



Village Shrine as a Common Cultural Space with Different Performances: Significance of Worshiping and Performance in *Khotelang*-Nepal

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Abstract

This paper is focused on how common cultural space in village of Nepal is utilized by different cultural, religious, social and ethnic or caste group for different performances by the villagers in different time is best explained. How these diverse performances in complex, multiplex Nepalese societies have significant role to maintain the diversity, differences, inequalities for the welfare, cooperation, harmony through the interactions, socializations to reduce the gap between the contradict, conflicting societies. The role of such rituals, feast and festivals to resolve the disorder, conflict and misunderstanding as mechanism, events and act or activities of everyday life of the people in the study area, were found very significant. Eight different common cultural spaces were selected as the case study for ethnographic study from each ward. Three level analysis; family community and society indicated that *Khotelang* villagers have used the common cultural spaces for religious, social, political, economic etc by different communities, at different time can maintain the harmony, cooperation, unity and respect from one to another with religious syncritized, culturally melted and socially accepted and psychologically dignified identity with each other sounds the good example for all diverged, multiplexed and complex society in this world. From the idea of "religion is the Opium of the masses" to "religion is the societal glue of the society" to "religious ritual provide the common spaces for diverse believers" can be visualized clearly with the help of theoretical preposition of structuralism, functionalism, symbolism, interactionism, interpretativism of various contributors form Emile Durkheim to Red Cliff Brown, Malinowski, Clifford, Geertz, to Turner to Sherry Ortner.

Keywords

Village Shrine, Common Space, Worship, Performance, Religious Syncretism

1. Introduction

Common cultural space in this study represents the place of people gather commonly to perform their cultural, social, political and religious acts for all and performance is the acts and actions by the people for the target groups those groups are different with others in terms of culture, religion, language, and belief system (Dahal, 2008).

In village there are various religious places which are used by different people, ethnicity, cultural linguistics and religious groups with their different performance in different time with different purposes. So, village shrines in Nepal is not free from either socio-religious or politico-economic sphere of village life. The native researcher has given less emphasis and less priority to study the role and significance of village shrine including religious, ritual and festival related studies in Nepal, but in case of studying, village shrine there are deep interest of few foreign anthropologist to the study of religion and ritual (Ortner, 1989) of a particular group. The role of village shrine and its significance in the village are not only function as sites of everyday and annual religious performances but they also become embedded in the wider socio-religious and political relationships of the respective religious community and beyond (Ortner, 1989, Rai, 2013).

In village socio-religious sphere of village life, any religious places, temples, Chautaro, Devithan etc. are ritual instruments and their function is to web individuals and communities into a complicated and inconsistent social fabric through various means like time (Durkheim, 1912, Dahal, 2024). Village shrine in the village is functions as the social fabrics or thread through which the relationship between and among the villagers are bonded, understood, and harmonized through the religious acts and action (Ray, 2004). Village shrines sometimes functions as the mechanism for the resolutions of conflicts, cleavage, struggles that undermine in family level, community level and society level, that encounters on the occasion of festivals, religious carnivals and offering of feasts for village level, community level and family level through various micro social institutions and organization (Ortner, 1989). The village shrine is the common places for diverse people, culture, religion, psychology and more through historical and political economic sphere of people in Nepal (Ortner, 1989) and such religious or ritual offers the religious and political importance of village shrine for those diverse people for common plight. People of Nepal have diverse culture, race, ethnicity, language and but share common territory, nature and social environment.

1.1 Theoretical Scope of the Study

Every society as a self-regulatory system of interrelated elements with structural social relationships and observed regularities are in alive with own form of pattern. It covers a great variety of authors and schools, which nevertheless tend to share a number of central tenets. First they explain the persistence of social practices by referring to those effects that are beneficial and secondly functionalism draws upon the notion of functional prerequisites.

The cultural demonstrations by the specific cultural customs, organization, institutions, their parts, elements and their interrelationship, interdependence or interplay to perform the task to maintain the total system are a function. Auguste Comte generated his classical functional ideas, as the societies should be studied as whole - a system of interrelated parts (Dahal, 2008). Likewise, Herbert Spencer viewed society as an organism made up of parts. His functional analysis tries to identify the “institutions” that society needed to fulfill the vital functions or “needs” necessary to keep the organism ‘alive’(Dahal, 2008). An organism has a structure, which consists of number of interrelated and interdependent parts.

Durkheim posited only one functional requisite: the need for social integration and it would involve assessment of the causes of phenomena and their consequences or functions for meeting the needs of social structures for integration (Durkheim, 1912). Social facts were different from any other facts; they were the very fabric of society, which arose out of human relationships and human association. Social facts, according to Durkheim, are of two different kinds and their difference need to be taken in the account in any sociological study. There are “normal” social facts and “pathological” social facts (Durkheim, 1912). If they are general, they will be normal, unless, they will be pathological for e.g. crime is central to Durkheim’s distinction between normal and pathological phenomena, when certain forms are normal in a society, if they regularly occur in similar types of society and if they fulfill essential functions in society. Phenomena are pathological if they don’t fulfill these conditions. In facts, normal forms are to be promoted, pathological forms to be eradicated. Social policy thus, generates and rests upon functional analysis (Durkheim, 1912).. Durkheim suggests that in explaining social facts, investigations should find the causes of social facts and the functions of social facts.

