grand festivals are occasionally observed which lasts four months, commencing in *Baisakh*, and ending in *Shrawan*. It consists in viding the shrines of the Gods in Nepal, which are said to be 2733 (Kirkpatrick, 2013, p. 196).

Bhaktapur is famous for its wonderful fairs and festivals which can be observed throughout the year. It was the cultural capital of Nepal from the thirteenth to sixteen century CE, for more than three hundred years (Amatya, 2011, p. 40). Nowaday, *Bhaktapur* is famous for the celebration of colourful festivals in and around the Durbar Square. Many festivals are celebrated throughout the year to mark the seasons, to pay tribute to gods, and in remembrance to the historical and legendary events (Dulal, 2021, p. 95). Among them, through the cultural, religious, tourist and tourism perspectives, *Kha Me Jatra* is considered important one.

As elsewhere *Bhaktapur* has been exploiting its festivals and *Jatras* as the cultural tourism products since three decades. Every season large numbers of tourists visit to observe its tangible and intangible cultural heritage including *Jatras* and festivals. Because of its prosperity in terms of *Jatras* and festivals, *Bhaktapur* is an enchanting tourism destination in the world. But, it has still not been successful in commoditization of its several festive events such as *Khame Jatra* in tourism markets as a significant tourism product.

Festival Tourism Product

The concept of tourism product is complex as it involves element of service, hospitality, free choice, consumer involvement, and consumption of experiences that must be actualized in some way (Hsu et al. 2008; in du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 153). Products can be natural, build, fixed of mobile, ongoing of temporary. At its core, though, a product has been defined as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy and need (Kotler & Turner, 1989, p. 435; in du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 153). Failte Ireland (2012) talks about the need to create memorable moments to make customers feel valued, by providing the right product, right quality, right quantity, right time, and right place (du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 153).

The tourist product is the total bundle of functionally interdependent tangible and intangible elements that are found in different geographical location and in different time periods (before, during and after the trip). These elements are considered as the recipes that enables the tourist on the one hand to engage in a specific activity at one or at several consecutive destinations and on the other hand to facilitate the transition to the destination(s) and the social reproduction during the trip (Koutoulas, 2004, pp. 9-10).

The tourist product is a composite product consisting of several components (Burkart & Medlik, 1981, p. 195). It is also labeled as a “package” (Jeffries, 1971, p. 4), an “amalgam” (Medlik & Middleton, 1973, p. 132) or a “bundle” (Middleton, 1988, p. 79) of tangible and intangible components. These components complement each other, i.e. they are functionally interdependent as each one provides only a part of the total sum of benefits sought by tourists (Mrnjavac, 1992, p. 122). Tourism product should not be seen from the point of view of the individual producer, but from the point of view of the consumer, thus equating the tourist product with his/her total travel experience. The tourist product should be perceived as including all the elements that are part of a trip (Koutoulas, 2004, p. 6). These types of elements can be found at the destinations of the trip, the transit routes and the places of residence (Leiper, 1990, p. 81).

Attraction is considered as one of the important components and motivating factors which attracts the attention of tourist and plays the leading role for the promotion of tourism activities in the destination. In the field of tourist and tourism, attraction is the pulling factor, which continuously inspires tourists in the destinations either that is accommodation or tourism products. Not all cultural tourists are the same hence it should be recognized that not all cultural tourism products are the same.

Attraction is an intrinsic part of a trip and a major motivator for selecting a destination, or they can be an optional, discretionary activity engaged in while at a destination (Mill & Morrision 1985; Jordan 1999; in du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 158). Attractions can be classified into three groups: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary attractions are important to most destinations as they play a critical role in shaping their image and influencing visitation (Mill & Morrision 1985; in du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 158).

Khame Jatra

Khame Jatra as a primary tourism attraction and as a festival tourism product, the core attraction is the local 'culture', dependent on the particular *Bhaktapure Newari* culture and background, potential enough to promote the tourism development and driving the economic development of the region by attracting more and more number of tourists. Secondary attractions may be locally significant and worth going a little out of year way to visit while in the destination, but they will rarely be the reason why people visit the destination. Instead they complement the tourism experience and may be popular in their own right but they do not influence the decision to visit the destination. Most cultural tourism attractions fall into the category of secondary or tertiary attractions (du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 158-160).

Kunwar (2017, p 30) has categorized attraction into two major folds which are on the inventory as a core attraction and a supporting attraction. Core attractions represent the basic assets or attributes of the community. They form the main theme of the destination.

