

Mahalaxmi Jatra: An Amazing Festival Tourism Product of Lubhu, Nepal

Lok Nath Dulal, PhD

Associate Prof. CD Culture, TU
dulalloknath@gmail.com

Sapna Singh

Student of BPSG Program
Padmakanya Multiple Campus, TU.
singhsana177@gmail.com

Abstract

Lubhu is one of the historical and cultural tourist destinations located on Mahalaxmi municipality 8, Lalitpur district of Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. There can observe and have a wonderful experience of tangible and intangible cultural tourism properties within core. The people of Lubhu annually celebrate different colourful festivals and Jatras such as Mahalaxmi Jatra, Nepal Sambat, Buddha Jayanti, Dashain, Tihar, Yomahri Punhi, Gobrateswor Mahadev jatra, Gaijatra, Krishna Janmasthanmi, Naag Panchami, Gathemangal, Ram Nawami, Chaite Dashain, Holi, Shivaratri, Shree Panchami, Pishach Chaturdashi, Byaja Chaturdashi on the special auspicious occasions. Among them, Mahalaxmi Jatra is an amazing cultural heritage and festival tourism product of Lubhu. It celebrates in the month of Baishakha especially from Baishakha Sukla Tritiya till to Ekadasi which takes more than a week for its completion. It is considered a hallmark of indigenous cultural identity and a popular cultural tourism product of the destination. But, through the tourist and tourism perspectives this Jatra is still not adequately exposed. Hence it is necessary to recognize Mahalaxmi Jatra as a prominent tourism product of Lubhu. How it is celebrated? what its celebrating processes, processions, rites and rituals, customs and customary laws? how far it is considered as an important source for alluring tourists and what are the major problems and challenges that hindering over the promotion to it as a tourism product? are the major questions and research gaps which have been answered and addressed through this paper. Likewise, to explore the different aspects embedded with Mahalaxmi Jatra of Lubhu and to examine Mahalaxmi Jatra of Lubhu as an amazing cultural tourism product are the key

objectives of the paper. In this paper both primary and secondary data and qualitative approach have been used and it is based on analytical and descriptive research design.

Keywords: Customs and customary law, mahalaxmi Jatra, means and materials, processes and procession, rites and rituals, tourism product

Introduction

Lubhu is a place that is part of *Mahalaxmi* Municipality located in word no. 8 of *Lalitpur* district in *Bagamati* province of Nepal. It is a sub-urban *Newar* habitation situated about fifteen kilometers south east of Kathmandu and slightly northeast of *Lalitpur*. There is a culturally most important temple of *Mahalaxmi*, goddess peace and prosperity due to it's the municipality was also named *Mahalaxmi*.

Lubhu was identified as the different names through the ages. During *Lichchhavi* period it was known as the name *paschimakograma* including with *Hansagrihadranga*. In medieval period it was identified from the different names such as *Lamhmu*, *Lahanu*, *Lumha*, and *Lumhu* (Shakya, 2054, p. 77). Sometimes it was also addressed by the name *Suvarnapur* during the medieval (Vajracharya, 2056, p. 112). Today, it is known by the name *Lubhu* is a corrupted form of *Lumhu* which was used in medieval period.

The temple of Goddess *Mahalaxmi* is one of the important heritage sites of *Lubhu*. As per the descriptions of *Bhasha Vamsavali* the *Mahalaxmi* of Bode, *Bhaktapur*; *Mahalaxmi* of *Lagan tol*, *Patan*; *Mahalaxmi* of *Khokan*, *Lalitpur* and the *Mahalaxmi* of *Lubhu*, *Lalitpur* are the most famous and powerful goddesses of Kathmandu Valley (Shrestha, 2064, p. 39). Likewise, *Mahalaxmi Jatra*, *Nepal Sambat*, *Buddha Jayanti*, *Dashain*, *Tihar*, *Yomahri Punhi*, *Gobrateswor Mahadev jatra*, *Gaijatra*, *Krishna Janmasthanmi*, *Naag Panchami*, *Gathemangal*, *Ram Nawami*, *Chaite Dashain*, *Holi*, *Shivaratri*, *Shree Panchami*, *Pishach Chaturdashi*, *Byaja Chaturdashi* etc. are the major festivals and *jatras* the people of *Lubhu* celebrate them in different seasons each and every year. Among them, through religious and tangible and intangible cultural perspectives the temple of *Mahalaxmi* and the *jatra* of goddess in *Lubhu* are known as one of the important heritage of Nepal.

The warm and cozy town of *Lubhu* carries numerous exciting folklores. Goddess *Mahalaxmi* and her tales is what lie in the hearts of all the locals here. The temple holds a special place in the lifestyle of *Lubhu*. There is also a tall white template of the *Gobhreshwar Mahadev* built in the same style as that of the *Krishna Mandir* of *Patan* durbar square that makes for an interesting piece of structure to study as well as revere.

The people of *Lubhu* have their own unique *Jatras* and festivals, the most famous being the *Mahalaxmi Jatra* observed in the month of *Baishakh* (April-May). It takes more than one week in which different types of activities can be observed. Therefore, it is an amazing

and wonderful festival of *Lubhu*. During the *Jatra*, the whole of the *Newar* community of *Lubhu* gets out of their daily monotonies to celebrate in a truly carefree fashion. It is not only an event related with the *jatra* of goddess *Mahalaxmi*, the golden masks of other gods and goddesses such as *Mahabhairav*, *Ganesh*, *Aakash Bhjairav*, *Kumari*, and *Kumar* also carry on the chariots during the *jatra*. Due to its sometime the festival is also named as *Mahalaxmi Mahabhairav Jatra of Lubhu*. Hence, from the tourist and tourism point of views, the procession of *jatra* of goddess *Mahalaxi* is to be taken as one of the important source of alluring to the tourists and festival tourism product of *Lubhu* as well.