Briefly, Durkheim suggested that religious activity is found in society because it has a positive function. It helps to maintain the moral unity of society. He analyzed religious activity in a primitive tribe on the assumption that all societies have some basic characteristic in common and that understanding of religion in a simple society would lead him or her to an understanding of the essential features of religion in any society.

1.2 Religion and Religious Beliefs

Studies in Nepal about religion either through the anthropological or through sociological or history or through only other perspectives have declared that, studies only uncertainly on Hinduism, Buddhism and their practices or in spirit possession with one’s own perspective. But, there is lacking of holistic perspectives, through which, everyone can understand the relations of people in their socio-political and cultural psychological dimensions.

According To Emile Durkheim, 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 (Durkheim, 1912). So, there emerge a “collective consciousness” which in turns constrains them and obliges to behave in particular ways.

Durkheim emphasizes on the moral nature of social relationships, in his all writings, he claims that, the divisions of labor itself is a moral phenomenon rather than economic one. He focuses on moral, legal, and political problems, of

societies as they are dynamic and they change from simple traditional agrarian systems to modern industrial societies. Both these two types of society are characterized by different forms of social solidarity and by the different social systems of morality (Durkheim, 1912).

Durkheim's view on "division of labor" is synthetic ideas put forwarded by Comte and Spencer i.e. Comte has argued that the division of labor would bring increased conflicts, as individuals and groups developed and protected their own would bring greater interdependence through increased differentiation and if anything make modern industrial societies less vulnerable to collapse and disintegrate than simple societies. Durkheim picks up something from both of them (Durkheim, 1912). He agrees that simple or primitive societies had little division of labor. He suggests that they have a segmental structure that is they are made up of similar units such as families or tribes. There are only a limited number of roles to be played by each group.

1.3 Religion; From Opium of the Masses to Glue of the Society

Religion has proceeded to serve the function of societal glue as Durkheim has started. The functional theory or functionalism has to answer questions such as if social life is to persist, what conditions are to be met by the social system. Another book of Durkheim – "Elementary Form of Religious Life" has to say that religion is a social threat that binds people together. The community also has played the key role to maintain the harmony, solidarity and cohesion among members of the particular community that mentioned by Durkheim. When one can evaluate the religion as component of the society (Durkheim, 1912), then Marxist arguments prevail that religion acts as the opium of the masses, in which people believe on irrational, illogical and unscientific arguments, opinion because of believe on religions that sanctioned by their belief system of religion.

1.4 Community to Society; Homogeneity to Heterogeneity

Consequently, it is their common roles, practice, expectations, and beliefs which bid them together. They experience what Durkheim calls a "mechanical solidarity" because each part of the society is comparable to all the other parts. By the process of progressive change, the division of labor increases and new roles are required; there is an increasing differentiation of units or grouping. At the same time, the uniformity of beliefs and moral, ideas decreases, but the society doesn't disintegrate (Durkheim, 1912). Instead a new form of solidarity, a new form of moral order develops to supplement the weakening influence of common values. This Durkheim calls an "organic solidarity". By this, Durkheim promulgated the view on society as it is seen as a stable, orderly system which experiences change and which adjusts or adapts to changed situation in some way to recreate a new order, a new state of equilibrium

1.5 Socio-Natural and Economic Landscape of the Study Area

Khotelang village municipality is 76 KM south from the district headquarter *Diktel*. It lies 1016 feet to 9255 feet (261 meter to 2373 meter) range of altitude from sea level. Geologically, it covers 27°03 to 27°10 in Northern Latitude from the meditation line and 86°45 to 86°55 Eastern Latitude. The district has 10 local bodies among them two are municipality and eight are village municipality including *Khotelang* village municipality which is the research area of this work (CBS, 2021).

Although in *Khotelang* village municipality, there is a predominance of Rai caste in this rural municipality, Chhetri, Bahun, Tamang, Gurung, Newar, Kami, Damai, Saraki, Magar and Thami caste also live there. According to the National Census (2021), the total population of this rural municipality is 16,846, of which 49 percent are male and 51 percent are female. Similarly, the wards are Likuwapokhari-1 male 801, female 809, Waplukha-2 male 878, female 904, Sawaktare-3 male 972, female 1016, Vadkadiale-4 male 886, female 925, Chipring-5 male 491, female 467, Indreni Pokhari- 6 Male 1013, Female 1030, Khotang Bazar-7 Male 787, Female 837, Simpani-8 Male 1147, Female 1322 and Lichkiramche-9 Male 1285, Female 1276. Most of the people of this rural municipality are dependent on agricultural occupations, while some of them are dependent on government jobs, trade, business, foreign employment, carpentry and carpentry occupations (CBS, 2021).

