



# Holi (Chir Swayegu) Performance, Socialization and Social Order: Significance of the Festival in Bhaktapur-Nepal

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## Abstract

The aim of this research article is to explore the role of ritual, performance to maintain the social order and socialization through Holi in Bhaktapur in general and how they transfer the knowledge about fertility, sexuality, its socialization and its significance in human life and maintaining social order through cultural socialization is explored particularly. Both theoretically and methodologically, various concepts, theories and methods were applied to describe, explore and analyze the cultural performance, festival socialization, singing, chanting, events, processes associated with the Holi and Chir Swayegu in Bhaktapur. This article tries to explore the significance associated with the festival, ritual and cultural performances, socialization, transfer of knowledge of fertility, sexuality and more that are associated with the popular spectacle of Holi and Chir Swayegu. Despite these, performances of rally, group singing, vulgar expression, love, sexual articulation, vulgar songs were paid greater attentions from anthropological perspective.

For cultural or ritual performance of actions to be ritually efficacious, they always set up the appropriate environment or conditions for agents to receive them as such. In the case of ritual performance on Chir Swayegu, Phagu, Holi, Newars are socialized to expect and respond to its arresting and captivating effects in order for societies' tensions and hierarchies to be made, periodically at least, more bearable. So, Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi stands as historically evolutionally predisposed produce ritualistic behavior to bring about relief of various social stresses, tensions, conflicts and to ensure survival is reflected in the life- force giving sense ritualized these performances.

## Keywords

Holi(Chir Swayegu), Festival, Ritual Performance, Socialization, Social Order

## 1. Introduction

Ritual or cultural performances are expressive in nature and they carry certain meanings through the events, practices or processes. Ritual, festival or any kind of events that use symbolic actions within particular cultural context, serve multiple functions of entertainment, socialization, acts as communication means and signify controlling mechanism or sometimes act as the maintain social order (Dahal, 2024). Performer- audience or participants of the ritual or cultural performances manifestly offer the events or occasion or festivals through which participants get entertainments and latently, such ritual performances acts as the controlling mechanism of society (Ortner, 1978). Ritual performances have framed wide range of social, cultural and religious activities, actions and acts that convey certain meanings of symbols by using body, voices arts, acts, singing, dances and other communicative resources.

Ritual performances often use certain cultural, religious or psychological both material and non-material symbolic elements or symbolic actions or gestures that convey meanings within specific context that are shaped by their respective social norms, values, beliefs and expectations (Turner, 1967). So, rituals are highly structured and symbolic performances that including entertainment, imparting education, enhancing social cohesion, harmony and cultural transmission (Geertz, 1973). Such performances construct and maintain social, cultural identities and relationships. Liminality is the transition stage of performance in ritual studies. Religious ritual performances help to connect material world to spiritual world (Dahal, 2024) and pray, meditation, chanting, hymn, as divine or sacred acts that brings communities together to share cultural traditions and values like festivals, celebrations, events and carnivals. Festivals involve acts, actions, music, dances, procession, food and cultural or religious expression that serve as means of socio-cultural resistance, cultural showcase, identity and solidarity (Dahal, 2020, 2024b).

So, this article aims to present the role of performances to maintain social order in Newars of Bhaktapur, and the Holi or Chir Swayegu, Phagu as the cultural performance through which the overall study is framed and Holi as events, Holi as socio-cultural procession and Holi as means of expression and Holi as means of socialization are explored.

## 2. Theoretical Overview

Ritual studies focus on the symbolic, patterned and repetitive behavior that behavior signifies the specific meaning in particular context and community. So, rituals importantly describe the significance of life transitions (rite de passage) with proper meaning and objectives. The beliefs system of ritual weaves the both material as well as spiritual dimensions of human life that include the concepts of sacred and profane that demark the role of individuals. Ritual serves social functions that strengthen harmony, cohesion, socializations, we feelings that reinforce shared values. Both formal and informal ritual carries certain values that are structured or unstructured or spontaneous, but they often transformed from generation to generation with deviations or modifications of cultural norms or values. Ritual studies provide the clear cut concept about symbols, meanings, identities and social fabrics that embodied practices.

Ritual studies helps to understand the performance of both material as well as non-material culture in which philosophy, doctrine and significance are found clear. Ritual studies are tools, framework to analyze the cultural events, structure, associations and performance, including spiritual normative through which behavior of people is judge either sacred or profane or polluted. Ritual and performance are the two sides of the same coin, without one other may not last in existence, both cover symbolic acts and actions and participations. Ritual focuses on efficacy on social objectives that people satisfy their needs within the defined norms and values maintaining social order, whereas performance focuses on participation, socialization, interactions, entertainment and aesthetic expression. Rituals need their religious or cultural base while, performance need not and ritual tend to follow prescribed norms, it demark the behavior in two sense of poles; sacred or luminal or profane or polluted according to the time and context but performance is more secular, improvisation and in more mundane setting (Dahal, 2020, 2024b). Ritual and (Dahal, 2024a) can demark by the level of participation, but in ritual performance, it is blur that can combine efficacy, entertainment and mundane too

The transition between life stages from birth to death or "Rite de Passage" is marked by ritual that can be divided into three phases; separation, liminality and reincorporation (van Gennep, 1909) that liminality has intense social bonding (Turner, 1969), which signify the importance of rituals within their cultural context with specific symbolic meanings (Geertz, 1973). The rituals are practices which are embodied, strategic that helps to generate power and maintain power relations (Bell, 1992), but, Roy Rappaport denied these and he framed as rituals are the foundations of religions that serve to regulate, balance and equilibrium the human-environment relations (Rappaport, 1999).