Problems of the Study

There are several studies concerning festivals and *Jatras* but specific studies on the *Mahalaxmi Jatra of Lubhu* as an amazing tourism product of *Lalitpur*, 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 researchers to prepare this research paper with the following research questions such as what is *Mahalaxmi Jatra of Lubhu*? how it is celebrated? why *Mahalaxmi Jatra of Lubhu* is known as an amazing cultural tourism product of the site?

Objectives of the Study

On the one side to trace out the historicity and identifying *Lubhu* as an important cultural heritage site is the general objective of this study. On the other to explore the different aspects embedded with *Mahalaxmi Jatra of Lubhu* and to examine *Mahalaxmi Jatra* as an amazing cultural tourism product are the key objectives of the paper.

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.

Anderson (1988) *The Festivals of Nepal*, Smith (2003) *Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies*, ILO (2009) *Abhyashma adhibasi janajati adhikar*, Shinde (2010) *Managing Hindu Festivals in Pilgrimage Sites: Emerging Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges*, Bowdin, Allen, Toole, Harris, & Macdonnel (2011) *Events Management*, Page & Connel (2014) *The Routledge Handbook of Events*, Dulal (2022) *Prospects of Promoting Festival Tourism: A*

Case Study of Khame Jatra in Bhaktapur have been reviewed for generating theoretical approach for this paper.

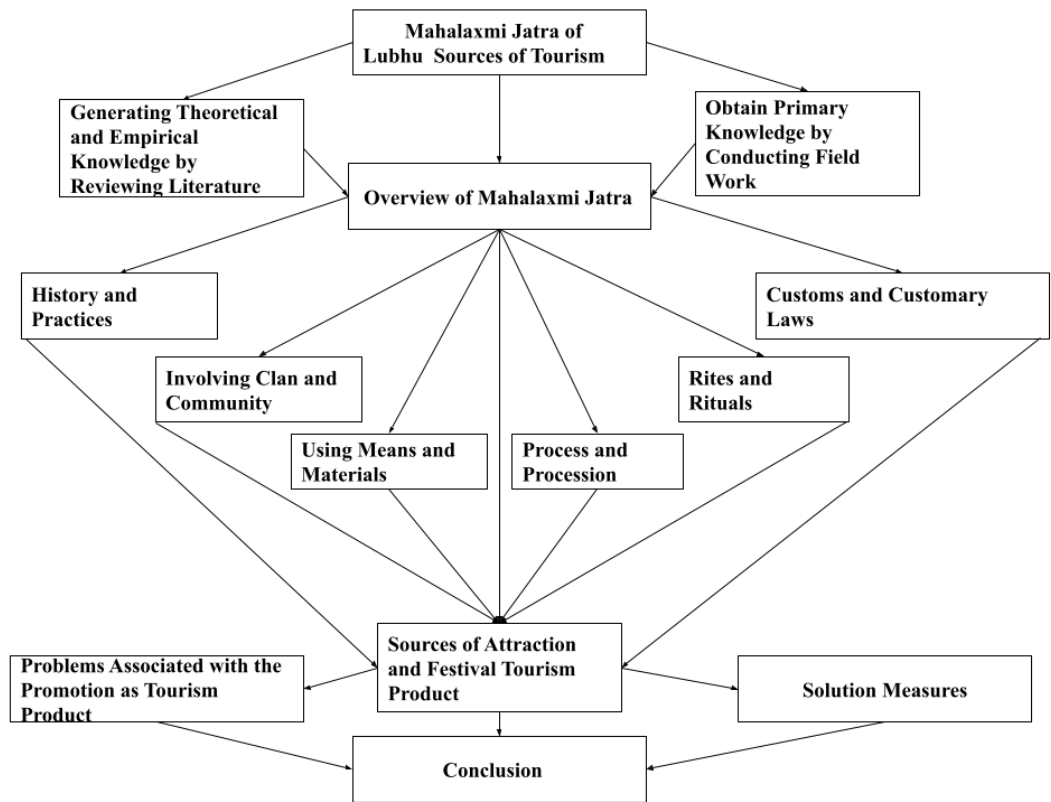
Likewise, Joshi (2028) *Madhyakalin Abhilekha (Inscriptions of Medieval Period)*, Regmi (1966) *Medieval Nepal (Vol-II)*, Shakya (2054) *Lubhusthita Shree Mahalaxmi Mahabhairav Mandirsanga Sambandhita Tamrapatra (Copper Plate Inscriptions Associated with the Temples of Shree Mahalaxmi Mahabhairav of Lubhu)*, Sharma (1983) *Neolithic Tools from Nepal*, Levy (1992) *Mesocosm, Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*, Shrestha (2002 AD) *Lubhu Khadga Jatra (Khadga Jatra of Lubhu)*, Shrestha (2014 AD) *Lubhuka Puratatwika Samkadaharu (Archaeological Heritages of Lubhu)*, Shrestha (2064) *Lubhu Mahalaxmi Jatra: Ek Parichaya (An Introduction to Lubhu Mahalaxmi Jatra)*, Dhaubanjari (2079) *Kathmandau Upatyakaka Bastiharu (The Settlement of Kathmandu Valley)* have been reviewed for generating empirical knowledge and finding the research gaps as well.