2. Theory and Literature about Village Shrines

Village shrine is the means to fabricate or work as the agency to formulate village cohesiveness, harmony, togetherness and cooperation among the villagers in south Asian countries. These shrines are mostly related with the human group, kinship, genesis, politics, history and more. Mostly, the relationships between living people with deities, living life with past kin's are remembered under the religious system of that particular society and culture (Dahal, 2024). Native speakers who know about the significance of village shrines is explained as; villagers are assisted in hardship by the deities, people mostly belongs with particular territory with either through the name of rivers, or temples or deities and villagers believe that village security, guardianship, mechanism of social controls were enforced through the various myths associated with the deities in the name of sacred and profane (Ortner, 1989).

The important role of temple in village to make the local community or family united through the donation collection from the same group, family and lineage from different places. The Vishnu temple represents the temple of family or descent/lineage donated by a single sect of caste or religious group such as Brahmans. The Shiva temple, in a sense, represents the temple of the whole village. The *Elangkali* temple occupies the position of village deity and temples

are also used in such ritual ceremony as the marriage or a sacred thread ceremony, and the *Garudasevai* ritual is “a solidarity rite in the classic sense” given to the phrase by Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown (Beteille, 1965).

The village deities with the ancestral shrine have a social group; an ancestral estates/rights, each estate has an ancestral shrine, where they offer rice and meat curry on the special occasion of festival and such festival functions for “the unity of the village” and they have several or more than one village shrine and deities even in a single village to protect and watch over the village community” (Morris, 2005).

The reciprocal relationship between deities, rituals, the villagers, their protections etc are always through the power which arises from the village shrines. The boundary or territorial securities from the enemy, witchcrafts, evil forces inside and outside the villagers and village are defended by the village shrines (Valk & Lourdasamy, 2007).

The village shrines as center for political struggle for justice, equality and freedom from dominant social groups (Mines, 2002), as ancestral deities (Morris, 2005), as protector of territory (Valk & Lourdasamy, 2007), and some for sacred and profane (Mathur, 1964), sanskritization or invasion of Hindu god and goddess (Verghese, 2004) and some for worshipping kinship, ancestral deities and family history with religious framework (Sharma, 1974).

2.1 Village Shrines; Socio-Religious Mosaic

Village shrines have great socio-religious importance in Nepal (Rai, 2013) in Himalayas including Nepal, the establishments of monasteries are not due to the single reason, it has multiple reasons behind it, otherwise how and Sherpas made monasteries in spite of their familial worshiping platforms Gompas since sixteenth century to till twenty-first century (Ortner, 1989). The newly established monasteries helped Sherpas used to keep the gods inside the private home by the senior clan member. Such publication of private familial gods from Gompa to monasteries due to the internal via domestic, social, religious, economic and social reasons as far as expansion of British colony in Himalayas except in Nepal (Ortner, 1989). The temple is associated with the religious belief that it is the place of merit making and receives blessings and god and goddess forgives the people in case of their past mistakes (Clarke, 1990). The flow of goods and money are the deep rooted belief that people obey the social rules associated with the religions that helps to maintain the social order and the means of social control in the name of merit making or in the name of forgiveness and it helps to maintain the collective feelings of the community or society with full of harmony. Temples and monasteries are constructed with the objective of communal feelings and for the betterment of the village and the feeling of socio-religious devotion ultimately helps to establish the feeling of 'common' or "communal" or "communism" (Clarke, 1990). The role of village shrines varies according to the social and political context as village shrines were found mostly operated, regulated and care taken by the elite of the village in which they shows the religious role as aesthetic as well as social leader of the village through the religious sphere of village people with the help of temples and monasteries (Bourghart, 1978).

2.2 Village Shrines; Political-Economic Platform

The village shrines have great political significance in Nepal (Rai, 2013). The history of Sherpa seasonal migration showed that the Sherpas were used as labor to construct monasteries in the Indian sub-continent such as in Himanchal, Arunchal, Darjaling, and more during British colonial period and later on the trend diffused towards in Nepal with the supports from government level as well as international supports in the name of various projects (Ortner, 1989). The history of various monasteries of Solukhumbu, Lomangthan etc are in the same tract that Ortner mentioned. The objective of such monasteries are with the various expectations that these socio-political institutions helps to bind the social relations, harmonized people and preserve the culture safeguards from the rising western cultural values (Craig, 2004).

During the political system of kingdom, king offered the infrastructure and cost of constructions and local elites patronages such religious institutions for political purposes and the any form of state have been regulated within the religious framework and conquest was the sacred duty of the warrior king and the king gave land and funds to the village shrines to great temples for legitimate their ruling government, to endorse policies through the religious institutions to enact law and order in the name of holiness (Bourghart, 1978).

