

Politics as a Genre of Performance: Reflection of Dabali's Trickster Personas in Nepali Political Leaders

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Abstract

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This paper analyzes the juncture of politics and performance by observing and comparing body-corporeality among three trickster characters from Batha Pyakha and three prominent Nepali politicians. Regarding this, the trickery and deception performed by mythical/cultural/theatrical characters Gaa Daju, Sama Daju and Batha Kija, respectively from Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan are examined. Similarly, the paper acknowledges strategic maneuvers attributed to three major political leaders of contemporary Nepali politics, i.e., the leader 1, the leader 2, and the leader 3, who have been subjects to varying interpretations. Additionally, it utilizes a discourse analysis approach to examine rhetorical and performative strategies in political speeches and bodily gestures to compare these leaders with traditional trickster

figures. The aforementioned leaders presuppose trickster-like personas since they manipulate public narratives, evade accountability, and undermine dominant ideologies. Indeed, leaders simply imitate less tricksters metaphorically rather than to personify their traits through postures, gestures, and strategic trickery. Finally, this paper concludes that politics itself is a form of performance and Nepali politics can be examined in relation to theatrical characters from Kathmandu Valley, where the archetypal images of tricksters have been functioning in modern days as if these mythical tricksters have reincarnated in the form of politicians' bodies and performing the same actions of deceptions. By bridging cultural storytelling, political rhetoric, and performance, this study pinpoints the enduring power of the trickster figure in shaping political discourse in Nepalese context.

Keywords: Trickster archetype, mythical characters, physical body, farce theatre, political performance

Introduction

Since the convergence of art and politics has been a fascinated topic to examine power, deception, and resistance, the concept of performativity explores how

political figures characterized as cunning, subversive, and ambiguous that manipulate the people and hold the power. Rooted in Nepali folklore and folk theatre, this research is motivated by examining the trickster archetype and the rhetorical strategies used by three Nepali political leaders. The trickster is a deceiver who lies, disrupts, and subverts authority, although he is not confined to myths or folk performances alone. In line with this, Shrivastava (2025) notes that through wit, through cunning and moral ambiguity; tricksters continue to mold literature and culture (p. 894). Such a trickster's characteristics revolve around the modern Nepali political discourse; meanwhile, politicians use humor, irony, and ambiguity to shape public narratives. At this point, traditional trickster performances could be compared and contrasted with the rhetorical strategies of Nepali politicians to reveal how such figures have been influencing people's perception. Their rhetorical strategies could be compared to and contrasted with traditional trickster performances.

Kartik Naach is a collective name of various folk dances performed for eight days at Krishna temple *Dabali* situated at Patan Darbar Square in Kartik. In Newari language it is called *Katipakh* and was started by Patan's king Siddhi Narsing Malla in 1697 BS (Acharya, 2079, p. 58). In the same vein, Acharya (2079) states that Gaa Daju, Sama Daju and Batha Kija are three clever men from Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan respectively (p. 62). These three characters of the folk drama are an "integral part of the *Kartik Naacha*" performed at Patan's *Dabali*. These trickster figures "perform many stories" of trickery in the form of "*Batha: Pyankhan*"¹ every evening during "*Kartik Naacha*" (Shrestha, n.d., p. 11). These characters sometimes make alliances and cheat other commoners and occasionally even outwit each other. Thus, *Dabali* of Patan has been capturing a similar theme of deception and trickery through the performance of three Gaa Daju, Sama Daju and Batha Kija during *Kartik Naacha* for a long time. Characters with trickster features typically exhibit traits such as cunningness, rebelliousness, and disregard for societal norms. They use wit and deception to achieve their goals, which may range from selfish gain to challenging authority or facilitating change. In this context, Shrivastava notes, "[t]he trickster's origins lie in ancient myths and folklore, where it often takes the form of cunning gods, mischievous animals, or subversive heroes" (p.890). Tricksters can be found across cultures and mythologies, playing crucial roles in narratives by disrupting the established order and introducing chaos or humor. These characters frequently blur

¹Performance of Batha Pyakha is an important part of *Kartik Naacha*. In 1723, King Srinivas Malla introduced the stories of the three *Bathahs* (the clever men), which add humoristic flavor to the performances. These folk stories represent the society of the times and have moral messages. This research includes just 4 stories of deception for analysis.

the lines between good and evil, morality and immorality, making them complex and compelling figures.