They may be natural or manmade, historical or cultural, recreational or spectator events. Further, attraction can be categorized into tourism products and available facilities or accommodations or as specific and multiple one. The destination which provides diverse features like cultural, historical, and natural is categorized in multiple attractions while the destination which provides only single attraction is called specific attraction viz. cultural or historical or natural. In this context Dulal (2019, pp. 315-316) mentions:

Bhaktapur is a traditional cultural destination which provides multiple attractions to the tourists that are ingrained in culture and heritage. Both tangible and intangible cultural heritages are the main tourist attractions and authenticities of *Bhaktapur*. Tourism development of *Bhaktapur* has utilized its tangible and intangible heritages as the authenticities of the destination. Durbar Square, National Art Museum, Wooden Work Museum, Metal Museum, Fifty-five Windows Palace, *Nyatapol*, *Yaksheswor*, *Vatsaladevi*, *Chyasindega*, *Phasingdga Charadham*, *Dattatreya* temples, *Pujari math*, *Chaturvarna Mahavihar* and other edifices are considered as the most important tangible authenticities of the destination. Likewise, *Bhaktapur* has been harnessing *Navadurga*, *Ghintaghisi*, *Asthamatrka*, *Lakhedance*, *Visketjatra*, *indrajatra*, *Gaijatra*, *Payajatra*, *Khamejatra*, *white horse Jatra*, *Ghantakarna Chaturdasi Gunla Puni*, *Dashain Tihar*, *Sithinakha*, *Mhapuja*, *Ghathemung* as the popular intangible cultural authenticities and images. Along with these, traditional knowledge and skills productions of different types of art objects concerning terracotta, wooden, metal, stone, garments, and paper works are also regarded wonderful and illustrative craftsmanship of *Bhaktapur* which also represents the authenticity of the destination. The *Jujudhau* (special curd), *Hakupatasi* (dress of women), *Bhatgaule topi* (special black cap) and several ornaments and the skills to make these ornaments are also the aspects of authenticity and destination image.

Anderson (1988, p. 150) confirms that on the ninth day of Hindu festival *Dashain* called *Mahani* in local dialect, the *Newars* perform animal sacrificing ceremony which is called *Syakkotyakko*. On the occasion of *Syakkotyakko* people of *Newar* community rush to the temple with gifts, animals and prayers for the Mother Goddess, with the belief 'the more you kill, the more you gain'. The sacrifice of male goat in the absence of a fowl or duck has to be made with a sense of compulsion. Those who are habitual vegetarians and abstain from violence offer a pumpkin as *vali* to the Goddess. But animals are preferred to every other item. If it lies within the means of a devotee, he may offer one animal for each of the nine days, because it is said that the goddess resides in the house in different forms known under different names for all of these days (Regmi, 1966, p. 674).

As per the information provided by the priest of *Taleju* temple, during *Dashain* festival, in *Taleju* including *Dumaju* and *Kumari* and other *Saktipeeth* about 108 animals are sacrificed for the goddesses in *Bhaktapur* officially. Specially, the eighth or *Mahaastimi* and

ninth or *Mahanawami* are the most important days for animal's sacrifice in the names of such deities (Dulal, 2021, p.96). In this respect Levy (1992, p. 335) says that:

Mahaastami is also known as *Kalaratry*. On this night in the memory of killing the Buffalo demon, *Mahisasura*, twenty-five buffaloes are offered to the goddess. On the night between the eighth and ninth days' large numbers of goats and buffaloes are sacrificed to the Goddess *Taleju*. A flock of some thirty goats is first brought to the temple; the leading one is called *Nikhudugu*. *Nikhudugu* goat must be pure black in color without any physical imperfections. Similarly, the first male water buffalo called *Nikhuthu* all black and without blemish of defects, is kept in a special shelter in *Byansi* area of the *Kwache twa*.

It is a popular belief that animals are sacrificed to help mankind liberate themselves of their sins and grant them of their wishes. These ceremonies are accomplished in commemoration of the beliefs and traditions of fierce battles between the *divine* and *demonic* powers that are held within animals such as buffalo, goats etc. During the *Mahani*, the Newars of *Bhaktapur* offer animals to the goddess. During the ninth day of *Dashain* festival a male buffalo (*Kha Me*) is sacrificed to the goddess *Brahmayani* in *Bhaktapur* with the procession which is called *Kha Me Jatra* (Dulal, 2019, p. 260). *Khame* is a *Newari* term which is derived from the word 'Kha' and 'Me', in which 'Kha' means pure and 'Me' stands for male buffalo (Dulal, 2021, p. 97).