There are reciprocal relationship between the temple, deities, and priests with the king, kingdom and the dynasty. The magical power of Yogis is the blessing of Gorakhnath Baba, power of Gorkhali king and the desire for blessing of god/deities by the kings that were found commonly in the temple or monasteries (Bouillier, 1991).

The worship is for god and the sacrifice is a ritual slaughter for communal meal. Ritual is a kind of pattern or sequences of actions that can be perceived, identified, described and believed in regular calendar basis is a scandal of animal sacrifice because of killing animals and eating them a sacred affair, a religious act or even the religious act (Burket et al, 1987). Animal killing in Nepal is labeled as ritual sacrifice that displays the inherent violence of human over animal as cultural initiative to control the whole ecology (Burket et al, 1987).

Among the Hinduism, Saiva(Shiva sects) Hindus (one of the Hindu sect) believe the power of female energy as "Devi" or "Shakti" to balance the power of male counterparts. Mostly, the mythical or religious epic stories were written as the Devi or Shakti only killed the male demon power or *Rakchyes* or *Daitya* (demon). So, people worship the goddess for particular powers such as *Sharaswoti* for education, wealth for Laxmi, power for Devi and those form of power association with goddess somehow in the periphery of God Shiva. The dialectics of worshiping Shiva as non-sacrificial god and Shakti (created or blessed by Shiva) or Devi as offering animal sacrifice is found very interesting and this type of dialectics also found in the study area that Devis or Shaktis are installed parallel with the Shiva temples or in the

periphery of the Shiva temples. In Hinduism –Vaisnav- Hindu who worship Vishnu- (Vishnu sect) do not offer animal sacrifice in worshipping. There are various forms of Devi- Bhagawati, Bhabani, Chamunda, Durga, Kali, Parvati, Satidevi, Shakti, Panchakanya and local Devi to whom sacrifice is offered. Generally, in sacrifice male goats or any male animals are sacrifice, but in Devithan, female goats are offered as sacrificial animal exceptionally. This is the one of the concern of this research to explore the reason behind this and trace out its significance.

The major role of village shrine is as functions as the constitution of village in Dhimal and people continue to socially reproduce their customary social-political relations based on the system of village head, village priests and others through the institution of the Gramthan and through the annual village ritual performed at *Gramthan* (Rai, 2013). The ritual importance of the village shrine has deep faith on either temple or Gompa or in base of tree over Chautaro called as Devithan. Similarly, the significance of village shrine is wider in Tharu called Bramathan with the dead family remembrance and dead soul always remains in Bramathan (Gunaratne, 1999). The worship practice of Bramathan or village shrine in which offering are made to the village god on behalf of the whole village on the night of the full moon or the new moon' where local Jimdar plays the main role to observe their Puja" (Gunaratne, 1991).

Crux from the theory review, empirical research and previous ritual studies, it is found that the origin and function of the worshipping as well as sacrificing culture that found in the various area, society and culture mostly in the Asian and specially in South Asian countries have been found abundance. The study of Marcel Mauss to Veena Das, from Tene Girad to Kathryan McClymond and from Sylvain Lebis to Jan Heesterman, Catherine Bell, Frits Staal, Wendy Dongiger, Axel Michaels and Fredrick Smith, David Holmberg to Sherry B. Ortner: there are ongoing reflections of worshipping and sacrificing cultural rituals of complexity in which every cultural group can search their identity, harmony and cooperation to way further the diverse, complex society in terms of culture, language, race and ethnicity and religion (Dahal, 2021, Dahal et al., 2025). Varying from sacredness of worshipping to polluted role of slaughter in everyday life of Hindu world towards the occasional ritual sacrifice, simple heart-felt expression of gratefulness for a rich harvest to staggeringly complicated ritual actions of communication and communion, all these covers the entire range of oath, worship, hymn, and token gifts (dan) to the gods to a complex world maintaining everyday life without any obstacles.

So, the significance of village shrine are associated with the historical, religious, political, ritual, economic, social, territorial and cultural context of the particular villages.

3. Methods and Materials

This research is designed as descriptive and analytical so as to collect information according to the research objectives. Descriptive research design is used to describe the religion, socio-cultural settings, history and origin of village shrines, cultural calendar and related socio-cultural religious and political components like what, when where related information are to describe.