These characters have trickster features. The image or archetype of trickster is common in almost all cultures and civilizations. In this regard, Radin (1956) mentions that "tricksters belong to the oldest expressions of mankind" (p. ix) and one finds trickster myth "in clearly recognizable form among the simplest aboriginal tribes and among the complex ...we encounter it among the ancient Greeks, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Semitic world" (p. ix). An exact reconstruction, taken straight from Jung's work "On the Psychology of the Trickster-Figure," is as follows: According to Jung (1981), "From this point of view we can see why the story of the trickster was perpetuated and developed: like many other myths, it was designed to have a therapeutic effect (p. 200)." In order to prevent the more advanced person from forgetting how things were yesterday, it places the prior low moral and intellectual level in front of him. [...] In actuality, the conscious mind is then able to break free from its fascination with evil and is no longer forced to live it obsessively. Due to a lack of energy, the evil and darkness have just retreated into the unconscious, where they stay as long as the conscious is doing well. They have not vanished into thin air. [...] From this vantage point, it is clear why the trickster story was produced and preserved: like many other myths, it was thought to offer therapeutic benefits.

Moreover, Babcock-Abrams (2014) has focused on the universality of trickster on a cross-cultural basis as she mentions, "No figure in literature, oral or written, baffles us quite as much as trickster" (p. 147). She adds, "For centuries [they have], in [their] various incarnations, run, flown, galloped, and most recently motorcycled through the literary imagination and much of the globe" (p. 158). Similarly, Hynes (1993) has highlighted six different characteristics of tricksters including "deceiver/trick player" as one of the key features (p. 34). Thus, it is clear that the trickster figure is one of the universal figures of folk narration and myths across cultures and geographies. Even the literature is not untouched by the image of tricksters. The three theatrical personas from Patan *Dabali* also belong to the tricksters since they have main tricksters' characteristics including 'deception.'²These three clever men are the archetype of Nepali tricksters and ironically, the role or the action of 'deception' (1993) of these three tricksters is now no longer limited to Patan's *Dabali* rather this archetype of trickster has crossed the border of theatrical performances and has reached into the political dimensions. The (un)political 'farce'

²In "Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide," William J. Hynes outlines six characteristics of tricksters: (1) the fundamentally ambiguous and anomalous personality of the trickster, (2) deceiver/trick player, (3) shape-shifter, (4) situation inventor, (5) messenger/imitator of the gods, and (6) sacred/lewd bricoleur (pp. 34). This paper only focuses on 'deception.'

performed by the main political leaders inside and outside the parliament of Nepal to gain power, has already surpassed the trickery of these three theatrical personas. What might be the relationship between trickery and deception performed on the stage of traditional Patan *Dabali* and the performance of deception by our political leaders in the Nepalese political scenario? Is there any similarity between three tricksters from the historical *Dabali* and three of our current leaders from major political parties in terms of trickery performativity?

If we observe and compare the performance of deception by these three leaders from three different political parties with three trickster figures from Patan *Dabali*, we can presuppose the leaders are proper modern replicas of the theatrical tricksters. Like the theatrical characters, they also have been deceiving and cheating each other as well as other common people. By doing so, they have been performing a 'farce politics' and have been blurring the demarcation line between theatrical *Dabali* and parliament. In "On the Psychology of the Trickster-Figure," Jung (1981) notes that trickster stories were developed and preserved because "it was intended to have a therapeutic effect," as the tale "has a direct influence on the unconscious, no matter whether it is understood or not" (p. 207).