As per their local terminology *Khame* denotes a special male buffalo which does not have any wounds and also has no physical defects. Levy mentions that the buffalo is called *Kha(n) Me*; *Me* means water buffalo and *Kha(n)* is a term of uncertain meaning, although the same term is used as one name of the *Na: laswa(n)* room, where it is locally interpreted to mean "sword". The *Kha (n) Me* is kept in a special room on *chheli*, the ground floor of the Nine *Durga's* goddesses house (1992, pp. 546-547).

There is no particular custom regarding the places to bring the *Kha Me*. Generally, they brought from Nala of *Bhaktapur* till to last previous years where they can get easy way. But, now day they bring from elsewhere as well. In 2076 BS it was brought from Gokarna which was donated by Krishnamaya Gaiju, Jela 8 *Bhaktapur*, costing about Rs 1 lakh and 25 thousands. Similarly Ram Bhakta Prajapati of Liwalini 8, *Bhaktapur* and Madhusudan Awal of Dagamana 16, *Bhaktapur* in 2074 and 2075 respectively. There is no need of financial support from municipalities and other concerned authorities specially to manage *Khame*. Today there is *akchhya kosh* (renewable fund) which was established in 2070 for managing the *Kha Me* and overall *jatra*.

They use and rub oil, red and orange colour vermilion (*Sindur*) before starting the procession (Jadhari, 2072, p. 102). According to local people *bhuesi* and *chikkan* called

for *Sindur* and oil respectively. *Sindur* and oil represent symbol of power, sources for the beautification, will kill germs from the body and helps to make pure to the *Kha Me*. Therefore, due to these causes they rub oil, red and orange colour vermilion on the body of *Khame*.

The buffalo representing the mythic demon slain by goddess *Durga* known as *Khame* is chased from the house of *Navadurga* Goddess towards the shrine of *Bramhayani* east of the town, one of nine *peethas*. On this day the buffalo is given alcoholic liquids to drink and is made fully drunk. The liquids called *Nyaga* (Jadhari, 2072, p. 102). Thereafter, *Khame* is brought out from the house of goddess *Durga* into the *Dattatreya* Square in the evening. The buffalo is chased and the people watch its unusual behavior. This buffalo chasing procession is also known among the local inhabitants as *Khame Bwakegu Jatra* (Shrestha, 2016, p. 23).

There is a belief that donating, rearing, observing, touching, bathing, worshipping and sacrificing the *Khame* will fulfill their desire and gate emancipation through all kinds of sins. Due to this tradition, with the ongoing evening, the procession of *Khame* is demonstrated on the streets, pavilions and the roofs of the houses are packed with local people, tourists and devotees. Locals take part in the procession, except some senior citizens, children and healthily and physically unwell (Dulal, 2019, p. 260).

As per the expectation of local people, *Khame* performs his bizarre attitude in a huge crowd. Formally, about 5 to 6 PM, the *Jatra* starts from Navadurga temple (*Lanchhe*) and finally comes to an end after reaching the temple of goddess *Bramhayani* on the bank of *Hanumante* River. About 1 Km. distance has to be covered by the procession. The *jatra* starts from *Navadurga* temple (*Lanchhe*) via *Ganchhe*, *Dattatreya* Square, *Taulachhe*, *Suryamadi*, *Chyamasing chok*, *Hanumante* River and finally reaches into *Brahmayani* temple. While the procession of *Khame* reaches the *Hanumante* River and has to be taken into the waterhole for bathing. Thousands of people participate on the bathing occasion which takes about half an hour to complete. After the completion of bathing process, *Khame* is taken into the courtyard of goddess *Brahmayani* for sacrificing which is done in the midnight prohibited for the commoners (Dulal, 2021, p. 99).

With a bundle or package of tangible and intangible components, *Khame Jatra* as mainly an intangible cultural heritage and as a new festival tourism product with authenticity hold an immense socio-cultural and religious significance amongst the Newar community of Bhaktapur who celebrate this *Jatra* devoutly annually to mark the victory of divine over the evil demonic. Among the unexplored and unutilized cultural tourism heritages, *Khame Jatra* a hidden or veiled festival is considered a product of great importance. This *Jatra* is an essential festival where thousands of people including the tourists gather at the streets of Bhaktapur to watch the activities and ceremonies of *Khame*. It is a typical *Jatra* which is not observed in any part of Nepal except *Bhaktapur*. Thus, it is considered an indigenous identity of *Bhaktapure* culture. It is entrenched in mysterious, colourful and amusing procession and

rituals, mythological, religious and historical backgrounds of the ceremonies, and the wealth of delightful legends and folktales surrounding it.