Table 1 Ward wise distribution of religious, historical and cultural places

| S.No. | Ward | Religious, Historical and Cultural Places | Importance |
|-------|------|---|------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | Gupteshwor Nachiring Mahadev Than | Tri-religious place |
| | | Sabitra Devi Temple | Historic temple |
| | | Malika- Mahankal Devi Temple | Religious belief |
| 1 | 2 | Panchakanya Devi Temple | Religious belief |
| | | Sabitra Devi Cage | Religious & Historical |
| | | Tin-Kanya Devi Temple | Religious |
| 3 | 3 | Jalpa Devi Temple | Religious |
| | | Sakenwathan (Chandi Temple) | Kirat Religious place |
| | | Kilampa Devi Temple(Patal) | Religious |
| 4 | 4 | Thati Bhagwati devi Temple | Religious |
| | | Shankheswor Mahadev Temple | Religious |
| | | Shiva Temple | Religious |
| 5 | 5 | Saptakanya- Devisthan | Religious |
| | | Mahadevsthan | Religious |
| | | Shyam Ganga Temple | Religious |
| 6 | 6 | Panchakanya Mandir | Religious |
| | | Bhagawati cum Shiva Temple | Religious |
| | | Khuteswor Mahadev Temple | Religious |
| 7 | 7 | Gaiyathan | Religious |
| | | Sidhhathan | Religious |
| | | Pakhuwa Devi Temple | Religious |
| 8 | 8 | Ganesh Temple | Religious |
| | | Bhairabnath Templei | Religious |
| | | Mahadev Temple | Religious |
| 9 | 9 | Pashupatinath Temple | Religious |
| | | Raktamala Devi Temple | Religious |

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Jalapa Devi Temple | Religious |
| Shivalaya Temple | Religious |
| Gita Sasangt Matha | Religious |

(Source: Fieldwork, 2023)

Analytical design is used to analyze the how and why parts of the research theme in which, relationship between village shrines, ecology, economy, demography, politics, culture religions etc. were analyzed by using analytical design. Necessary data were collected by using interview, participation, key informants' interview and focused group interview, case study methods to collect primary data, whereas, secondary data were collected from the concerned office, CBS, District office, and related offices as per the requirements.

Interview, observation, participation and participant's observation were the tools to gather the information required. This research is socio-religious in nature and it demanded special for village shrine and its significance in the diverse demographic situation of the study area, belief system, religious syncretism and political, social role of priest and various institutions in maintaining social order in village.

3.1 Case-Based Ethnography or Focused Ethnographic Case Study

Case based ethnography is employed (in such conditions) that researchers were experienced a necessity of depth study with particular cases. Case study method generally help to outline the research theme or objectives with the case base in qualitative research, but if those case studies are specific, particular that can justify and verify the data through the life history, genealogy and past records in such cases, case based ethnographic field work is necessary to find out the depth of the research. All temples were studies generally as case studies which are listed above in table.1. But, few temples, and few worships are exceptional which can justify the significance of worshipping and sacrifice. So, Sabitri Devi Temple, Sakencha Than(Chandi temple),Soledhunga, Sikari Thumka, Panchakanya Devi temple, Kalika Bhagawati temple, Bhairabinath Temple, Ganesh temple and Raktamala Temple including nine temples and their worshipping were selected as case-based ethnography in which thick descriptions regarding the significance of worshipping Devithan or village shrines by the diverse religion, culture, ethnicity, caste, were studied.

Methodologically, the common cultural spaces of village-Khotelang with different worship and performances were studied by using qualitative methods in three level; family level, community level and village level, through which the common cultural spaces were found easily and so as to analyses the situation of harmony, cooperation and unity in different level. But to observe the different performances of worship and festival, feasts annual calendar of each community were identified and gathered information by using various tools and techniques.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the research are mainly focus on why non-sacrificial temple of Shiva and sacrificial temples of Devi are found together. What is the significance of Devithan in villages? How all religious people of the village worship the village shrines in different forms? What are the forces to keep all villagers of diverse religious, culture, caste/ethnicity in a common religious-cultural place- village shrine? How people perceive village shrine as occasional worship or it is everyday life for them.

4.1 Why Hindu Goddess Loves Sacrifice?

"The ideal god and goddess is the protector of all living world human including human and there is division of work according to the need and necessity of the society" according to the key informant. So, Bramhaa, Vishnu and Shiva are assigned for their specific roles. There are 33 corer god and goddess who are assigned for specific tasks. Mostly, goddess idol is nothing but a virtual form of all living womanhood, so sacrificing innocent animal by man at virtual goddesses' feet is a form of virtual worship of real womanhood by man. Why Hindu goddess love demon sacrifice? Why mostly gods resist such demonic acts? Men from performing such demonic acts to disguise themselves as godly man by nourishing these works, to encourage women to resist them by snatching those sacrificial swords to save those innocent animals. If it becomes necessary to sacrifice one or two animals to save the thousands of animal, they can do themselves as there is gender equality, but they must never allow any man to do that at all.

The symbolism of animal sacrifice or such demonic acts from the various forms of Devi manifests on the sacrifice of selfishness, self-centered approaches, masculine though, power centric behaviors etc. latently, such acts symbolizes the acceptance of female, nature and creature of this world.

The worshipping ritual is typically performed by male priest of elder male of community and family, and the male also sacrifice the animals, but only the feet of female in the name of Devi is offered. Mostly he goats were offered as sacrifice but she goat is offered in Devithan or village shrines occasionally in special cases. The goat is the messenger and receives a glorified status before his or her scarifies. These animals were fed abundantly, and color painted to signify exaltation. This is reserved only for goats that have taken the vow to be sacrificed. The vow is complete when water sprinkled on the goat causes him to shake. The shaking is the signal that he or she has accepted and is ready for his or her sacrifice.