Three Tricksters from *Dabali* and Contemporary Nepali Politics

In the first version of Bath: Pyakhan, '*Chhan Dhal Khah*', (You are right), these three tricksters insist that what each other says must be believed. If it is not accepted, the "dissenter will have to become a servant instead" (Acharya, 2079, p. 62). Gaa Daju from Kantipur tells a story about the king's elephants and horses running on the path woven by the spider's web from Swayambhu to Buddha, and the rest both believe it. Sama Daju gossips that a vegetable (Rayo's) green leaf has grown and covered Bhaktapur, and the rest both believe it. Finally, Batha Kija tells that he had on the way to raise money lent with his two servants in his previous life. The servants lost their way, and both eventually arrived together. Gaa Daju and Sama Daju agreed, and Batha Kija accepted them as servants (Acharya, 2079, p. 62). Ultimately, according to the agreed-upon conditions, Gaa Daju and Sama Daju were required to serve, even if they were skeptical of Batha Kija's claims. Likewise, there is a bet on who is the eldest among the three. Beating his chest and pretending that his grandson is dead, Batha Kija gets the court of Lord Krishna to decide that he is the eldest by using the same dramatic act (Acharya, 2079, p. 63). In one story, while visiting a village, the three *Bathas* get hungry but they do not have any money. Sama Daju takes out his mother's earrings and gives them to Batha Kija. Batha Kija goes to Sunakar's shop, but instead of selling the earrings, he sells the other two *Bathas*. These three characters also cheat other commoners. In one version, these tricksters cheat a lady by buying a goat worth 12 *dām* only for 6 *dām* (Acharya, 2079, p. 63). In

another story, they cheat a Brahmin and eat his he-goat. Cheating, trickery, or the role of cunning man is an integral part of farces and humorous folk plays since the first written farce *The Boy and the Blind Man* (French) is based on the theme '*Chor Mathi Chandal*.' Machiavelli also regarded 'deception' as one of the virtues of a prince as he mentioned in *The Prince* "never to attempt to win by force what can be won by deception" (p. 14). Not only in traditional performances, but also in politics, deception has become integral. In terms of political deception, our leaders seem far ahead of their theatrical counterparts from the *Dabali*.

Gaa Daju, Sama Daju, and Batha Kija can be seen as allegorical representations of political figures from Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Patan respectively regions that also correspond to the current residences of prominent political leaders in Nepal. Interestingly, the leader 1 resides in P1 (Kathmandu), the leader 2 in P2 (Bhaktapur), and the leader 3 in P3 (Lalitpur). The Federal Parliament House in Baneshwar thus becomes the central stage where these leaders, much like the clever characters from *Batha Pyakha*, engage in complex political tactical moves. Their interactions and struggles for leadership—particularly the role of Prime Minister—mirror the theatrical strategies of trickster archetype, characterized by their cunningness, negotiation, and performance.

As Rancière (quoted in Srirr, n.d., p. 4) points out, politics is all about how certain categories become visible while others fade into the background, and it revolves around the distribution of what we can sense. In this light, we might not see these leaders as direct counterparts to trickster figures. Rather, they can be viewed as symbolic extensions of the trickster tradition. Their strategic and performative actions have significantly influenced the current political narrative in Nepal. To understand this metaphorical interpretation, we need to take a broader look at how traditional theatrical styles can shed light on modern political behaviors. The actions of political leaders often resemble a well-scripted performance, characterized by predictability and theatrical flair. For example, during the 2017, provincial and federal elections, the leader 2 and the leader 3 made their entrance into the political scene through a party unification in the nation. This strategic partnership was a calculated move that can be understood through the lens of trickster politics—where adaptability, shifting loyalties, and timing are key players.

In Nepal, elections have become a crucial moment when political calculation, strategic alliances, and theatrical performances are most visible. Political leaders take elections as a site of democratic practice and an opportunity for calculated positioning. For many citizens, it takes on the form of a spectacle—part celebration, part performance. In the provincial and federal elections of 2017, two prominent

political leaders, the leader 2 and the leader 3, agreed to unite their own political parties and make a new unified communist party. Due to this alliance, it secured a near two-thirds majority in Parliament and the leader 2 became the Prime Minister. The leadership of the leader 2 failed to meet the expectations of people particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This issue was largely raised by intra-party members and the government's decisions and symbolic actions brought serious controversy that captured public attention. Misunderstanding within the party central committee aroused a tension among the leaders. Regardless of gentlemen agreement between the leader 2 and the leader 3, the leader 2 refused to hand over leadership to the leader 3. The intra-party conflict reached at the climax which resulted into a party split and the prime minister lost the majority in the parliament. Meanwhile, the leader 2 dissolved the parliament and declared a mid-term election, claiming that it was an executive power of the prime minister, and election was the best solution for the country and democracy to come out the (un)political deadlock. Dissolution of the parliament remained controversial; some people were in favor of the move, while others were against it. These events reflect recurring patterns of trickster-like behavior marked by alliance, betrayal, and disruption that continued to shape the nation's democratic processes.