The concept of social drama perform (Turner, 1970) as Holi or Chir Swayegu that mediate and conflicts of Newar society, i.e. who propose from marriage to whom in individual and family level. Holi festival and Phagu Dalne as process ultimately signify the latent interest of individual to who likes whom that is deadlock in Newar society opens during the festival. A sequence of social interaction of competitive, conflicting and agonistic ideas, individuals and group which breaks a social rules- a breach (Turner, 1969) that was completely alike in the Newar community of Bhaktapur in case of marriage proposal. Such social interactions as performances with individuals, groups adopting different roles and scripts (Goffman, 1959) or any kind of artistic articulations that are prescribed by Newari culture and accepted by Newar society mostly Rally procession, Lakhe dance or emphasis on Phagu Dalne to whom one like for upcoming season of marriage. The transformative potential of performance of performer carries skill, identity, knowledge of different meanings that enhances the quality of the performance to create luminal spaces (Schechner, 2003) juxtapose during Holi or Phagu to point out the girl he likes, propose to play Holi or Phagu with courage that sanctioned in society enjoying certain level of freedom is perceived as the hidden occasion of selecting couple to break the ground for the formal process of engagement if they and their family agreed.

Anthropology of cultural performance is an integral part of the ritual performance, which objectively, trial the arts of vulgarity, sexual expression and acts of performances that is even unclean, impure and banned in normal life but creates the opportunity to share in festival of Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi. These cultural performance or acts of expressions are always tremendously variable within the acceptable formal boundaries of behavior (Schechner, 2003). Thus, cultural performances as an experience, events, processes enables people to viscerally feel that they belong to distinct socio-cultural and religious entity. The festivals especially Phagu, Holi and Chir Swayegu are vehicles whereas members of Newar worlds find voices against the existing socio-cultural norms and values regarding sexual expression and vulgar songs. These festivals in Bhaktapur provide the special context for those participants in which to oppose the hierarchy that set up by the society. The cultural performance or concepts of ritual festivals include sexuality, vulgarity, humor and commodification of culture.

Religious or any other festivals allow people to merge sacred and secular on their own terms, or to invert the normal contexts for encountering phenomena so termed (Mauldin, 2004). Humor is recognizable frames of knowledge that are shifted to unexpected but alternative interpretation of various cultural events, artifacts, phenomena of particular cultural events (Beeman, 2000). The temporary acceptance vulgar expressions, sexual songs as forms of aesthetic acts and arts of Newar culture, affords socio-cultural issues across the chance to indulge in expression of sex related acts and actions not permitted in everyday life of Newars to interacts. Such acts lie in the liberating sexual expressions; vulgar songs etc. and these effects do not temporary normalizing practices with ambiguous meanings of Chir Swayegu, Phagu

and Holi. Participants or performer in the context of Phagu expresses the ambivalent spectacle of the Newar world; who participates or performs performances at the world also belongs to it (Bakhtin, 1984). In this research, festival performance, ritual socialization and significance of Holi or Chir swayegu is explored in general and knowledge about fertility, sexuality, and its socialization with significance is explored particularly.

### 3. Methodology

This research is based on qualitative methods in which a sum of factors, their relations and interpretations are associated in comprehensive manner to draw a conclusion. The Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi, are selected as the sample of the study in Bhaktapur. The cultural performance on Phagu is the main content of the study and exploration of significance of the festival is the novelty of the study.

This research integrated the cultural performance of Phagu, Holi, Chir Swayegu and its various dimensions of interactions between social, cultural, religious and ritual dimensions of human and environmental interactions to motivate depth study on symbiotic relations between religion and socio-natural system and their sustainability. So, this research is qualitative or narrative methods where the contents were analyzed properly and are based on both secondary as well as primary information about research topic were studied. Information was gathered by using ethnographic study of reading materials and participant observation, interviews and group discussion along with key informants' interview were conducted.

The references were gathered related to the research topic in Holi, Phagu and Chir Swayegu relations to the ecological, economic, social, cultural and religious dimensions of cultural performances. The bibliographical searches on socio-religious significance of Holi, Phagu, Chir Swayegu, cultural performance of Holi or Phagu were explored so as to make research scientific and comprehensive. Library and online survey were conducted to find out the literature and research conducted on the similar topics. Seniors, experts, academicians were consulted so as to verify the data to check the validity and reliability. The research was conducted on March to April 2024 in Bhaktapur Durbar Square where the Holi (Chir Swayegu) was celebrated. 50 respondents were asked the random questioned, interviews and participants observation were conducted.

### 4. Findings and Data Analysis

This study paid attentions to the ritual structure and the sequences of Holi, Chir Swayegu and Phagu, ritual socialization and its symbolic actions, objects, gestures or words that hold specific meanings with great significance.

#### 4.1 Holi and Religious History

Before the full moon day of March-April, Phagu or Holi is celebrated for seven to eight days. The unique Holi is celebrated at Bhaktapur by providing the knowledge of sex, opportunity to propose to opposite sexes from Phalgun Asthami to Punhi. One of the legends associated with Holi is god Krishna. It is believed that the skin of god Krishna was dark blue because of demons tried to poison him when Krishna was a baby. Due to the appearance and skin color of Krishna Radha would not liked him. Yashoda (mother of Krishna) suggested Krishna with tactics to smear multiple colors to Radha. After that Radha fell in love with Krishna. So, Holi or Phagu is perceived as ritual of love, affection and attractions between opposite sexes.

Likewise, the story about god Vishnu and devotee Praladh is also another legendary history that associated with the myths about Holi and Phagu. The king Hiranyakashipu was the king of Asura or demons and he got boon of nobody can kill him either inside and outside home, neither day nor in night time, neither by any projectile weapons nor any handheld weapons and nobody could kill him in sky or air, water and in land. Hiranyakashipu got angry with Praladh on devotion towards Vishnu. God Vishnu in the form of Narasimha (half human half lion) chooses at dusk to take Hiranyakashipu to the doorstep and placed him on his lap and killed by his lion claws. So, in the occasion of victory of truth over false, it is believed that Holi festival is organized.

Another myth that associated with the Phagu or Holi is the story about Kamadev and Rati. One day lord Shiva was in yoga, meditation and goddess Parvati wanting to bring back with the help of Help of Kamadev (god of love) on Bashanta Panchami. The god of love shoots at Shiva, and the yogi opens his third eye and burns the Kama to ashes. The death of Kamdev made upsets both Parvati and Rati that Rati decided to meditate asceticism for forty days. By this devotion Shiva forgave Kamadev (god of love) and restores his life. So, people have celebrated Holi or Phagu on the occasion of restoration of life of Kama 40<sup>th</sup> day after the Bashanta Panchami.