One of the respondents interpreted that the sacrificing process is very different than any ordinary one. It is done by cutting the main vein of the throat and the blood is showered at the goddess. Therefore, it is very difficult to witness the process of sacrificing the *Khame*. It is believed that ordinary people cannot see the process of sacrifice. Anyone who sees this event will face death. Hence, the process of sacrificing is strictly prohibited to the female and people as well (Dulal, 2021, p.99). Next day morning, the body of dead *Khame* is cut into tiny pieces and distributed as the *prasada*.

Substantiated grace i.e. *prasada* is a metonym, a metonymic agent of divinity, and more broadly, of extraordinary personhood that takes on special significance in Hindu temple worship and pilgrimage (Pinkney, 2008). Grace can be conferred by visible means in a number of ways. Generally, and most commonly, food or flowers will be offered to the divinity in a temple or shrine; once the deity is partaken of and called *prasada*. Another way of receiving grace is from *arati* lamp or *puja* lamp that is waved before the divinity. One can put one's hands over the flame and then touch one's head and/or face to receive the blessing of the divinity. Things given to a person by a *guru* or other religious personage also can confer grace. In fact, any object placed before an icon in order to be placed may be given *prasada*, or grace (Jones& Ryan, 2007, p. 334).

Although, in this festival instead of accepting the *prasada* of goddess for substantiated grace, people will turn it into a ritual, under which people will burn it into light in the evening of *Laxmi puja* for the incense to goddess *Laxmi* (Dulal, 2019, p. 260). According to their belief, if the *prasada* is taken into the house, every member of the family remains safe and secured from the evils, and the smoke of incense will destroy the evil spirits through the power of goddess. This reveals that this *prasada* symbolizes the power of the goddess.

Khame can be observed in *Panauti* too, one of the ancient *Newar* town which is located about 15 Km southeast of *Bhaktapur*, but not like a *Jatra*, only in the form of a *puja* in which offering is made to the goddess. *Khame* is put in a dark room at the first day of *Dashami* with *Tantric Puja*. He is only fed *jand* (local beer) for 7 days considering him as the ghost. On the eighth day i.e. *Asthmi* he is killed and the meat is distributed to every household of *Panauti* (Ulak, 2012, p. 73). The residents of *Panauti* still celebrate the *Kha Me puja and Nalaswang* (barley plants *jamarā*) *puja* in *Dasami* at the *Layaku* in a way identical to that of *Bhaktapur*. The custom of sacrificing *Kha Me* and numerous male goats for different goddess and seedling of the *Nalaswang* still continue at *Layaku* area. The custom of distributing meat of *Kha Me* and the male goats plus the *Nalaswang* to every household in *Panauti* has continued even after the *Layaku* Durbar has vanished (Ulak, 2012, p.73).

As per the information provided by the local informants, *Khame* of *Bhaktapur* is nurtured by the *Banamala* clan group of *Newar* community. They are also known as *Gatha*. All responsibilities such as feeding, protecting and health caring of *Khame* goes to the same family. The cost of rearing period is managed through the *Navadurga Guthi*. When asked about the management of this festival, the concerned authorities and key respondents explained that they do not need proper policy because they strongly believe that those who donate the *Khame*, their families will never be in any crisis and all their desires will be fulfilled. Because of this psychological assumption there is a healthy competition between local families those who are economically sound for providing the donation for the amount needed for managing the *Khame*. This reveals that it is an idiosyncratic festival which does not require any support from the organizations.

Khame Jatra as a New Tourism Product

Besides *Khame*, other several tasks associated with *Jatra* such as preparation of costumes and masks of *Navadurga*, managing of flowers and garlands, street management, sanitation etc. are accomplished during the *Jatra*, which needs some additional amount that is maintained by municipality and *Bramayani Guthi* as well.

However, it is deduced that if *Bhaktapur* can properly manage *Khame Jatra* as a new and an important intangible authentic festival tourism product, event-based cultural tourism will be further boosted in this destination. From the perspectives of culture, tourism and cultural tourism activities, *Bhaktapur* has varied tangible and intangible cultural heritages within the core and surroundings, which also makes *Bhaktapur* an extremely popular and interesting cultural tourism destination in the world.