The political landscape changed after Batha Kija (the leader 3) teamed up with Gaa Daju (the leader 1) and other parties. After the Supreme Court decided to restore the parliament, Gaa Daju also entered Baluwatar Dabali with support from Batha Kija and allied groups. This coalition carried on into the latest local and federal elections. However, after the election, a conflict emerged in Baluwatar, which Gaa Daju occupied, between leader 1 and leader 3 over the prime ministership. According to their agreement, leader 3 was supposed to take on the role of Prime Minister for the first half of the term. The political drama escalated. Sama Daju (the leader 2) kept trying to convince Gaa Daju over the phone. He claimed he was meant to be the future prime minister and that he should not give up the position to Batha Kija under any circumstances.

In a surprising turn, the leader 2 invited the leader 3 to the P1 proposing the leader 3 for the post of the prime minister. In this process, the leader 1 was politically sidelined. However, within a month, the leader 1 re-engaged with the leader 3 and re-established a coalition government, leaving the leader 2 once again out of the equation. Then the leader 2 was in a wait-and-watch situation of political gamification. One year later, the leader 3 and the leader 2 dramatically agreed to make a coalition government and the leader 3 became the prime minister of the new government. Once again, Deuba's strategy failed as a new government was formed under Dahal's leadership. Hence, these political developments reflect a cyclical

pattern of alliances, strategic deception, and leadership competitions. In many respects, they are like tricksters and have the performative nature of traditional farces performed at the Patan Dabali, in which appearances, roles, and allegiances constantly change.

Patan's farce "*Chhan Dhal Khah*" (You are correct) was also performed in the legislative stage during the vote of confidence. Even though Batha Kija had become prime minister with Sama Daju's help, Sama Daju handed Batha Kiza a vote of confidence in order to encourage his active participation in power and the establishment of regional governments. It was customary for the heads of the government's allied parties to offer the vote of confidence. To everyone's astonishment, though, Batha Kiza also received a vote of confidence from the opposition Gaa Daju. Similar to the folk story, even if Gaa Daju and Sama Daju agreed with Batha Kija's statement that "Chha dal kha!" Gaa Daju and Sama Daju ended up as slaves of Batha Kija. In the Dabali of Patan Batha Kija once sells both Gaa Daju and Sama Daju to a goldsmith. In contemporary Nepali politics, 'Batha Kija' consistently outmaneuvered both Gaa Daju and Sama Daju despite holding significantly fewer seats in the parliament than both of them.

The plot of both performances favors Batha Kija, which is another resemblance between the comedy of Patan Dabali and the performative politics practiced by leaders. Despite being younger than the other two, Batha Kija in the Dabali uses cunning to establish his superiority. He even sells Sama Daju and Gaa Daju. He is from Patan (Lalitpur), and if the farces were created by people from Bhaktapur or Kathmandu, the plot might be turned upside down. Currently, Batha Kija from Patan (Lalitpur) is prime minister with the right play and strategic acumen despite being a junior member of the party. The quality of the leader is to be sold with personal benefits in the long run of Nepalese political sights along with the visionless paths for the well-being of the people within the territory of the nation and Nepalese feature of the language (Jora, 2019).

Politicians frequently employ the trickster persona to gain political legitimacy and exhibit charismatic giftedness in a theatrical performance at the societal liminal stage (Pontianus, 2021, p. 31). This character portrays himself or herself as a charismatic leader who appears to have solutions for the current state of the community or society. As a result, he or she turns into an anti-structure agent who uses lying and trickery. The cunning politician uses this tool to obtain authority and communal resources. Therefore, the study shows that the majority of Nepali politicians in the country's political system have used this approach frequently.