Methodology

This study deals with religious belief, deities, worship system, festivals and processes and steps of *Jatras*, customs and customary laws as well, therefore, it is based on qualitative approach. Both primary and secondary data have been used. Field work is the main source for primary data. By using observational and interview methods the first hand data have been collected. Researchers adopted participant observation approach on the particular events of *Mahalaxmi Jatra* which helps to collect detail information. Similarly, for collecting primary data, structured interviews were taken with the key informants. The essential secondary information were collected through conducting literature review of published and unpublished different sources such as journals, books, reports and electronic versions.

Conceptual Framework

During the study researchers have applied theoretical and empirical approaches in accordance with the requirements of issues for generating theoretical and practical knowledge. Along with the sketching historicity of festival and jatra in the world and Nepal this paper helps to explore the *Mahalaxmi Jatra* as an amazing tourism product and different issues associated with the *jatra*. Hence, for addressing the above mentioned research gaps, problems and fulfilling the determine objectives the following conceptual framework has been adopted.



As per the key words, problems, objectives and figure mentioned above, involving clans and communities, using means and materials, processes and procession, rites and rituals, customs and customary law, sources of attraction as festival tourism product, problems associated with safeguarding the heritage and promotion of tourism and solution measures have been discussed in this paper.

Findings and Discussion

During the field survey, researchers have applied observation and an interview method for gathering primary data. What is *Mahalaxmi Jatra*? How and when is it celebrated? Why the people of *Lubhu* celebrate it? what are its performing rites and rituals, customs and customary law? how far it is considered as an amazing cultural tourism product of *Lubhu, Lalitpur*? what are the major problems associated with safeguarding it and promotion of tourism and which steps should be taken for solution measures? These are the major questions which have been asked to the local people during the field work. Similarly, the process, rites and rituals and participation of local and tourists have been observed during the field survey.

Finally, the findings and discussions have been presented through the following sub-headings such as an over view of *Mahalaxmi Jatra*, history and practices, involving clans and communities, using means and materials, processes and procession, rites and rituals, customs and customary law, sources of attraction as festival tourism product, problems associated with safeguarding the heritage and promotion of tourism and solution measures

An Over View of Mahalaxmi Jatra

Locals believe that Goddess *Mahalaxmi* arrived in *Lubhu* making her way from *Gundu*, *Sisnery*, and *Devisthan*. When *Shringi Rishi* was meditating in *Sisnery Cave*, *Mahalaxmi* and *Bhairav* were embodied in *Gundu*. After meditation and numerous rituals, they were established at *Devisthan* a temple further up in *Lubhu*. *Devisthan* is believed to be the maternal home of *Mahalaxmi*. The idol of *Mahalaxmi* remains inside the *Mahalaxmi* temple; however, during *Jatra* it is placed in a chariot and taken to *Devisthan* (<https://thesaarang.com>).

It is believed that goddess *Mahalaksmi* helps to bring auspices of peace, prosperity and fulfilling their all desires to an individual, in families and communities as well. There is a temple's of goddess *Mahalaksmi* in the core of *Lubhu*. According to stone inscriptions the history of this shrine can trace till to the *Malla* periods. The temple goddess *Mahalaksmi* is known as an important religious architecture of *Lubhu*. There are altogether five layers of gold-plated masks of the above mentioned deities enshrined in the temple. As soon as the existing one gets even a slight damage, the figurines are covered by yet another layer of the masks made of precious metals and plated by gold.

The temple exists as one of the nine heavenly powers in Kathmandu Valley. The copper inscription found inside the temple takes us back to Nepal *Sambat* 847. The stone inscription dates the history of *Mahalaxmi* temple back to *Malla* dynasty. Even though the wave of urbanization is seen to hit the old town, it still has managed to conserve the warm feel of the countryside. During harvest months, the grains are scattered on the roads adding to the vibrant vibe of this culturally rich town. The people of *Lubhu* make sure not to harvest any crop when the idol of *Mahalaxmi* is not inside the *Mahalaxmi* temple. It is believed that if any resident harvests crops at the time then all the crops would get damaged.

It is believed that in ancient times, many people there were seen to have a common condition of swelling in the neck. Although there is no scientific explanation, the people there say that it was because the *Mahalaxmi* was established above *Gobhrateshwar Mahadev*. Therefore, after conducting different rituals, the *Mahalaxmi* temple was relocated in the gateway of *Lubhu*.

History and Practices

Lubhu is located in *Lalitpur* district which is one of the oldest human settlement sites among the several places of Kathmandu Valley, where different types of festivals and Jatra have been practiced from the very earlier (Shrestha, 2014, p. 31). Neolithic stone tools have been discovered from *Lubhu* (Sharma, 1983, p. 1). Therefore, the history of human settlement in *Lubhu* can be traced till to the prehistoric period. It is historically and culturally important place during the medieval period. There absentees of inscriptional records which deals properly to the *Lubhu* before medieval period (Dhaubanjari, 2079, p. 204). An inscription of King *Narendra Dev* of *Anatalingeswor* close to *Lubhu* mentions *Hansagrihadranga paschimakogramasahitasya* which means *Hansagriha* town including the village of western part (Vajracharya, 2030, pp. 485-489). This evidence suggests that during the *Lichchhavi* period *Lubhu* was developed as a human settlement knowing with a part of *Hansagriha* town. Likewise, there find another inscription of *Abhaya Malla* of early medieval period from *Motitar* (Vajracharya & Malla, 1985, p. 25 & 35). It is nearest village of *Lubhu*. This historical record also helps to trace out the historicity of *Lubhu* back to early medieval period.