Fig. 1 People carrying wooden phallus of Bhimsen around city, street and to pond.



Another very important myth that was associated with the Holi or Phagu particularly with the Bhaktapur is one of the sexist male so eager to have sexual intercourse with female. One day he forcefully raped the female and at that moment, female cut his penis of rapist and Holi is celebrated on the occasion of women' courage and victory over rapist male to show the cut penis of rapist publicly.

In Hindu society, women are problematic partly because of their association with sexuality and fertility and partly because they are perceived as destructive to agnatic solidarity. But, what gives this ambivalent view of women such power in society is the fact that it is reinforced by reflecting in so many of the conceptual and symbolic structures of Hinduism (Bennett, 1983). Similarly, one of the pervasive symbolic structure concerning women is the set of meaning attached to the female body. The body, with its reproductive processes, is a vehicle through which body positive and negative feelings, about women and about sexuality itself are expressed, the ambivalence about one reinforcing the ambivalence about the other. The negative view of sex in ascetic ideology combines with the patriline is mistrust of afford women to produce a deep mistrust of the sexual and seductive aspect of women (Bennett, 1983).

#### 4.2 Holi (Chir Swayegu) as Socio-Religious Performance

Religious ritual comprises those events, phenomena, actions, web of symbols and performances that are culturally, religiously and ritually prescribed by a religion or by the customs, traditions and socio-cultural laws reinforced by everyday life of the people and their customary and formal laws. Anthropology of ritual is a kind of critical exploration of how people perceived their efficacy renders their symbolic aspects of their socio-cultural life (Geertz, 1973, 1980) and their reinforcement (Leach, 1966). That's why the religious ritual has great significance on "life crisis" in society (Turner, 1957).

**Table 1** Social values that learned from Festival Socialization

S. No.	Socialization through Holi(Chir Swayegu) Festival	Respondents
1	Unity, Harmony, Cohesion	20
2	Collective efforts or Guthi functions	12
3	Interactions	25
4	Co-operation	11
5	Interdependence	9
6	Responsibility, Accountability	35
7	Knowledge about sex, fertility	18
8	Conflicts, violence, suppression	7
9	Taboo, traditions, myths	16
10	Cultural heritage	26
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>

(Source: Field Survey, 2024) \*Note: Respondents answered multiple factors of socialization, so total respondents were 50 but answers exceed that.

Above table showed that there are various socio-cultural values that were found imparted by the festival socialization of Holi and Holi plays vital role to socialize socio-cultural norms that is significant in Newar society.

Chir Swayegu is a ritual festival celebrated in the Bhaktapur begun, when Cir of Fagu Purnima has erected in the Basantapur of Kathmandu. Among the eight days of Fagu Purnima, the first day is well known as the "Chir Swayegu" which means "to erect cir" or erection of a bambo pole with a varicolored cloths attached with. But, Chir Swayegu practices do not practice in Bhaktapur as that organized in Basantapur of Kathmandu. It was practiced in the past but not now in Bhaktapur (Anderson, 1971).



**Fig. 2** Symbols of Bhimsen wooden penis intercourse with vagina of Daudpadi.

Holi starts when cir has established and the beginning of Chir Swayegu in Bhaktapur resumes when the 3 feet length and 30 inches wooden pole brought to hang in the Bhaimsen temple in front the Dattarai temple. The installations of wooden penis of Bhimsen and vagina of Draupadi hanging, at the floor of the Bhimsen temple culturally, religiously, socially and ritually starts the Holi in Bhaktapur. The erection of the cir or pole ultimately opens the freedom or kind of social approval or license to throw colors in the forms of powder or in the form of liquid through various means.

One of the beauty of the full events of Holi and Cir Swayegu is phrasing of Newari folk songs about the love, fertility, sexual proposal regarding Holi (for a week long period) is a kind of cultural traits introduced from outside Nepal (Nepali, 1965). A weeklong festival Holi begins with the establishment of Cir Swayegu and ends with the celebration of Holi on the Punhi called Fagu Punhi.

The penis shaped wooden Linga and vagina shaped red cloth was installed after being exhibited to the market, is hung over on the floor of Bhimsen temple for seven days. Devotee worship, and shake the wooden penis to penetrate into vagina shaped cloth that considered as sexual intercourse between god Bhimsen and goddess Draupadi. The penetration of wooden penis with cloth vagina is called "Chir Swayegu" in Newari culture. The Phagu begins when the first penetration of penis into vagina by priest in the presence of Guthi members. After that feast offers by the Guthi members and Holi celebrated on the Punhi and Phagu closed for this year.

As Emile Durkheim emphasizes all human associations give rise to expectations of pattern of conduct. When a person is associated with others, tends to develop common ways of perceiving, evaluating and acting. These new patterns of values, perceptions and action then give rise to expectations and constraints on how persons should or ought to behave. So, there emerge a "collective consciousness" which in turns constrains them and obliges to behave in particular ways. He focuses on the moral nature of social relationships, in his all writings; he claims that, the division of labor itself is a moral phenomenon rather than economic one. Both these two types of society are characterized by different forms of social solidarity and by the different social systems of morality. Religious rituals oppose existing tensions or conflicts that allow any kind of socio-cultural events, phenomena or processes (Turner, 1969). The anthropological approaches on cultural performance which categorize codify religious rituals as a aspect of cultural theater, social platform and means of communication through which people interact with each other. The performer performed religious and ritualistic acts, arts and actions that people perceived and understand and evaluate to socialize, enculturation ad assimilation of cultural acts with the customs, traditions and cultural norms and values that has tended to peruse in-depth evaluation of performance as religious ritual or cultural events emphasizing and intensifying as norms and values.

### 4.3 Holi as Socio-cultural Socialization

Holi offers the opportunity to interact society through the worship, celebration, play, entertainment, foods and events of public procession like carnival benefits to interacts multiply. It has played great role in socialization of individual, community and society. Fagu or Holi festival is the festival of colors is celebrated by swearing and throwing dry colors or colors dissolved in the water at fellow revelers. In front of Dattatreya temple in Bhaktapur, it starts with the installation of pole (of size three feet length and thirty inches diameter) symbolizing the God Bhimsen's phallus. People sing various Newari hymn and sexual connotation. The phallus of Bhimsen is also taken around the various toles, settlements, cities of Bhaktapur mostly; Inacho, Jenla, Jagati, Bachutol, Brahmayani and Chyasingh during Holi. Devotees worship this wooden pole and make offerings as it is taken around in a procession to each house and shop along the route.