Case A- Sabitri Devi Temple

Sabitri Devi temple lies on the top of the hill of Likhuwapokhari near ward office of Khotehang village municipality in ward number one. This temple is believed that the construction of it is by the Shah King around 1873 BS. Every year on Shrawan 2 (mid-July), Rakye festival is organized. Except this, every year in Udhauli and Ubhauli, there is celebration of Sakela-Chandi festival of Kirat. Devithan lies on the bank of Devi River and Kirat-Rai of Thulung clan worship in *Tin Dhara* (three taps) with *Tin- Kanya Pokhari* (Three girls pond) and Tin-Kanya Devithan (Three girls village shrine). The place is common pilgrims for that diverse caste- ethnicity, religions, culture for their own identity, participation and harmony with syncretism. From ethnic people Kirat-Rai to caste group, from Hindu to Kirat religion, from Kirat culture to high caste culture, all religious, ethnics, language and cultural followers have participated and share common feelings of their ones' own. Religiously and culturally common for all villagers as village shrines the *Sabitri Devi Temple* is one of the most significant pilgrims for all Khotehang villagers.

Case B- Sakenwa Than (Chandi Temple)

This temple lies in the ward number three of Khotehang Village Municipality. This is one of the most important common temples for both Kirat and Hindu religious, cultural people, because, Kirati believe that this temple is the old as Kirat civilization emerged and developed. This temple is perceived as female Chandi with various mysterious and historical cum archeological importance and significance. On the occasion of Ubhauli and Udhauli held on mid-April and mid-December, Kirat-Rai celebrate festivals with worshipping, Sakela dances, and Chandi dances with full of feasts for participants and invitees of different caste-ethnicity and cultural groups. on these occasions, buffaloes, goats, chicken, duck etc were slaughtered and Dhami(Dopa)- Kirat priests worshipped and sacrifices animals with dancing Sakela Sili. After the death of Dhami on 2060 BS (2003 A.D.) the celebration, worshipping and sacrificing have been prosounded to till date. This temple has a couple of peacock, a couple of poisonous snakes and countless pigeons. There is popular myths amount Chandi that if one does anything without worship without priest, Chandi will angry very much, that may result the disaster, natural calamine and even death of people. One of the key informant shared the once many people died when they did not dance Sili properly in ancient time.

The myths that people deeply believe on worshipping gods and goddess, memorial worshipping of ancestral deities with request to gods for their aims to complete with the worshipping this god is the great significance that we have found during fieldwork.

For Hindu Sadhus, the temple is famous for the meditation for mental peace and merit making, worships death souls and pray for the reincarnation.

Case C- Sol Dhunga (Sano Halesi)

In ancient time, one porter put down for temporary rest for few time during travel carried load on the bamboo basket in the big stone in this place, and then the place became famous as *Sol Dhunga*. In this cage, on the occasion of Shivarati, Balachaturdashi, Ramnavami, people gathered and huge mass people worship ancestral deities by spreading seeds, worshipping God Shiva for the peace of death soul.

On the north corner of the cage where Shivalinga lies, there is temple of Devi, where people sacrifice the she-goats, she-pigeon and hen. The sacrifice of she-goats, hen and she pigeon is significant in ecological, cultural, social and religious reasons. People in the festival processions mostly worship through the Dhami- Jhakri (traditional healer) and priests. The worshipping Devi is restricted during Shivaratri, Balachaturdashi and Ramnavami, when the god Shiva is worshipped, because form of Shiva is non- sacrificial i.e. sacrificial denied god whereas Devis are sacrificial accepted goddess. The Devi is popularly as her name Saptakanya and she goat is sacrificed for her. Researchers asked to the key informant that why female goats are sacrificed in Devithan why no male goat? He replied that Devi is goddesses as she denied male and she likes female in every ritual and religious functions. Likewise, when asked to the priest of the temple that why female goats are scarified? He replied that it is our traditional culture and we still follow it. He is again asked why this culture is still in practice? He replied as" the population of goats became large and one male goat can pregnant more female so, to control the population of goats, lack of market to sell, our ancestor had started to sacrifice female goats. It is one of the major of ecological balance.

Case D- Sikari Thumka(Hunter's Hill)

In this hill station there is there is no temples, no statue of gods and goddess. There is only tower of stone and few Trisul (weapons of God Shiva). On the occasion of Gai- Tihar(cow festival or worshipping festival) or Laxmi puja, there is great mass procession, worshipping and ritual carnival with joy. People celebrate happily. If one worship the tower and surroundings, devotees can get relief from the diseases, wound relief and relief from body ache if they have and most important thing is the cattle became relief from any troubles and give high productivity. The special features of this holy pilgrim are the fruits were rolled from the hills for the soul of death. People lit the light remember there death ancestral soul and worship for the peaceful stay. One of the special features of the place is there is tantric play and demons souls were found in this area and people were restricted to go at the evening and mid-night, unless they went, they may caught from them make ill.