The performance of *Batha Pyakha* represents the genre 'Farce' as it is "a short comedy whose humor is due to exaggeration of effects and distortion of incidents" and a "[f]arce may be defined as an ultra-logical comedy, in which everything is pushed to extremes, and the hero is the plaything of special providences" (Ittthews, n.d., p. 213). In line with this, R. F. Sharp views, "a farce is a play in which exaggerated types of possible people are found" (ibid, p. 213). Generally, a farce exaggerates actual incidents, people, and happenings and can even present political characters and power relations through exaggeration in the form of 'political farce'. They create ludicrous effects by intentionally exaggerating the faults existed in politics and the society. However, there is an irony: the actions and activities of our politicians seem like an exaggeration of the actual farces performed in Patan *Dabali*. The 'farce politics' performed by our leaders have already surpassed the 'political farce' from *Dabali* and blurred all demarcation lines between *Dabali* and parliament in the discourse (Jora, 2021) of political contour.

"*Kartik Naach*" is translated as "*Kartik* dance" or "dance of Kartik." This is a traditional stage for the Patan (Lalitpur) people during their monthly festival in *Kartik*, the eighth month of the lunar calendar, named for, and taking place in, the month of *Kartik*, that is, during October and November. The name is a combination of "*Kartik*" (referring to the month) and "*Naach*". In essence, "*Kartik Naach*" is a traditional dance-drama spectacle, already centuries old, occurring annually in Patan Durbar Square during Kartik Purnima and during the days of Kartik (Kartik Naach, 1641; Nepal Tourism Board, n.d.; Culture Nepal, 2021). Kartik Naach is a traditional dance-drama festival in Patan, also known as Lalitpur, in Nepalese culture, where devotional storytelling in dances, melodies, and mythological circumstances is practiced, especially in Kartik months or during Kartik Purnima days. This is one of South Asia's oldest surviving dramatic performances, where Hindu epics and mythological legends are unfolded in artistic presentations. Kartik Naach is a traditional Patan festival, where dances, music, and mythological storytelling are practiced (Kartik Naach, 2023). The tradition of this festival traces its origin in the 17th century in the royal kingdom of Patan, being organized at Patan Durbar Square during the month of Kartik (Kartik Naach, 2023).

Methods and Materials

This research paper is qualitative in nature, and is primarily based on library research and, consequently, its analysis is based on secondary sources. Moreover, this paper follows fundamentally hermeneutical (Jora, 2026) phenomenological and thematic analytical approach to portray the theatrical performance related to the characteristics of trickery and deception of three prominent leaders in contemporary

Nepali politics. This study encompasses the theoretical methodology of new textualities, a position of intersectional approach where theories from diverse disciplines, such as theatrical performance and trickster archetype converge. According to Lane (2013), such a theoretical model is sometimes referred to as the "hybrid approach" (p. 724). This modality might be even helpful in dealing with the paradoxical crossing of fact and fiction. Likewise, this work tries to establish the corporeal relationship between Nepali traditional theatrical performance and contemporary political performance within the theme of trickery and deception. It has attempted to depict the trickster of leaders in their behavior and styles of political rhetoric.

Results and Discussion

Body of the Actors and the Body of the Politicians

Body serves as a powerful tool for expression, persuasion and representation both in the fields of theatre and politics. While we observe the role and use of body in these realms both the actors and politicians go through similar dimensions. As an art form, theatre relies heavily on bodily expression to convey emotion, follow the narrative, and convey the meaning to the audiences. Similarly, politicians utilize their body for effective communication among audiences. Both actors and politicians engage in performative practices, and these bodily performances constitute the process of their becoming. Performances for politicians determine their presence. Phelan (2013) connects the body and performance with the formation of self as well as depicting the presence, "In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of 'presence'" (p.148). Through the performance, the body goes through the process of being and becoming.