**Table 2** Various dimensions of socialization through Holi Festival

S.No.	Socialization through Holi Festival	Respondents
1	Social Dimensions	29
2	Religious Dimensions	35
3	Cultural Dimensions	40
4	Political Dimensions	5
5	Institutional Dimensions	7
6	Mythological Dimensions	17
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024) \*Note: Respondents answered multiple factors of socialization, so total respondents were 50 but answers exceed that.

Table 2 showed the various dimension of Holi socialization altogether. Various dimensions of human life are socializing through such festivals (Dahal, 2024b) and it is said that open museum of cultural world (Dahal, 2020). In case of various mythical, spiritual, material, cultural dimensions of Holi or Chir Swayegu it is socialized through the Holi or Phagu events. The concept about sexuality linked with fertility of soil, human and trade was found great significance and sexuality as well as fertility mostly perceived as pollution or sinful in everyday life ultimately shadowed the population growth and the biological as well as physical and psychological growth (Dahal, 2024a) became the priority for a year is highly signified in Newar society was found. The chanting or songs that related with human sex, fertility got high priority and the color or phagu symbolizes the symbol of harmony in one way signify the general meaning but the Phagu if given to a unmarried girl symbolizes the he likes her and if she accepts the family and society will know their affair and if they are eligible the process of Magani or engagement will starts to marriage in forth coming season of marriage. So Holi is perceived as occasion of propose to marriage has great significance, if girls ignores there may fights between the two parties if boys side force to put Phagu forcefully. Such sex, fertility and openness were found signify the chanting or singing of vulgar songs in Bhimsen temples and surroundings.

Fagu, holi punhi, chilla punhi, which began on the day of falgun sukla asthami, would be celebrated as sexual festivals by the people of Bhaktapur. From asthami to purnima, Gaiju of Bhimsen guthi, sat on the floor of Bhimsen temple and sung sex related songs. Holi purnima is celebrated by worshipping Bhimsen as the god of trade and singing a

Newari song on the floor of the famed Bhimsen temple in front of Dattatarai temple in Bhaktapur. The symbols of Bhimsen's penis (made of wood) and Darupati's vagina (made of fabric) is hanged and shown like sexual intercourse for one week in Bhimsen temples.

The wooden phallus of god Bhimsen is carried on the shoulders of two persons on the Falgun Sukla Asthami for the purpose of demonstration to devotees. The wooden penis is hung on the floor of the Bhimsen temple in the evening after visiting house and stores around the Dattatarai temple in Tachapal, is well known as "Chir Swayegu" in Newari tradition. This is an unique tradition amongst Newars that Newars of other region do not practices. The practices of worshipping, bowing and paying charity to the twisted wooden penis is also perceived as the phagocytosis commences. People believe on that such worshipping increase the trade, fertility and love among the people. The festival of Holi associated with the love, fertility, sex and vulgarity is perceived as the events that help to establish solidarity among people in Newar society. The symbols associated with the phallus of Bhimsen as wooden penis and a red cloth with hole in the shape of vagina of Draupadi symbolizes the importance of sex, fertility, love and essentiality of sexual intercourse to form family, society, to produce materials, re-produce it and to reproduce overall system associated with the Newar society and culture. It is believed that people get son if one follow the ritual the practice has begun in the regime of Jagat Prakash Malla.

Holi's origin has distinctive history and is linked with pornographic demonstration. Event begin on the installation of pole on Tachapal, Dattatarai temple represents the phallus of God Bhimsen. It symbolizes in front of the Dattatarai temple that includes newari musical performances. Devotees thronged around the 3 foot long and 30 inches diameter pole to pay respect and cut it in to a shape of a human phallus. People come to pay reverences to the wooden pole, which is a symbol of phallus, and believed that if they observed they will be blessed.

**Table 3** Different agents of festival Holi (Chir Swayegu) socialization

S. No.	Socializing agents and agencies of Holi Festival	Respondents
1	Family	47
2	Community	32
3	Guthi	37
4	Society	18
5	Festivals and Celebrations	25
6	Peers group	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024) \*Note: Respondents answered multiple factors of socialization, so total respondents were 50 but answers exceed that.

Table 3 describe about the role of socialization and its agency in Holi festival. The vital role was found from family then Guthi. The singing takes place every morning until the full moon in the falgun, as in the lunar calendar. The people of the Bhimsen Gthi members known as "Gayaju" a religious trust sing this song. The wooden pole symbolizes the phallus of god Bhimsen is ritualistically inserted in to a hole cut on a large sheet of red cloths signifying the Genetiala of Draupadi, in the midset of the song. In the Mahabharata mythological story Draupadi is the queen of the five brothers- pandava. The wooden phallus is also taking along to Inacho, Wachutol, Jenla and Taulachan tole. Devotees worship this wooden pole and make offerings as every houses and shop along the path is brought around a procession.

Every year the local Bhimsen Guthi marks Phagu as the traditional festival that symbolizes the sex and fertility.

#### 4.4 Holi as Cultural Performance

Cultural performance or public spectacles are kind of socio-cultural theater in which cultural performances were presented. Cultural performance as a spectacle is a cultural events and a structured social process for accomplishing socio-cultural objectives of social harmony, co-operation and social unity, despite satisfactions of desires, needs and actions. Spectacle is a kind of visual part of aura and remarkable or lavish display (Beeman, 1992), which is consumed by audience (Inomata & Coben, 2006). Anthropology of cultural performance mostly focuses on the effects and impacts of religious rituals rather than the cultural components and various aspects of rituals associated with it. This article tries comparing the ritual events, processes and festival with cultural content to expose the significance of religious rituals in cultural world of Newars in Bhaktapur across the generations.