Case E- Panchakanya Devi Naraha

This temple is lied on ward number six of Khotehang village municipality. Mostly, the worshipping remained same as in the previous Devithan or village shrines as female goats, hen and pigeons were sacrificed in temples. But specifically, worship follows on Purnima (Half moon), Panchami in three days of week, Monday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Ekadashi, Chaturdashi, Aushi(dark night) and month of Shrawan there is restriction in sacrifice, so there is no worship too.

There are various temples such as; Kalika Bhagawati Temple of ward number seven, Bhairavinath Temple of ward number eight, Ganesh Temple of ward number eight and Raktamala Devi Temple of ward number nine all have same ritual of worship and same ritual of sacrifice but in case of Ganesh Temple, the guard of Ganesh at the entrance gate of the temple receives sacrifices rather than Ganesh. But the worshipping procedures remained same in most of the Devithan and for the well wishes, for the good health of the people and the cattle and for the remembrances of the death soul and their peaceful stay in heaven etc.

4.2 Dialectics of Sacrifice and Non-Sacrifice

Durkheim was perhaps the first thinker to recognize the critical importance of religion in human societies. In his view “religion is a collective act and includes many forms of behaviors in which people interact with others”. Durkheim initiated sociological analysis of religion by defining religion as a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things”. Parallel with the definition of Durkheim, it is curious that how human society held together and what factors keep the society together because society is the union of diverse individuals and social groups with diverse interests and aspirations?” The probable answer may be that “religion binds these diverse elements and forces in same rope with diverse forces”. But readers may have further questions “Why should religion provide the societal glue?” Religion provides societal glue because it offers people meaning and purpose for their lives. It gives them certain ultimate values and end to hold in common. Although subjective and not always fully accepted, these values and ends help a society to function as an integrated social system. That’s why people believe in religion either for “hope” or by “fear”. In fact religious rituals are those practices, taboo, belief system in which people act, react and people move forward by resolving various problems. Religious ritual worship divine power by the followers with their specific duties and responsibilities.

4.3 Common Space, Different Performances

"Nepal is a holy garden of different flowers and all flowers are designed perfectly in the garden with their beauty and smell, so, all religious, cultural, ethnic people in same village and they have developed such a place in which all people goes to share their own way of belief system and Khotehang is not exceptional" said key informants.

During fieldwork, it was found that people went the hill station to worship god and goddess, to celebrate cultural ceremonies and offering religious rituals that everyone can participate and one can respect others' cultural traditions, identity and so on. Sects of Hindus, those who follow sacrificial and those who restrict sacrificial are in common place. The ritual station is common for all and they worship their own god and goddess with own cultural patterns, with own religious beliefs and with own processes and procedure. All villagers worship nature like river, air (different form- some worship, as god *Bayu*), earth, forest, flora (some species of plants) and some fauna (some species of animals), ancestral deities in various forms, even though, villagers worship demons too. The significance of worshipping such god and goddess and deities and demons is to protect the village, villagers, productions from the enemies, disaster and demons. Villagers worship divine power and deities for the protections, blessing, good faith and their good wishes for the peace, prosperity and progress, but there were various acts and activities to pressure demons, to make them happy and to control over them with *Tantra*, *Vidhya*, and traditional healing practices of *Dhami* and *Jhakri* practices.

The worshipping god and goddesses is far more complex work than a single act of getting bless. There were sacrificial and non-sacrificial, demons, divines, Hindu, non-Hindu, Buddhist, caste- ethnics, like various diverse groups of people live, interact, work, participate and functions together in village economy, society, politics and even in religions too. Such, diverse elements, components and units were found together in same religious place with full syncretism, with full respects and with full participation is not a simple acts and activities it is complex.

Lord, Shiva or Mahadev, Sansari Mai with natures, rivers, air, tree, plants, hills, stones, mountains etc were found worshipped by the all villages in their own cultural calendar in their cultural festivals, religious rituals. Except these, specific god and goddess were worship in specific functions for specific purposes. Devis or village shrines, goddesses were worshiped in most of the Hindu cultural calendar but specific worship was performed in specific day with specific forms. Generally, male goats, cock and other male cattle were sacrificed in temples of goddess, village shrines and Devithans but female goats and hens were sacrificed once in a year. This is because of the control over the population of cattle by controlling the population of female. People promise goddess, shrines and Devis for their work to accomplish in time and urgently and after results they arranged the sacrifice is called Bhakal. Similarly, people worship village shrine for the good health of people, their treatment of wound and even the good harvest on farm and field and healthy cattle and good product from animals.