During the late medieval period it was a fortified city belonged to *Lalitpur* kingdom. At that time there were strong entrance gateways on the four side of the city. The *Chwaya* (upper gate) was in the east, *Kwanaya* (lower gate was in the west, *Macha* (not open) was in the north and nasal gate was in the south (Dhaubanjari, 2079, p. 206). Now days they are not observe in structures. Only ruins of the eastern gateway can be seen other are completely demolished and disappeared.

There are interesting folklores explaining about the name of *Lubhu*. *Lubhu* got its name in *Newari* word means Golden Plate. Mainly, there are four legends which reveal the causes of its identity as the name of *Lubhu*. The first one tells that once upon a medieval period, while the king of *Lalitpur* was came into here, he saw beautiful scene of mustered flowers that made him quite happiness and immediately expressed '*Lumbhukhani*' means golden plant. Then, local people started to address the site as the name *Lubhu* (Dhaubanjari, 2079, p. 205).

The second legend emphasizes that during the medieval period this settlement site was affected by an epidemic. For the protection from the epidemic the queen *Ganga Maharani* sold her *Lubhu* (*Lu* means gold and *Bhu* means plate) i.e. gold plate to generate funds and protect to the citizens of the city. Thereafter, local people started to identify it as the name of *Lubhu* (Shrestha, 2014, p. 31).

As per the third legend it is believed that there was a homosexual resident who worshipped *Mahalaksmi* and *Gobhrateshwar Mahadev* to resolve his confused sexual orientation. After three years of devoted worship, the Gods were finally happy and granted

the worshipper the body of a complete man. Knowing no bounds for his happiness upon this, the devotee is said to have offered both the deities' plates made of gold, and hence named the place "Lubhu", meaning the same.

According to the forth legend mentioned by local people, during the period of epidemic sorrow God *Bhairav* himself laid under golden umbrella to protect the people from disease. Then after, gradually the place was called 'Subarna Chhatrapur' but was called 'Lubhu', which means the same in *Newari*.

Mahalaksmi Jatra in *Lubhu* is conducted during the month of *Baishakh*. The *Khat Jatra* started on *Achhya Tritiya* along with the *Rato Machhendranath Jatra*. The *Khat Jatra* is observed on *Panchami*. More or less ten days long this festival is celebrated with feast and entertainment in the company of friends, family and relatives. It is believed that one out of four wheels of the chariot of *Rato Machhendranath* is regarded as the representative of the *Bhiarav* of *Lubhu*. So, along with the starting of *Machhendranath Jatra* in *Jawlakhel*, *Khat Jatra* also begins here in *Lubhu* (<https://thuprai.com>). It is believed that *Ganga* Maharani Queen of *Malla* regime in 650 *Nepal Sambat* started the *jatra*. According to an ancient myth, *Lubhu* was affected by an epidemic. *Ganga* Maharani sold her *Lubhu* (Lu means gold and Bhu means plate) i.e. gold plate to protect the city from the epidemic and started the *jatra* (<https://thehimalayantimes.com>).

Involving Groups and Communities

Newar are the main dwellers of the core of *Lubhu*. About 730 acres of land of the core settlement areas of the *Lubhu* is populated by the same ethnic community. They are mainly belonged to *Shresthas*, *Maharjans*, *Rajthala* and *Gubhaju* sub-caste in the main town area. While Brahmin and *Chhetri* also found little in numbers in the outskirts of the town. *Mahalaxmi Jatra* is a Hindu festival where majorities of Hindu *Newar* take part whereas; Buddhist *Newars* also participate during the celebration of festival. This is the time of the year when the whole of the *Newar* community of *Lubhu* gets out of their daily monotonies to celebrate in a truly carefree fashion.

As the roles and responsibilities *Thakali* a leader and an eldest member of *guthi*, *Kanafatta* Yogi, a saint does have cutting the ears of *Nath* Sect of *Pasupatinath* of *Deopatan*, peoples of *Maharjan* sub-caste of *Jyapu* group, a Lama priest for performing *puja* with *tantrik* rituals, and musician with their musical instruments for presenting music on the streets are seemed very important personal during the celebration of this *jatra*.

The idol placed inside *Mahalaxmi* temple is taken out by *Thakali* head of *Mahalaxmi* temple an eldest member of *guthi* and placed in the chariot for the *Jatra* to begin. One set of chariot filled with gold plated masks of deities carries idols of *Ganesh*, *Mahalaxmi* and *Kumar* while the other set carries *Mahabhairav* and *Kumari* (<https://thesaarang.com>).

Using Means and Materials

On the basis of traditions, cultural norms and values, rites and rituals, customs and customary laws there needed several things, means and materials for celebrating every festivals, *jatras* and religious ceremonies. Different types of flowers and fruits, flowers and plants leaves, incents, oil lamps, nectars, white and coloring rice etc. are more or less common things, which are needed in every religious ceremonies. Some things, means and materials are taken as the specific objects for especial one.

