

Editorial

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The current volume 19 of *Nepalese Culture* features 12 selected articles that have successfully passed the double-blind peer review process in accordance to the journal's requirements. Throughout the process, there have been serious and dedicated efforts to beget this volume in contributing standards. Needless to say, but I cannot and should not proceed without acknowledging all those who contributed for this in one way or the other. At the cusp of the publication, I extend my sincere thanks, on behalf of the editorial board, to all the dedicated contributors and congratulate them on the selection and publication of their articles in this journal. The time they have invested, their venture into the topics, repeated revisions and resubmissions all point to the authors' subtle dedication and sincere urge for task accomplishments. Similarly, I have my deep gratitude to our editors who took dedication to the next level, reviewers who meticulously worked but remain anonymous, advisory board who offered "leans" on patronage and the TU print house for consistent support. I have my sincere thanks for the HoD for his consistent trust upon our team and also to the colleagues of the Central Department of Nepalese History, Culture and Archaeology at Tribhuvan university for their well- wishes!

It would be appropriate to begin with depictions on the types of research we have here prior to presenting their concise summary. Research articles have covered a wide range of themes of spiritual well-being, didactic and persuasive narratives on Vedic rituals, *mantra*, tangible and intangible cultural riches, failure on tourism governance to interesting indigenous and ethnographic studies. The perspectives, findings and discussions on noble and emergent or new issues raised by our valued authors have spanned in diverse themes and purpose-oriented approaches. These all, hopefully, set up avenues for the readers to think, rethink and surmise the cultural riches of Nepal. The researchers have either addressed or directly studied components of World Heritage sites, employed comparative paradigms to compare Nepal and other countries, engaged with Hindu epistemological traditions, and contributed to the study of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Importantly, succinct summaries presented below should be pivotal for directing readers to the research of their interest.

Ann Suwaree Ashton brings in an achievable framework for life skill development within social contexts through yoga-based practices. The research glorifies the "yoga genre" and imparts how perceptions of yoga's benefits across different places or countries all converge to being therapeutic, purposeful and life-directing. The article concentrates on 'spiritual well-being' and also makes use of in- depth interviews with yoga practitioners of different nationalities in Nepal and Thailand to finally suggest that authentic yoga practices can be positioned as therapeutic intervention to support physical, mental and spiritual healing. Critical engagement with the article may raise questions or may invite reflection on its obvious research results of being too predictable. On the stronger side, the article also caters to fourteen different dimensions of wellbeing measurement (kindness, transcendence, self-awareness, self-engagement-to mention few) and connects yoga to spiritual healing.

While **Ann** brings her homeland Thailand to compare and connect with yoga practitioners' responses in Nepal, **Asutosh Pradhan** deliberately excludes countries like Thailand and Switzerland in his tourism governance studies and instead chooses Bhutan, the Maldives and Costa Rica to aid his comparative tourism studies with that of Nepal. **Pradhan's** article has that grasping acumen to critically provoke - Why amongst strong policies, rich tourism resources and huge potentiality, Nepal still struggles to underperform in and from the tourism sector? Readers have to take a whole few turns of serious reading to find out why the author boldly attempts to incriminate Nepal's governance structures, institutional coordination and regulatory systems amongst others that impede to tourism underperformance.

Three articles in this volume chiefly narrate and analyze ritualistic phenomena, authored by **Deepak Gurau, Sangita Pancha and Meera Maiya Shrestha**. These studies contribute to indigenous, *ich* (intangible cultural heritage) and community studies. The authors seem to bring in their emic or near-emic experiences to depict unique but interesting rituals with captivating details. While **Gurau's** article ethnographically documents the *Kantari* festival of two communities from Nawalpur, **Pancha's** article weaves in Bhaktapur's age-old practice of worshipping *basi* (*naag/snakes*) for rainwater. **Gurau** narrates the festival's connection with the Tharus' mother goddess *Kuwarwanti* and Magars' *Tinmai*, informing about associated esoteric rituals, syncretic blend of the Magars and the Tharu during the festival. **Pancha** justifies snake worship, its interesting facets and the success of worship for propitiating the rain god/nature. This article also signifies community's interrelations with the environment and ecology. Similarly **Meera Maiya Shrestha** examines *Jyapu* marriage traditions, and drives in keen and empirical approaches to dig down the functional, symbolic, and ritualistic dimensions of the marriage within *Newar* community. At some stances, she leaves the readers dumbfounded on the distinct jubilation of the wedding patterns, beliefs, symbolic meanings and ceremonial vibes. For instance readers may get pleasantly paused at the post-marriage ritual of a bride's mother gifting "*gwe*" (beetel nut/ scientific name- ***Aerica catechu***) to her daughter in her new home for transferring responsibilities and communication of decisions.