As a festival tourism product, *Khame Jatra* has played a vital role in extending the fame of local culture and tradition and has helped in the propagation of *Bhaktapur's ancient cultural heritage at the international level that has helped engender a unique experience for tourists and the whole tourism industry hence contributing positively to nation's vanity, belief and traditional identity*. This tourism product comprises of a bundle or package of tangible and intangible components based on activities and ceremonies of various kinds. It is the range of experiences tourist get while travelling to *Bhaktapur* that satisfy their thirst of cultural attractions.

In broad-spectrum, this *Jatra* is not always associated with socio-cultural and religious aspects but an economic aspect of profit if utilized properly as tourism product. Further, it has to be analyzed in the local situational context. If *Bhaktapur* systematically markets *Khame Jatra* as a new festival tourism product, no doubt it can help to develop and enhance the present situation of cultural tourism in *Bhaktapur*. Culture and tourism have a mutually beneficial relationship which can strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness

of places, regions and countries. Further, culture is an increasingly important element of the tourism product as it creates distinctiveness in a crowded global market place.

Conclusion

Festivals and *Jatras* are religious and cultural ceremonies celebrated for the recalling of special events, perseverance of belief on gods and goddesses, celebrating the incarnation or birth day of the protagonists, and for the protection of man and animals, and betterment of agro-farming. Festival tourism is that particular alternative form of tourism through which a tourist can get opportunity to observe festive events from very close. It plays a major role in the development of tourism hence travel to visit a festival is treated as a separate type of tourism. It has a substantial influence on the tourist space. If the impacts are positive, they are referred to as functions. Festive events have religious and cultural significance which are categorized under the intangible cultural heritage. They are celebrated with huge gathering of people on the special auspicious days and time for the fulfillment of certain desires. Consequently, festival tourism is considered an important source for exploring, highlighting and protecting of cultural heritages as the tourism product of the destination. The *Khame Jatra* of *Bhaktapur* is a popular tourism fascination like other attractions that embarks with the splashing water on sacrificial buffalo at *Hanumante* River of *Bramayani* Temple on the ninth day of the *Dashain* Festival that involves the chasing of intoxicated male-buffalo or *Mahisasur* demon on the streets of *Bhaktapur* and the consequent sacrifice of the animal which marks the victory of good over evil.

The individuality of *Khame Jatra* is expressed through its multifaceted impacts on different elements of tourist space that promote culture and make it possible to experience it, provide tourists with entertainment and offer them an opportunity to spend their free time in an interesting way. They offer an opportunity to exchange information and ideas, as well as to learn and promote tolerance and multiculturalism. However, the commercialization of culture can undermine its meaning and detract from tradition. The connotation of *Khame Jatra* is 'cultural' festival tourism with the potentiality to attract tourists, through the development of festival tourism space, to activate the tourism market, enrich tourism resources, and strengthen cultural communication between the people at a global scale. Despite the importance of this *Jatra* as a bundle of tangible and intangible components and heritages, its connotation as a prodigious tourism product, has been less realized, highlighted and utilized as a cultural tourism product. As an indigenous practice and the product of the *Newari* community, the local Newar ethnic community is a direct consumer of its benefit. Hence, first and foremost responsibility of preserving, practicing and commodification of this festival in tourism market also goes to the same community that can help *create an inimitable experience for tourists and the whole tourism industry hence contributing positively to local belief and customary identity.*

With both socio-cultural and economic significance, *Khame Jatra* is a cultural venture to develop, establish and vivid image of "catalyst" for systematic planning, develop and marketing to form a series of activities. Proper research planning for *Jatras* can better meet the demand of tourism consumers, improve the visibility of *Bhaktapur* and drive the development of regional economy. It will further promote the healthy development of festival tourism. *Khame Jatra* should not only consider the socio-cultural benefits but also consider the economic benefit. Although *Khame Jatra* as a domestic festival is in the lead, but relative to other famous brand foreign festival activities, it still has phenomenal gap. With the development of urban and leisure tourism, the *Khame Jatra* in *Bhaktapur* will continue to thrive. Through continuous research, systematic planning, internationalization, marketization and utilization of local unique culture as a breakthrough, this *Jatra* will further expand and thrive as a powerful tourism product of 21st century. The local people and community, governing bodies, local organizations and the concerned authorities should pay adequate attention for the protection and marketing of this *Jatra* as a new festival tourism product.

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