As per the same doctrine during the *Jatra* of *Mahalaxmi* gold plated masks of deities of the *Mahabhairav*, *Ganesh*, *Mahalaxmi*, *Aakash Bhjairav*, *Kumari*, and *Kumar*, two *khata*s i.e. chariots, nols i.e. polls use for carrying *khata*, *syabaji* a kind of food, seven *Thakalis* and their seven sons, different types of dresses and ornaments of gods and goddesses, musical instruments especially *Newari baja* such as *Dhimaya*, *Dha*, *Khin*, *Daha*, *Dam Khin*, *Mag Khin*, *Bhushya*, *chushya*, *Ta*, *Tai-nai*, *Piwach*, *Sarangi*, *Guitar*, *Sitar*, *Violin*, *Basuri*, *Murali* etc. and *panche baja* a set of five types of musical instruments (*Narsinga*, *Sanahi*, *Jhyali*, *Damaha* and *Temko*), rice, *koncha* a pot of alcohol which represent the god *Bhairav*, *Bhomdhyo* a deity made by paper, *Jadhyo* a deity made by rice, alcohol, male goat for sacrifice, garland of intestine of sacrificed goat, different species of flowers and fruits, flowers and plants leaves, incents, oil lamps, nectars, white and coloring rice etc. are the most needed things as the basic means and materials.

Processes and Procession

Khat Jatra, the main day of *Mahalaxmi Maha Bhairav Jatra*, was observed in *Lubhu* of *Lalitpur*. The *jatra* is celebrated with much fanfare in *Lubhu*. Idols of deities *Mahalaxmi*, *Maha Bhairav*, *Aakash Bhjairav*, *Kumari*, *Kumar* were kept in the *khaast* (palanquin) and taken around the *Lubhu* area. The *Khatjatra* started on *Achhya Tertiya* along with the *Rato Machhendranath Jatra*. The *Khat Jatra* is observed on *panchami* (<https://thehimalayantimes.com>).

The gold-plated masks of different deities are kept in the two chariots inside the temple of *Mahalaksmi*. Among the two, one of the chariots is used to carry a set of *Mahalaksmi*, *Ganesh* and *Kumar* statuettes, whereas the other carries another set of *Mahabhairav*, *Ganesh* and *Kumari*. The chariot is then hoisted by drunken revelers to make a complete tour of all the houses in the locality followed an elaborate *Bhoj* (feast), which is an essential part of the merrymaking.

In fact, there is another shrine further up the location of the main *Mahalaksmi* Temple that houses the mother of Goddess *Mahalaksmi*. The chariot is taken around the town and to *Devasthan* which is the *Mahalaxmi*'s mother's temple so that the mother- daughter meeting

can take place which also marks the climax of the *Jatra*. So, when you're here don't miss out on *Gobhrateshwar Mahadev* temple and *Devasthan* nearby (<https://thesaarang.com>).

Formally, *Mahalaxmi jatra* starts from the day *Achhaya Tritiya* and came to an end in the *Ekadashi* altogether which takes nine days for reaching its concluding remark. Therefore, the whole celebration processes and processions can be classified into the preparation stage, first day, second day, third day, fourth day, fifth day, sixth day, seventh day, eighth day and ninth day in which different rites and rituals perform in different places where the procession arrive. In those days the procession circumambulated all the villages such as *Debanani, Aakhya, Ganchhe, Tagontu, Takhanchhe, Bakunani, Bhagawatilachhi, Dasi, Nasal, Duneganchhe, Ghasi, Nhuchhefal, Dabunchhe, Nyatha, Taleju*, and *Gobhrateswor toles* of the core of Lubhu. The details of performing rites and rituals and customs and customary law associated with the *jatra* given separately in below.

Rites and Rituals

Overall, *Mahalaxmi jatra* is nine days long festival celebrated in *Lubhu*. Therefore, the whole rites and rituals and activities carried out in the days associated with this *jatra* are analytically discussed on the basis of celebration days as following.

Preparation stage: For the proper preparation of *jatra Thakalis*, members of *Guthi*, local people and concerned authorities started to conduct managerial tasks from the days before. In this process the day before *Achhaya Tritiya* seven *Thakalis* have conducted all the works related with cleanness of the temple and all the areas covered by the procession. After completely *Chhaulabhu* i.e. locally called managing tasks the seven *Thakalis* and their seven sons celebrate *samayabajee bhoj* a kind of feast and seat over night without sleep there in the temple of goddess *Mahalaxmi*. Meanwhile, they decorated the deities by their dresses and ornaments. These entire tasks have been conducted within the preparation stage.

First day: It is occurred on the *Achhaya Tritiya tithi* of lunar calendar. After completing full phase preparation formally the *Jatra* started to procession of the *Baishakha Sukla* which is locally called *Bachhalathwa*. During the day, *Thakalis* performs *Chhyama Puja* i.e. apologies worship to the all gods and goddesses with chanting religious hymns in the main sanctums of the deities such as *Mahabhairav, Ganesh, Mahalaxmi, Aakash Bhjairav, Kumari*, and *Kumar* and carry on chronological order and bring out into the ground floor. Thereafter, finally the *Jatra* of goddess *Mahalaxmi* of *Lubhu* came to an end. The first day of the *Jatra* only remains the surrounding areas of the temple of goddess *Mahalaxmi*.

Second day: The second day of *jatra* is occurred on the fourth day of *Baishakha Sukla* i.e. *chauthi tithi* of Lunar Calendar. Early in the morning firstly daily worshipping of the deities on the *Khatas* i.e. chariots has been performed by the *Thakalis* and other devotees. Than the *Khatas* have carried on the shoulder of the people of *Maharjan* sub-caste of *Newar*

community and taken to way forward toward the *Dhyokha* or *Dhyochha* with traditional musical bands.