Cultural performance or spectacle is useful concepts for religious, cultural, social and ritual efficacy that psychic unity of mankind, enculturation, assimilation and socialization of new members of Newar society with old, tradition, customs and values (Dahal, 2020). The other aspects of the socio-cultural phenomena such as transfer of power, role of members, role and responsibility of micro-social institutions (including Guthis), public cultural functions, feasts and festival and celebrations are also preformed culturally and publicly. Cultural performance or spectacle constitutes cultural i.e. religious, rituals etc. performance itself and various aspects of that performance (Dahal, 2024b). Cultural festivals or religious festivals of Newars is an organized sets of acts performed to celebrate an events, processes, demonstrations, deity and person or the common identity of the performers, audiences and ritualized spectacle.

In Cultural performance or spectacle the dichotomy of viewers or audience or member of the society and cultural, religious ritual performer are integral to how social scientists including anthropologists visualized such religious rituals as

cultural or social events, mechanisms that socializes new members of the culture, promotes harmony, and establishes stability and co-operation with members or participants of the events.

The objective of this research is to explore the latent forms of sexuality that are manifestly performed in the cultural, social, religious festivals. Such arts of acts are ironically revealed through the masking and glorified sexuality publicly through the cultural events (Dahal, 2024b). During Cir Swayegu and Holi events people usually sing vulgar songs, demonstration of love and affection towards opposite sexes and various spectacle taking hemp, bhang and alcohol. The proposal of love is exchanged within the society for a whole single year. So, these festivals Cir Swayegu and Holi is perceived as the socio-cultural, religious events or ceremony that are linked with transgresses sexuality as resistance, and acquiescence and ambivalence towards the socio-cultural domination of traditions, customs, norms and values of the Newar cultural empires and civilization associated with these festivals.

#### 4.5 Holi as Play, Singing, Dancing and Entertainment

Lyrics of music as an art is part of human beings, magnificently interpret the total socio-cultural world. Lyrics can embody and transcend both its creators and its times to reveal enduring truths about the human condition, the more we understand the meaning and messages of lyrics, the more we understand ourselves, our society, our culture (both material and non material) including our behavior and relationship too and even the complexities of our world.

The Guthi called Gayaju of Bhimsen temple mostly involved in the singing vulgar, sexual and double meaning singings.

##### *Lyrics in Newari*

भिमसेन देया: लगे: खन्गालो बान: ला:  
ल्यासे: बिस्यु:अने म्वयक: सो झने: ला:

##### *Lyrics in Roman*

Bhimsen Deya Laga, Khangalo Banala  
Lyase Bisyuwane Mwayak So Jhayala

##### *Meaning in English*

Did your heart lure towards penis of Bhimsen?  
Did you come to observe for not needing to escape?

The song holds sexual, vulgar expression of meaning which is normally anti-social in every society according to their social norms. But, there is public belief that the sonless parents would bear the son if they carry the penis of Bhimsen to the river for washing purpose. So, many Newars try to carry the wooden penis of Bhimsen to the river. With the perspective of ethnomusicology, such vulgar and sexual arts of acts and actions are prescribed to sing for short period of time during the ritual of Chie Swayegu, Phagu or Holi. After completion of Holi festival such singings were strictly prohibited to sing till the Holi of next year started.

##### *Lyrics in Newari*

छंगु हिसि दुगु- खा: स्व स्व  
मन जिगु स्व थें जुल:  
ओ मैचा  
द: वैं. यात्येनला

##### *Lyrics in Nepali*

तिम्रो राम्रो मुहार हेर्दा हेर्दै  
मन मेरो बिग्रेको जस्तो भयो  
ओइ मैचा  
मलाई पागल बनाउन लागेको हो?

##### *Meaning in English*

Looking at your beautiful face  
My mind was broken  
Oh maicha  
Are you going to drive me crazy?



The laughing, singing, and dancing in Phagu or Holi, then, represents a complete reversal of the Newar ideal of womanly behavior. To say that a Newar girl is shy, embarrassed is to praise her highly. During Phagu or Holi, the high spirits, the flirtatiousness, the sexuality which women must ordinarily suppress are released through the various expressions, movements and through various ways (Dahal, 2024b). However, this display of symbolic sexual intercourse of erotic side of female nature is only permissible because, in Phagu or Holi, it is given social acceptances, social approvals if one is liked by another and people starts to gossip of their love and affection. So, Phagu or Holi indirectly, acts as an event to select capable candidate for future possible couple. The dangers of female sexuality are thus firmly bracketed by the mutually reinforcing ascetic and patrilineal ideals. But it is not until the rituals of Phagu or Holi are complete that the female sexuality which emerged in the event dancing and singing are truly brought under control and integrated into the ideology of the patriline that are as prescribed in the Newar society and culture.

Singing took place in the morning from Asthami to purnima, organized by the Bhimsen Guthi at the floor of the Bhimsen temple by "Gayaju" in the form of hymn mostly coverage of the singing is sex matter, fertility, sexuality, love, lust and vulgar expressions. The focus of singing always frame the phallus of Bhimsen penetrating the genitalia of Draupadi that symbolizes the sexual intercourse, sexual stimulation, expression of vulgarity that always restricted in the disciplined Newar society, and Holi provides the opportunity to express the their feelings, sexual expression that would ventilate during festival. The procession of the wooden phallus around the city and in streets- Inaocho, Bachutol, Jenla, Jagati, Brahmayani and Chyamashing is the phallus if symbol of fertility and devotees worship the symbol of phallus and make offerings as participated in procession and by worshipping as they perceive without human fertility other fertility could not be raised (Dahal, 2020). So fertility is a special gift of god phallus has unlimited capacity of fertility so they want to use such unlimited capacity to install in their physical body, psychological, economic and social. Overall progress is associated with the fertility, so people worship phallus.

#### 4.6 Holi as Means of Expressions and Socialization

The popular festival of ancient city Bhaktapur Chir Swayegu provides the opportunity to share their feelings, their vulgar expression and offering the proposal to whom he or she likes and chir swayegu as religious festival signify the given traditional differences between male and female and their socialization among Newars.