If we observe the bodily performances of our three political leaders, it is clearly visible that all of them always try to convey certain messages to their supporters. Among them Gaa Daju (the leader 1) and Sama Daju (the leader 2) have opposite personalities and words. Gaa Daju makes his personal activities less public since by doing that he aims to hide his personal weakness. However, Sama Daju always depicts his multiple vocations and sportsmanship because in one hand he aims to prove himself as a multi potential personality. On the other hand, by projecting sportsmanship, he aims to hide theatricality of his health condition from the public. Batha Kija (the leader 3) also has his own trademark of speech and body language to influence the mass towards him wherever he goes in the nation. In this sense, the use of the body by our political leaders too embodies their characters as well as conveys certain messages which are also a part of the 'formation of subjective self' among our leaders.

The bodily performances of the politicians have another notion of power dynamics. For theatre scholar Schechner (1997), the body in performance is a site of cultural expression since it embodies "the limits of what we think, do, and feel" (p.8). Actors manipulate their bodies to evoke empathy, provoke thought, and challenge societal norms. It makes audiences engage in a shared experience of catharsis and reflection. Likewise, in politics, the body is crucial for shaping public perception and garnering support. Even during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw large posters (photos) of our prime minister across the walls and poles in Kathmandu. This body posturing also has a direct link to the power relation. Politicians carefully choreograph their gestures, facial expressions, and postures to convey confidence, authority, and empathy. Our leaders use the body and performativity in order to gain much power or to depict larger than life personality among the people. Contextually, Butler (2011) notes, the body are not only "a medium of communication but also a site of power relations, subject to regulation and scrutiny" (p. 2). The concept of body resembles to Nepali politicians' performative aspects of their bodies to craft compelling narratives, which establish connections with their voters, and project an image of strength and competence.

The performative nature of body of an artist and political leader has another similarity. Both in the theatrical stage and political stage the judgment or authenticity takes at a backseat to the spectacle. Politicians could use a variety of forums to demonstrate their performativity, much as actors develop identities on the theatrical stage (Dabali). In this sense, "political theater" could refer to events such as political rallies, TV shows, interviews, speeches, and the widespread use of video clips on social media these days. These leaders place less importance on student learning, human casualties, and innovation in the country's system (Jora, 2023). In this way, the performativity of the body has become a crucial component of the majority of politicians.

Among our three prominent political leaders, Sama Daju (the leader 2) seems one step ahead of Batha Kija in terms of bodily performativity. We can observe the vibrant use of bodily performance by Sama Daju in terms of body's emancipation from disciplinary practice. Rich and Evans (2011) assert that "when the body becomes the object of science, it becomes the object of a systematic, analytical examination" (p. 349) and this body turns to be an object of study and regulated by "educators and health professionals" through "systematically review, analyze and regulate the body . . . through measurement of weight, health and activity" (p. 349). With transplanted kidneys, Sama Daju's body becomes an object of experiment, and the public too doubts his health condition. But the leader 2 is too much active in the discourse (Jora, 2022) and prefers much in preaching people with his ideas in the

political platforms even signaling the taste of multilingual turn (2020) getting the pattern of *dabalis*. However, Sama Daju time and again projects the activeness of his body by depicting his posture of playing music, playing football, table tennis and cricket. On one hand he aims to give a message that his body is fit and fine among the public. On the other hand, his projection of body could be regarded as a "subjugation" of the body (Foucault, 1995, p. 180).³

Foucault's (1995) idea is concerned with body politics. He takes body as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, transit communication routes and support for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge. Though the body is considered as object and target of power the same body is docile and may be subjected, transformed and even improved. By the active projection of the body Sama Daju hides the severity of his health from the public, projects his physical (bodily) capabilities and recollects the political power. For Foucault (1978), the body is not just a "physical entity" but a site of "political inscription, where power relations are inscribed and contested" (p, 25) which is perfectly applicable in the bodily performativity of our politicians. In this sense, the body plays a vital role even in political performances.

There is no difference in the intention of being more expressive or reserved by our political leaders. All of them do so to hide their weakness from public. Here is a very contradictory nature of our politicians in terms of their reality and bodily performativity. Although all three have grown old always try to depict themselves as young men to the audience. Similarly, they try to project themselves as clean, devoted and saviour personalities for the nation and its people though most of the time they engage in power play among themselves like the tricksters from Patan *Dabali*. And their speeches are sleepery and prioritize less to the strategies to stop students within the nation for the mainstream development (Jora, 2026).