Dhyochha is the oldest site of goddess *Mahalaxmi* which is known as the maternal home where the special worship with sacrificed male goat to the god *Mahabhairav* has been paid by the chief *Thakali* (Shrestha, 2064, p. 40). Thereafter, the procession started to move into the different tolls i.e. villages in the core of *Lubhu* and finally reached into the courtyard of *Gobhrateswor Mahadev* where *Khatas* are kept in front of the temple of *Akash Bhairav*. Over night the *Khatas* are remaining there and offering special worship with *Jadhyo* i.e. a rounded piece made of six *mana* (a measuring tool) rice is known as the symbol of *Akash Bhairav* which is prepared by members of *Guthi* in the house of chief of *Thakali*. Meanwhile, seven *Thakalis* bring out the *Jadhyo* into the shrine of *Akash Bhairav* and paid special sacred worship with sacrifice of a male goat and offered a garland of intestine of sacrifice goat by the priest and *Thakaili* as well (Shrestha, 2064, p. 40).

After completing afore mentioned rites and rituals chariots have been carried over on the shoulder of eight people of *Maharjan* sub-caste of *Newar* community on the rotating manner. It is believed that the chariots cannot keep on the ground during the *Jatra* period and nobody can touch the deities, chariots and the eight carriers themselves (Shrestha, 2064, pp. 40-41).

Third day: It is occurred on the fifth day of *Baishakha Sukla* i.e. *panchami tithi* of Lunar Calendar. Third day of the *Jatra* started early in the morning with the worshiping of the deities on the *Khatas* i.e. chariots which has been performed by the *Thakalis* and other devotees. There after the *Jatra* of *Mahalaxmi*, *Mahabhairav* and *Akash Bhairav* begin. During the procession the *Khat* of *Akash Bhairav* keeps in the front and followed by the chariots of goddess *Mahakali* and *Mahabhairav* respectively. After revolving all the *toles* i.e. villages of the core, finally third day of the procession came into an end reaching on the courtyard of *Gobhrateswor Mahadev*.

Fourth day: The fourth day of *jatra* is felled on the sixth day of *Baishakha Sukla* i.e. *Shsthi tithi* of Lunar Calendar. Early in the morning *Thakalis* and other devotees offer worship to the deities on the *Khatas* i.e. chariots. In the fourth day procession the *Khata* of *Bhumdhyo* i.e. *Akash Bhairav* does not keep along with the others chariots which left there on the courtyard of *Gobhrateswor Mahadev*. Only the *Khatas* of goddess *Mahalaxmi* and *Mahabhairav* move into procession and covering all the *toles* of the core, the procession return back into the same place where the *Jatra* begun. Then again all the *Thakalis* pay special *puja* and carry the *Khatas* way forward toward the *Tagotun tole* where they offer *Ya puja* and celebrate a great feast.

Fifth day: The fifth day of *jatra* is occurred on the seventh day of *Baishakha Sukla* i.e. *Saptami tithi* of Lunar Calendar. It starts early in the morning with daily *puja* to the deities on the *Khatas* i.e. chariots which has been offered by *Thakalis* and other devotees. In this day the procession does not occur only public gathering, feast have also been conducted. Firstly, *Thakalis* perform special worship with playing *panche baja* and after concluding it all the *guthi* members and the people associated with the temple of goddess gather for a common and great feast.

Sixth day: It is occurred on the eighth day of *Baishakha Sukla* i.e. *astami tithi* of Lunar Calendar. Sixth day of the *Jatra* started early in the morning with the worshipping of the deities on the *Khatas* i.e. chariots which has been performed by the *Thakalis*. There after other devotees can get opportunities to pay obligation and worship to the deities. The process of obligation must be completed within 12 PM sharp. After completing it, a special worship with playing *panche baja* and a male goat has been sacrificed by the *Bhansari* (head of the representative of local government) on the behalf of local government. Then, in the evening, the *Khatas* of the deities carry into the *Ganesh* temple slightly eastern part of goddess *Mahalaxmi*.

Seventh day: The seventh day is occurred on the ninth day of *Baishakha Sukla* i.e. *nahami tithi* of Lunar Calendar. It is seventh day of the *Jatra* which starts early in the morning with paying worship to the deities on the *Khatas* i.e. chariots. It is offered by the every *Thakali* families. After completing obligation and worship seven *Thakalis* take part a feast called *syami*. In this day the *Khatas* of the deities bring out the close of goddess *Mahalaxmi*.

Eighth day: It is occurred on the tenth day of *Baishakha Sukla* i.e. *dashami tithi* of Lunar Calendar. As per the other days, eighth day of the *Jatra* started early in the morning with the worshipping of the deities on the *Khatas* i.e. chariots which has been performed by the *Thakalis* and other devotees. There after *Bhaumdhhyo* (god *Akash Bhairav*) carries toward the *Dhyochhen* village and after participation for *chipanthi* a kind of feast all the participants return back into their homes.

Ninth day: The ninth day is occurred on the eleventh day of *Baishakha Sukla* i.e. *ekadasi tithi* of Lunar Calendar. It is a final and concluding day of *jatra* starts early in the morning with paying worship to the deities on the *Khatas* i.e. chariots by the *Thakali* and other devotees. In this day a special sacrifice of male goat has been offered with playing different musical instruments, religious hymns, songs and slogans to the *Ganga Maharani* in the maternal home of goddess *Mahalaxmi*. There is compulsion to present all the *Thakalis*, *Bhansari* (head of the representative of local government), prestigious persons of the village, and Lama a tantric priest during this special occasion. Meanwhile, Lama a tantric priest performs *Chhyama Puja* i.e. apologies worship to the all gods and goddesses with chanting

religious hymns. Thereafter, finally the *Jatra* of goddess *Mahalaxmi* of *Lubhu* came to an end.