Caste is a group of people who are united together on the basis of we-feeling that they have a common organization and are ritually and socially different from the other groups. Caste system in fact is a method of stratifying the population into superiority and inferiority to form a hierarchical system in society (Nepali, 1965). Newar caste stratification is based on the system of morality rather than the economic one. Caste organization or system is the principal basis of social hierarchy that cuts across Hindu and Buddhist religions and integrates the two religions (rarely found elsewhere). In detail, caste serves much purpose like commensality, cohabitation, religious function, and marriage and Guthis organization. However, the major role they play is stratification for jobs (occupation or profession). Newar community is self-sufficient and self-sufficient and self-contained where even the minutest jobs are done by separate caste and sub-castes. This has promoted interdependence, inter-relation and promotion of solidarity. Hierarchical ladder is based on the caste stratification among the Newars, e.g. Kullu Caste- leatherwork, Chayme, Scavenger, Manandhar- oil, Khadgi- butcher etc.



Fig. 3 Phallus of Bhimsen (wooden penis) and Vagina of Daupadi (red cloth with hole) are worshipping by Newar people.

Each of them has their own sub caste. Their interdependence and inter-relationship to satisfy functional needs create solidarity and integration though giving rise to inequalities.

Guthi is Newar's identity since long while caste or sub caste limit to the general status of a person in the total society. The ritual and social life is regulated and controlled through this "Guthi" institution. A network of such "Guthi" institution binds the Newar together at three different levels- caste, patrilineal grouping and territory. The guthi's manifest function is to fulfill material (e.g. feast) and religious (e.g. funeral) interest but its latent function is to preserve norms and values of the community. Each caste has Sana Guthi that performs death rituals and a permanent office of caste in its own locality. Another Guthi is Dewali Guthi, whose members is of patrilineal descent and shares a common ancestor. The members are known as "fukee".

The Guthi organization thus sets up network of social relationship involving values, norms, etiquette and social precedence based on age and generation. It is also a work organization concerning the social and religious interest of its member. The Sana Guthi and the Dewali Guthi function as the most effective instrument of preserving caste norms. For



example if a person is out –caste then he is automatically cut off from the Sana Guthi membership. Besides these two Guthis there are numerous inter-caste Guthis involving the solidarity of regional community where they celebrate festivals together. The formal Guthi (Sana) combines the same caste member together even though they are scattered over a wide area today.

So, these wide gap between the society and their members should be shortened by offering such festivals which provides the opportunity to participate, to celebrate social events so that conflicts, misunderstanding, cleavages that are created by the structures (hierarchies) and function (action) is automatically resolved and the society with new thesis in new stage will go up.

#### 4.7 Significance of Chir Swayehu, Phagu and Holi

Holi signify the various dimensions in Newar community and it significantly contribute to socialize, entertainment, interactions and spiritually it contributes to the psychology of the Newar society in Bhaktapur. To maintain the delicate balance between population, resources and the family is great challenges for the Newars.

**Table 4** Significance of Holi (Chir Swayegu) in Newar community of Bhaktapur

S. No.	Significance of Holi Festival	Respondents
1	Religious and Spiritual	40
2	Material	37
3	Growth in agriculture product	42
4	Growth in Trade	46
5	Health	30
6	Entertainments	36
7	Socio-cultural socialization	47
8	Security	18
9	Well being and Prosperity	48
10	Cultural preservation and Heritage	45
11	Impart the sex knowledge	37
12	Help to maintain the equilibrium between population and resource distributions	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024) \*Note: Respondents answered multiple factors of socialization, so total respondents were 50 but answers exceed that.

The above table showed that the significance of Holi (Chir Swayagu) in Newar community of Bhaktapur.

Lyricist can visualize the socio-cultural circumstances in his/her wording, while musician can compose that song in composite pattern with his way of interpretation. Likewise, singer sings the song, and listener understands the message that is passed by lyricists, that was happened or is being happened in the particular circumstances. All these artists sought to make visible the ground reality of the culture and emotions, aspirations, feelings and experiences of the people that was fabricated in terms of his/her behavior in music/lyrics and others (Dahal, 2024). Each lyric acquired diverse techniques of expression with which could faithfully fully replicates or manipulates reality.

#### Lyrics in Newari

‘भिर्सी द्यो या लग खड लो वान ला,  
बिस्नु वाने मायक स्व वया ला’

Bhimsen's sex seduced his heart, he dares to see it so that he has to run away" such songs that echo in the hall of Bhimsen temple in front of Dattatraya temple in Tachpal, Bhaktapur municipality during the Holi festival have now reached an endangered state.

Sitting on the floor of the Bhimsen temple, from the day of February Shukla Ashtami to the full moon, the Gaijus of Bhimsen Guthi used to sing these songs and bid farewell with the arrival of Holi. But, now such songs and lines about Holi written in AD 781 and 792 during the Malla period have reached an endangered state.

On the day of Phagun Shukla Ashtami, a linga made of wood three cubits long and 30 inches thick is taken to the lotus pond, bathed in it, carried on the shoulder, passing through Bramhayani, Chyamasingh, Jela, Inacho, Bachutol, and around the houses and shops around the Dattatraya temple in Tachpal.

Keshari Kapali, who has been working as a priest in the Bhimsen temple at Dattatraya for years, has been following the tradition of being considered as a symbol of Bhimsen's penis and Draupadi's vagina. His son Kamal Kapali says that many of its ancient traditions are on the verge of extinction.

He said that this 400-year-old tradition is carried on on the day of Chir Swayagu. On the day of Chir Swayagu, Bhimsen's Linga made of wood is carried on shoulders and taken to the (lotus pond) Kamalbinayak.

He said that there is a tradition of worshipping the Linga for a week. He said that it is still believed that after childless people worship it and take Prasad, they will be blessed with children and those who are childless will have a son. As the Bhajan Mandal that sings Bhajans has decreased, this tradition is also in a state of extinction.

He says that while there is a tradition of devotees touching and pretending to touch the house, giving Dakshina and hanging it on the temple in the evening, the practice of turning the Linga around is disappearing now.

According to the Newari tradition, it is called Chir Swaygu, that is, after turning the linga, the tradition of starting Phagu has been going on for 400 years, but the tradition of carrying the linga on the shoulder and swinging houses and shops has become endangered. He says that there is a popular belief that if the shop and house are placed in the village and given Dakshina, the children will get happiness and business will increase in the shop.