Swety Manandhar's article exposes less known ritualistic aspects of the Harati *mata*. The article concentrates in the Harati temple at World heritage site Swyambhu, Kathmandu. Harati, the demon turned divine goddess (also venerated as a Buddha's disciple) is contemporaneous to Buddha and is equally venerated by both the Buddhist and the Hindus of the Kathmandu valley. Likewise, **Yamanath Upadhyay** also exposes the historicity of the highly revered god Sankata while beautifully providing details of worship purposes, practices, mythologies and intangible riches of this holy sanctuary of Kathmandu. The article may provoke rethinking on the confusions among worshippers regarding gender identity of the Sankata deity after reading the article. **Sagar Shrestha** also brings in simple descriptions of the historic town of Kisipidi, Kathmandu with its tangible and intangible riches and contributes to highlight the importance of the historic town.

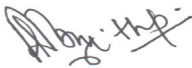
Amit Wosti focuses on archaeological and historical dilemmas that have been clouding above the various truthful aspects of Lord Buddha's birth place - Lumbini. He also relates them with the King Asoka's visit to Nepal and attempts to sort them out. His research interestingly delves into the archaeological dilemmas and attempts to analyze confusions, debates and historical misinterpretations not only taking back but also connecting the readers to the authenticity debates of king Asoka's visit to Nepal.

Suraj Sthapit comes straight against common studies around World heritage sites and instead attempts to make a virgin study of the water infrastructures in the courtyards of the world famous Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square. Interestingly, the article describes about palatial arrangement for rainwater harvest, toilet chambers and humbly provokes for future researches with confession that the author could not locate the kitchen of such a historic residence. The writer finds out that amongst 11 courtyards in the palace vicinity, the water bodies have greater concentration in the Northern flank. This finding could have been stronger- had the author used the epistemology of the ancient Hindu text *Vastushastra* to explain and connect the cardinal directions' significance and the much assumable purpose of maximum confining of water bodies to a particular direction. Above all, interesting details about the palace amenities and photographs have enriched this article.

For those interested in ancient knowledge of the Hindus, the research articles by **Suraj Parajuli** and **Arun Kumar Pandey** are a "must read". The areas of their research are intellectually and scholarly enjoyable and full of gravity. **Parajuli** explores the seemingly unexplorable theme of the "*Shiva Panchakshari*" (*Nama Sivaya*) relating it to and associating it with **OM**. He also presents didactic discussion on the relevance of the *mantra* and the importance of the *guru* in invocation of the *mantras*. **Arun** simply chooses to persuade the readers to value the importance of the *Yajnic* rituals. He also has a didactic tone as he brings together Vedic philosophy and Hindu epistemologies to explain the significance of *karmakanda*. In the changing phase of the modernity, **Arun** regrets or at least expresses concerns to say that people are losing life-essences by neglecting the multi-faceted importance of *yajnic* rituals and Vedic epistemology.

On this fine morning, as I engage and reflect on the 12 articles selected for publication in this volume, I am beginning to worry about a good editorials' conciseness and precision, and humbly self-reminded of a more scholarly closing. To recapitulate, the diverse themes, research contributions and the methodologies employed by the authors in investigating cultural, historical and spiritual discourses all offer readers a vibrant and critical engagement. Still it would be relevant to add hereby the death of the author. In 1967, Roland Barthes through *The Death of the Author* shifted the authority of the text from the author to the readers. Although this applies less in research articles where the authors' concept, intent, claims and findings matter a lot, yet, relying upon texts as multi-meaning spaces with possibility of multi-interpretation and points of departure for further researches, this journal volume is humbly offered to the readers and future researchers.

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