Concluding Activities: after completing all the procession, rites and rituals of the *Jatra*, reestablishing process of goddess *Mahalaxmi* and other deities in their original places i.e. main sanctums of the shrines have been conducted by the *Thakalis Nanki* i.e. wives of seven *Thakalis* with making herself purification. In this process, firstly, they establish vassal and oil lamps in the main sanctums, secondly seven *Thakalis* bring out all the deities in the original places, thirdly all the deities take holy bath and daily *puja* and finally after participating same *bhoj* a kind of feast the *Jatra* and concluding activities came into an end.

Customs and Customary Law

Customs and customary law is differentiates between each other one of the important aspects of identity of any indigenous ethnic groups. it helps to control, manage, guide and regulate a member, family and community within their norms, values, privilege traditions and discipline of that particular ethnic group. Customs are the organizations, which perform their responsibility as an institution in the community. Generally, every ethnic community has their own special organization. They do different task in their community according to the norms and requirements of the society. These types of organizations which are founded in accordance with the provision of customary law are called indigenous institutions of the community (ILO, 2009, P. 81).

Traditional or indigenous institutions are being established by the communities for the fulfillment of the objectives of the members of that particular society. It is a working system which is governed by the available laws, rules and regulations of the communities. As per the system there is provision of custom and customary laws in *Newar* community. *Guthi* and *Thakali* systems have been playing different types of roles in *Newar* society from the days of early. The *Newar* society has from very early times included miscellaneous associations of people formed for various special purposes called *Guthi*. The word derived from the Sanskrit term *gosthi* (Levy, 1992, p. 144). The *Thakali* is the head of the clan. He is the oldest member of it. By virtue of his age he possessed adequate knowledge of men and things, which concerned the entire clan. His opinions were sought on all matters affecting the clan particular religious observances and caste practices (Regmi, 1966, p. 733).

As per the views of the local people the *Newar* of *Lubhu* is also associated with the *Guthi* and *Thakali*, the leader of the clan. There were several *Guthis* in previous days. But now gradually the numbers of *Guthis* are reducing due to the negligence of local people. Now days, *Guthis* such as *Sona Guthi*, *Sei Guthi*, *Dauwali Guthi* and other some are functioning as the customs and customary laws of *Newar* community in *Lubhu*. More or less as the same doctrine *Khat Jatra* of goddess *Mahalaxmi* is totally depended on *Guthi* and *Thakali* and guided by the some certain customary laws which as follows:

- Before beginning of the procession firstly *Thakalis* have paid worship to the deities and followed by the *Kanafatta Yogi* a saint cutting ears of *Nath* Sect of *Pashupati Deopatan* with especial Tantric worship.
- Finally, after paying worship with sacrifice of male goat to the *Koncha* a pot full of alcohol as a symbol of ferocious god *Bhairav* on the courtyard by the *Thakalis* and the *Kanafatta Yogi*, the *jatra* formally inaugurated.
- Every year from *Achhaya Tritiya* to *Ekadashi* this festival is celebrated with keeping the deities on the *Khatas* i.e. in the chariots.
- During the period of *jatra* there is strictly prohibited to the members of *Guthi* for getting outside from the city.
- During the period of *jatra* there is strictly prohibited to *Thakali* males and females for having foods and other corns. They remain pure, thus, they eat only milk and fruits.
- During the *jatra* period *Thakalis* are remain pure they never impure while their relatives passing way.
- If there occur a death casualty in village, the *Khatas* of the deities must be covered by the pure white clothes and after completing funeral procession the cloths bring out from the *Khotas* and *jatra* again restart.
- The day before *Achhaya Tritiya* after finishing the management of *jatra*, seven *Thakalis* take *Syamabaji* a kind of *Newari* food item and seat over night without sleep.
- During the time when the seven *Thakalis* carry the masks of goddess and gods no body allow to touch them. They most remain pure without touching by others.
- While the deities bring out from the main sanctums, naturally the sanctums become deity less which cannot see, thus, there is strictly prohibited to see the open sanctums.
- There is a strong believed that while the *jatra* of *Ratomachhendra nath* came to an end, the *Jatra* of *Mahalaxmi* remains become incomplete.
- There was a prohibited for the skin and skin product goods and materials for the entrance within the town during the *jatra* period, but now days this custom came to an end and not seen in practices.

Sources of Attraction as Festival Tourism Product

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). In this context Dulal (2022, pp. 9-10) writes that:

However, a festival is an event ordinarily celebrated by a community, centering on some characteristic aspect of that community and its religions 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.

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 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.

Festivals, *Jatras and Mela* as the heritages of the nation can establish a separate identity of the countries in 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*. 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. In this regards Smith (2003, p. 140) mentions that:

Festivals celebrated in a particular location from small villages to large towns aims to bring people together to celebrate their local area. 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 program content with the attraction of tourists in mind.