‘इयालय् च्वंगु तुकं मा  
, वहे ल्यासे जितः माः,  
व ल्यासे मदयकं जा हे मनया’

Pujari Kapali says that in this festival, which is celebrated as a festival of love, such bhajans and songs have become extinct by singing a song meaning that there is a garland of mustard all over the window, I want that young girl, I will not eat rice until I get that young girl.

#### *Lyrics in Newari*

‘अबिरया होली तंचाया ला ल्यासे,  
अबिरं छगुं खाः हिसि दयेका बी’

#### *Lyrics in Nepali*

अबिरको होली, रिसायौं कि तरुनी,  
अबिरले तिम्रो मुहार हिस्सी बनाइदिउँ कि’

Abir's Holi, Risayaum ki taruni, Abir tehin muhar hissi bhainidiun ki', Dafa bhajans in Nepalese language are used to express love. Kehri Kapali, who has been working as a priest in the Bhimsen temple for years, says that the tradition of Holi proposing love to the girl he likes (if girl shy she may accept his proposal) through Bhajans on Holi has now disappeared.

Bhimsen Guthi has traditionally celebrated Holi as a festival of love and sex. Guthi has hung the symbols of Bhimsen's linga and Draupati's vagina in the Bhimsen temple every year from the day of Phagun Shukla Ashtami to Phagupurnima, depicting the reflection of sexual intercourse.

For seven days, the locals have been worshipping and Darshan of Linga and Yoni. The wooden Linga is considered to be Bhimsen's linga and the yoni-shaped hole made of red cloth is considered to be Draupati's yoni. The residents of this place have been protecting the symbols of the sex and the vagina as a sexual relationship between Bhimsen and Draupadi, not as a deformity but as a cultural significance.

Shaking the penis hanging on the pot, it penetrates the vagina-shaped hole in the cloth; this is considered as sexual intercourse. Kapali says that although there was a tradition of hanging Bhimsen outside the patti in the past, after receiving complaints that it was difficult for women to move from here, they have been hanging it in the Bhimsen temple on the upper floor of the patti for the past few years.

Those who come to visit here shake Bhimsena's linga and pretend to have Bhimsena's linga attached to Draupadi's vagina and offer Dakshina. Cotton is hung on the top of a wooden linga and the cotton is taken as a copy of semen. She says that there is a popular belief that doing Darshan in this way will bring family happiness, longevity and business growth.

Historian and Sanskritist Dr. Purushottamalochan Shrestha of Bhaktapur says that this festival has been celebrated since ancient times as a religious, cultural and social festival. He says, 'There is life here, so there is celebration, and there is celebration and then there is life.' He says that Holi festival has been celebrated here as a symbol of love and sex for years.

Dr. Shrestha said, 'Bhimsen is Bhairav, Bhairav is Mahadev, Draupadi is Bhairavi, i.e. Parvati, Draupadi's five husbands are given a negative message. In fact, Draupadi died without getting married in her previous life, after she did penance to Mahadev and asked for a husband five times. Five Pandavas became her husband's after giving a boon as Tatastu, that too is Mahadev's Leela, it has tantric power, don't misunderstand.'

Stating that the wooden linga hung in the temple is a symbol of Bhimsen, he said that it should be seen in connection with love and sex. Stating that it is a symbol of male power, he said that it is wrong to try to mix history, religion and culture by misconstruing this tradition as the gender of the rapist by spreading confusion as per Tantric method. He said that evidence of religion and history confirms that it is not the gender of the rapist, but that it is kept as a symbol of Bhimsen.

He says that the Fagu festival, which is symbolically related to sex, i.e. Holi, is associated with Krishna and Prahlad in some places in South Asia, but especially in Bhaktapur, it is related to the sexual union of Bhimsen and Draupadi. After Chir Swayegu i.e. hanging the linga, the Newar community here goes to Bhimsen temple to eat Guthi Bhoj, and during Holi, a fair is held in Bhimsen temple on Saturday and Tuesday.

Dr. Shrestha, a history and cultural expert, says that it is wrong for some of the people here to offend the religious faith and to promote the gender of the rapist and try to destroy religion, culture and tradition. Not only men but also women come to observe and darshan, and those who come here shake the hanging linga based on religious beliefs. It is believed that this year's Holi will end after taking out the linga from Bhimsen's temple in front of Dattatraya temple in the evening on the day of Phagupurnima, carrying it on the shoulder and taking it to the pit dug in the river at Bramhayani temple. Pujari Kapali says that there is still a popular belief that a person who carries a penis from the temple to the river will have a son that year.

It is said that the arrival of the spring season starts from the month of February and this time is considered to be the time of sexual energy, the time of love, and it is also related to the festival of Holi. It is believed that not only humans but also birds and animals have sexual desire in spring season.

In Bhaktapur, which is considered to be the real Dolakha Bhimsen, there is a tradition of staying awake all night and feasting on Bola Bali and keeping the music alive by singing hymns all night. According to this tradition, the Guthi people here worship the symbol of Bhimsen's linga on Holi day and take Draupadi's yoni (chir) with curd and put it in khat and take it around the village.

#### 4.8 Anthropology of Holi Performance

Theoretically, it is better to adopt the gender modes of interpretation and symbolic modes of interpretation. Here I would like to synthesize the concept of gender conditioning, gender based division of labor, role of socio-structural psychological factors for the determining gender status and role in Newar society of Bhaktapur in general and role of women in Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi in particular through symbolic gender perspectives. The theoretical objectives are to identify and to interpret the Newar perception or attitudes or ideologies of both genders in both general and how women themselves see and realize it in particular.

In case of Holi of Bhaktapur Gayaju, Bhimsen Guthi and associated members as socio-cultural, religious ritual parents are normally the first and most crucial agents of socialization of songs, their meanings, and significance to the people of Bhaktapur. Usually, they guide Newars into gender roles deemed appropriate by their cultural prescribed values. It is a serious question that, why phallus get priority rather than vagina though both are equally important for intercourse? Why phallic expression dominant in hymn why not vagina? The answer is very simple that Newar society is patrilineal and they have knowledge of phallus has unlimited capacity of production. If a phallus wants it can make more pregnant and can produce more children and if more children have then economy is strong. In a way the male supremacy over sexuality of female is dominant both psychologically and economically which is parallel with the Harris's model of cultural materialism.