In a similar vein, our politicians rarely carry out their duties as statesmen or political leaders and frequently deceive one another. Our politicians' physical identities and bodies are marked by this discrepancy between their looks and realities, acts, and duties; these characteristics also influence how we see them. According to Ahmed (2004), corporeal experiences form our "vision of reality and influence our

³Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, explores how throughout history, societies have exerted strict control over the body through various mechanisms of power. He terms these methods as "disciplines," which meticulously regulate bodily operations and maintain a constant state of subjection. And, despite the control exerted by disciplinary powers, Foucault suggests that the body's resistance manifests through various forms of agencies.

political subjectivity" (p. 45). "The corporeal nature of the body shows the embodied practices through which individuals negotiate their social existence" (p. 67), according to Merleau-Ponty (2012). The discrepancy between the duties and deeds of contemporary politicians resembles metaphorical masks, which may be related to Batha Pyakha's use of masks. Mask performances are a part of both *Batha Pyakha* and *Kartik Naach*. Performers don masks that correspond to their personas during the performances. The audience may identify characters based on their masks and veils because all of Gaa Daju, Sama Daju, and Batha Kija appear in masks and disguises. By looking at their masks, we can even determine how old these three characters are. In essence, the actors are regular people from Patan, and they wear masks to make the characters seem strange, magical, or exceptional to the general population. In a similar vein, our politicians attempt to present a different image by donning masks that conceal their actual selves. However, since the majority of the local audience in Patan is aware of who works behind the masks at *Batha Pyakha*, the "farce politics" these leaders engage in reveals their true identities as tricksters or deceivers.

The performance of the body has been a common ground for theatre and politics, and it relates to the complexities of human experiences and power dynamics. Since body captures the entire performance, from the stage to the campaign trail, it serves as a site of performance, negotiation, and resistance in order to shape audiences' understanding. After examining the interplay between theatre and politics, we can understand the role of performance in shaping our perceptions of reality and in influencing the course of history. The aforementioned activities are the common characteristics of theatre and politics. However, the irony is that the task of trickery and deception in our politics is more intense than the actual theatrical performance of the *Dabali*. The sequences of political farce that have been ongoing in our political scenario have already surpassed the theatrical performance of Patan *Dabali*, as if our mythical/cultural/theatrical tricksters have taken on new bodies and are repeating the same acts of trickery and deception with increasing intensity. Nepali politics is now seen in the subterfuge and double-dealing.

Conclusion

Nepali politics operates around Gaa Daju, Sama Daju, and Batha Kija presenting empathy rhetorically, but deceiving each other in reality. Observing the theatrical personalities of farce plays and major contemporary Nepali political leaders reveals a similarity in the narratives of deception, trickery, and power dynamics. The traditional folk plays, *Batha Pyakha* (a form of farce), embody the timeless themes and archetypes of trickster personas that have been transcended by the contemporary Nepali political leaders. In our contemporary political landscape, the roles of three

theatrical tricksters (Gaa Daju, Sama Daju and Bath Kija) have been performed by three politicians from major three major political parties through the interplay of power and performance, just like the traditional narratives of trickery and deception. Just like the tricksters of Patan *Dabali* our political leaders too have been employing similar tactics to hold the power in contemporary politics. Thus, the universality of trickster personality has not only crossed the cultural/geographical boundaries but also has crossed the field of art, culture and myths and reached into contemporary Nepali political scenario. It has equally blurred the demarcation lines between theatrical performance and political performance.

Similarly, the corporeal nature of political leadership, marked by their bodily expression and performative gestures, has turned the political scenario into the stage of *dabali* where they have been performing timeless trickery and deception. Like actors on a theatrical stage, politicians too have been manipulating their bodies to convey messages of strength, competence, and authenticity by blurring the boundaries between appearance and reality. Like performers from *Batha Pyakha*, they have been trying to hide their true identity and present themselves as something else. In summary, our political landscape has turned into a *Dabali of Patan*, where the act of deception and trickery has escalated into a more extreme mode than those in theatre. In this way, the political discourse reveals the realm of betrayal and duplicity.

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