There are plenty of festivals and *jatras* have been continuously practicing and celebrating in Lubhu a fantastic historical, cultural and architectural town of *Lalitpur*. Due to its tangible and intangible cultural heritage including festivals and *jatras* every year *Lubhu* hosts large number of tourists in its core. Here in *Lubhu* people celebrate different festivals in different seasons such as *Mahalaxmi Jatra*, *Nepal Sambat*, *Buddha Jayanti*, *Dashain*, *Tihar*, *Yomahri Punhi*, *Gobrateswor Mahadev jatra*, *Gaijatra*, *Krishna Janmasthanami*, *Naag Panchami*, *Gathemangal*, *Ram Nawami*, *Chaite Dashain*, *Holi*, *Shivaratri*, *Shree Panchami*, *Pishach Chaturdashi*, *Byaja Chaturdashi* etc. each and every year. *Mahalaxmi Jatra* is celebrated from *Achhaya Tiritiya* of *Baishakha Sukla* till to the *Ekadashi* especially in the *Newar* community is one of the important intangible cultural heritages, an indigenous feature, identity and tourism product of *Lubhu*.

As elsewhere in *Lubhu* this *jatra* can be exploited as the cultural tourism products and people of *Lubhu* doing so since three decades. Every season large numbers of tourists visited to observe tangible and intangible cultural heritage associated with it. Therefore, *Mahalaxmi Jatra* can be exploited in tourism markets as a significant tourism product.

The main day of *Mahalaxmi Mahabhairav Jatra* is celebrated with much fanfare more than a week in *Lubhu Lalitpur*. During the *jatra* the idols of deities such as *Mahalaxmi*, *Mahabhairav*, *Aakash Bhairav*, *Kumari*, *Kumar* have been kept in the *khatas* (palanquin) and taken around the core areas of *Lubhu* town (<https://thehimalayantimes.com>). The scene of this *jatra* can observe very amazing and beautiful; therefore, it might be developed as an important source of alluring tourists in this destination.

Besides it and other tangible and intangible cultural properties *Lubhu* is a major textile-production area continuously producing locally made garments from the very earlier. It is also a major source of garments of many Nepalese cloths industries and tourist areas. A majority of households have their own small to large scale factories to produce such garments. While some still have the traditional wooden hand looms, many residents own textile factories with electric looms. No doubt, *Lubhu* can also be utilized these technologies and craftsmanship as the tourism products in tourist market as well.

Problems facing regarding Promotion as a Festival Tourism Product

Lubhu could not adequately capitalize *Mahalaxmi Jatra* as its potentialities due to the hindering of different problems. Finally, this study explores and highlights the following threats and problems in the case of the enhancing and associating to the *Mahalaxmi jatra* as a festival tourism product of *Lubhu*.

- The seniors and skillful artists gradually passing out without doing transformation of such craftsmanship to the young generation which continuously threatening over the traditional occupation and existence as well.
- Due to modernization and industrialization, disappearing indigenous equipment and tools, deducing skillful human resources that are associated with this jatra.
- Lack of proper positive attitude of local people toward the promotion and safeguarding of cultural heritage including *Mahalaxmi Jatra* and development of tourism in the destination.
- Obviously, tourism of *Lubhu* generates both positive and negative impact on the society and culture.
- Lack of marketing and communicating means and materials such as documentaries, guide books, brochures and other publications and internet facilities about the site.

Solution Measures

If effective tourism planning should not maintain otherwise, it sometime can play the destructive role as an agent of destructions. Hence, for the adequate development of *Lubhu* and especially *Mahalaxmi jatra* as festival tourism destination, the problems and threats which have already been discussed should be addressed in time. The government, concerned authorities, municipality, local community, concerned authorities are its major stakeholders. They should make earnest efforts for its maintained therefore in this respect the following major steps should be prescribed as the solution measures.

Role of Local Communities: As far as the intangible cultural heritage is concerned traditional craftsmanship is also facing serious challenges of conservation. So, without any delay, these precious heritages should be preserved with the practice of community level

and for the promotion of tourism positive attitude of local people should be developed themselves.

Role of Local Organizations and Institutions: This study suggests that tourism of *Lubhu* is generating positive and negative impact on the society and cultural heritage as well. For the sustainable tourism development, negative impact should be controlled by conducting interactions, seminars and public awareness programs.

Role of Local Body: The monuments of historical, cultural, religious and social values and objects of art, crafts and festivals including *Mahalaxmi jatra* are the major attractions of tourism. So, without any delay, these precious heritages should be preserved and marketized. Guide books, brochures and internet facilities should be published for easing the visitors to access required information about the site. Positive attitude of local people is also an important matter for the development of tourism; therefore, launching different kinds of educational programs for the development of positive attitude of the local people should be done. Tourism entrepreneurs are known as the major partners for the enhancement of tourism in the destination. They can play a positive role in these respects. So, for the betterment of tourism in *Lubhu*, close relationship with them should be maintained and some sort of subsidy should be provided.

Role of Concerned Authorities: The earthquake of 2015 demolished the whole country, including *Lubhu*, but renovation works are being carried out. The *Lubhu* core seems to have risen stronger than before. Still, efforts from government and concerned authorities would be of need for the revival of the famous historical and cultural town of *Lubhu*.

Implication

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 an amazing festival tourism product of the destination. 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. In this circumstance, no doubt, this study can help to address towards the systematic planning, marketing and promoting *Mahalaxmi Jatra* of *Lubhu* as an amazing festival tourism product.

Conclusion

Festivals and *Jatras* are considered as the 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. *Mahalaxmi Jatra* of *Lubhu, Lalitapur* is a popular tourism fascination like other attractions that can observe on the streets of the core. The individuality of *Mahalaxmi Jatra* of *Lubhu* 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. Therefore, it can be promoted as an amazing festival tourism product of *Lubhu Lalitpur*.

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.

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