With the perspective of gender symbolic approach to study the Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi of Bhaktapur, the way of Newar life show that the importance of symbolic cultural configurations in the construction and maintenance of a Newar society's "sex role plan" which is Newari culture; sex role plan is instinctively tried to its worldview i.e. religious ritual or socio-cultural philosophical stance, and that these plans reflect the interpretative and meaning give to Newari social and cultural relations with its environment. As parallel with Peggy Sunday and Lynn, Bennett it is appropriate that how Newar women understand the Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi and religious ritual and their socio-cultural circumstances and how they explain or express their behavior in symbolic terms. In my opinion, three areas were given priorities; the origin of Newar Cultural civilization in Newars of Bhaktapur and gender symbolism, the Newar practices and Newar cultural meaning of sex segregation, especially in the festival of Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi and sexual connotation which is generally sinful and pollution is perceived as cultural purity, the historical pattern of the emergency of male dominance along with cultural taboos, myths, religions etc.

Gender symbolism in origin stories is a projection of people's perception of human birth; their experience with the environment and what they believe or think is the source of power in universe (Bennett, 1983). Religious rituals of Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi related interpretations are focused on the relations between male dominance and sexual segregation on the basis of practices of male dominance on sexuality and phallic related taboos. Parallel with Marry Douglas, I want to focus on the cultural, religious and ritual knowledge creates the hierarchy which ultimately render the structure in society that is associated with the power to dominate. "Power and dangers credited to social structure are reproduced in small in the human body"(Douglas,1966). In festival of Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi Newars restricted women to participate the Bhimsen Guthi related ceremonies. So, it is mostly the masculine festival too. Agreeing with Sandy's theory of "female power and male dominance", I like to raise the issue about in Newars of Bhaktapur mostly Bhimsen Guthi related rituals; cultural and social factors by projecting various myths, ethos, religions weenies, etc. try to control the female sexuality as dangerous forces in the name of sexual and vulgar expression as cultural pollution and purity. Thus, in Newars of Bhaktapur, cultural beliefs about the danger of participation in Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi symbolically reserve the equation of femaleness with life and growth.

Belief system associated with the festivals of Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi offers the feast or "Guthi bhoj" by Bhimsen Guthi helps to maintain the balance and order evenly both intra and inter gender practices. In intra gender relation there is always cleavage between generations that old always forcefully enforce the cultural and ritual ceremonies, participations and offering feast while new generations deny such works. Similarly, in inter gender relation there is always contradictions between male and female in role taking and domestic power sharing in Newar, household, family, Guthi and so on, but, their socio-cultural values, beliefs and functioning as the balance between these opposing ideologies.

Cultural performance during a ritual of Chir Swayegu, Phagu, Holi may be at play in disseminating the message of festival that why Holi songs are more phallic centric? Why phallus of Bhimsen got more priority than Draupadi? The religious activities that involve sexuality or symbolism of phallus of Bhimsen and vagina of Draupadi are sometimes called phallic cults. The significance of such ritual which promotes sexual intercourse is believed to promote fertility, those that release a flood of creative energy by breaking cultural boundaries and by returning a culture to the state of primeval and powerful chaos.

The anthropology of cultural or ritual performance focuses on the verbal performance and performativity. In this regard, concept of performative (Austine, 1962), and concept of forms of oratory and verbal art as performance (Bauman, 1977) are found interdisciplinary approach. The ritualized performances are creative, rather than merely re-creative, or re-iterative (Tambiah, 1979), but repeated performance reveals the social structures that are "emergent in action" (Hymes, 1975). For cultural or ritual performance of actions to be ritually efficacious, they always set up the appropriate environment or conditions for agents to receive them as such. In the case of ritual performance on Chir Swayegu, Phagu, Holi, Newars are socialized to expect and respond to its arresting and captivating effects in order for societies' tensions and hierarchies to be made, periodically at least, more bearable. So, Chir Swayegu, Phagu and Holi stands as historically evolutionally predisposed produce ritualistic behavior to bring about relief of various social stresses, tensions, conflicts and to ensure survival is reflected in the life-force giving sense ritualized these performances.

## 5. Conclusion

Holi signify the various functions in Newar society. Festival creates the opportunity and micro social institutions acts as the agents to act and implements the objectives. Socialization is the main function and maintaining social order in Newar society is the main functions of festival socialization of Holi. Even during Chir Swayegu, Phagu or Holi, the high spirits, the flirtatiousness, the sexuality which women must ordinarily suppress are released through the various expressions, movements and through various ways. However, this display of symbolic sexual intercourse of erotic side of female nature is only permissible because, in Phagu or Holi, it is given social acceptances, social approvals if one is liked by another and people starts to gossip of their love and affection. So, Phagu or Holi indirectly, acts as an event to select capable candidate for future possible couple. The dangers of female sexuality are thus firmly bracketed by the mutually reinforcing ascetic and patrilineal ideals.

In case of Holi of Bhaktapur Gayeju, Bhimsen Guthi and associated members as socio-cultural, religious ritual parents are normally the first and most crucial agents of socialization of songs, their meanings, and significance to the people of Bhaktapur. Usually, they guide Newars into gender roles deemed appropriate by their cultural prescribed values. It is a serious question that, why phallus get priority rather than vagina though both are equally important for intercourse? Why phallic expression dominant in hymn why not vagina? The answer is very simple that Newar society is patrilineal and they have knowledge of phallus has unlimited capacity of production. If a phallus wants it can make more pregnant and can produce more children and if more children have then economy is strong. In a way the male supremacy over sexuality of female is dominant both psychologically and economically which is parallel with the Harris's model of cultural materialism.

Chir Swayegu, Phagu or Holi play a basic biological and socio-cultural role is ensuring a continued human propensity towards social co-operation, social solidarity and social integration through religiously pure or sacred ritual of Holi and that reinforcement in highly differentiated Newar society, and Holi must continue to be examined as a useful tool or means for historical, socio-cultural, religious ritual, cross-cultural efficacy of ritual in human experiences of, and with, power.

## Conflicts of interest

No potential conflict of interest related to this article was reported.

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