In Khotehang, Kirat-Rai celebrate Sakela worshipping nature, mountain, trees, forest and so on and except Kirat-Rais other villagers cannot participate in worshipping. After worshipping, they offer feast celebration and performance of dances like carnival in community, where they invited the other villagers, kin, to take part in the feast. The Sakela is

highly signify for the promotion of village cooperation, harmony and interactions, that ultimately resolve the conflicts, tensions and misunderstanding between Kirat-Kirat and Kirat-non-Kirat, Hindu, Buddhist and culturally, ethnically, linguistically, religiously different groups living in same village who share common forest, land, rivers and so on. The situation is vice-a versa (i.e. Kirat-Rais were invitees and others were organizer) in other ceremonies except ancestral deities worship of caste groups. Recreation and entertainments associated with the ritual, cultural ceremonies ultimately functions as the mechanism of conflict resolution, promote harmony and enhance co-operations.

4.4 Family Based Worship and Performances

In the study area, there were many worships and performances that were based on the family. Such as, worshipping ancestral deities, family based gods and goddesses and their worships associated with the performances. Family is the unit of society and unit of production structured and functioned as microcosm of the society or village which we are defined in this study. This type of worships was found more common for the protection of family members from the demons and worship for the blessing of the gods and goddess and remembrance of ancestral deities. The significance of the family based worship and performance helps to socialize the family members, interaction between them helps to resolve the familial problem and misunderstanding or conflicts within family or clan or relatives.

4.5 Community Based Worship and Performances

It was larger than the family based worship and performance. Mostly based on the caste and ethnic groups of homogeneous groups were found practiced in study areas. Udhauli-Ubhauli, Sakela Sili, Chandi Puja, etc of Kirat-Rais, Clan worship, Dewali puja, etc of Brahman- Chhetris, etc including various worships and performances of Majhi, Danuwars, Sunuwars etc. were categorized in this categories. The community based worship and performances were found more focused and responsible for the welfare of the particular communities, their protections from the natural calamine and disaster, protection from the demons and blessing from the gods and goddesses including natures. This category of worship and performances were mostly found focused on the worship of nature; river, air, forest, plants and various animals too.

4.6 Village Based Worship and Performances

This is largest and huge space for all villagers for their survival. All space of the natures, forest, rives, climate, topography, gods and goddesses were worshiped in this categories. Common way of life, everyday life of villagers of the Khotelang village was determined by the frequencies of raining, climatic factors, ecology, environmental situations, so villagers worship those physical, mental factors that were associated with the village economy, village ecology, village resources, and common gods and goddess for all cultural, ethnic, religious groups which are directly or indirectly involved in the village ecosystem. Nature got first priority, resources got second priority, production got third and likewise they worship for all in chronological order of their need and priority basis.

Sansari Mai, Lord Shiva, Mahadev, and Devi etc were common for all but they worship in different time according to their cultural calendar. Bhakal, were found more common for all.

4.7 Discussion and Analysis

Theoretically, cultural common space for worship different performances based religious ritual is the means to join Khotelang villagers to the god and it protect the villagers from the demons, disaster and natural calamine and blessing for the progress, prosperity and good health. The stricture of Nepalese society and its hierarchy with status of various indicators like gender, ethnicity, religion, economy, culture and linguistics etc in general and Khotelang village in particular are functioned and structured through the hierarchy and latent function of the ritual is to maintain the status of villagers always more or less to maintain stable, functional and structured (Dahal et al., 2025). Traditionally, the villagers are divided in to the three level; firstly, family, community, village level of hierarchy of need, aspirations and emotions, values and more. This is the structure of the village in Nepal society through which they can maintain the statuesque of the village comprehensively. This segment of difference make more interdependent of all religious, ethnic, economic, social and cultural groups as unit of analysis. The continuity of such ritual-cycle ultimately created the cultural-religious and social taboo that maintained the status of villagers mentioned by the structural-functionalist Emile Durkheim, Red-cliff Brown and Malinowski.

The concept of demons, profane, polluted etc in the family, community and village of one unit of analysis is endangered with different societal norms of other families, communities and villages. It will preserve the concept of being sacred through the worship in one hand and in hand socialization through the performances while also demonstrating the efficacy of the ceremony. Thus, the concept of cultural relativism of understanding the one's particular belief and practices must be followed to make ritual performance evocative. Otherwise, it would become an ambiguous practice, rendering the cultural space of worshipping and performances rite obsolete. Meanwhile, the rituals of worshipping and associated performances of particular culture with 'the god and goddesses including nature may reinforce the common way of village life to adopt for survival confining the villagers in a common cultural space and the application of which may set more interactive and diffused rites for performers of different sects. Hence, the villagers may be complex, advanced and, social acts and activities may engulf them and the status of people would be newly jeopardized in one way that they can lose their own cultural features. The contradiction would occur between two rituals of sanctioning the status

of those who love sacrifice and who do not love sacrifice. As a result of its three diverse levels of ritualistic practices, villagers are concurrently represented as an melting pot culture with religious syncretized.

From the perspective of gender and sexuality, the cultural common space for village ritual events are significant to protect all villagers from enemies and demons through the goddesses like Sansari Mai, Jalpa devi, Sabitri, Panchakanya, Tri Murti, Saptakanya etc. I have found one myths about these practices that when villagers became in troubles from enemies the Devis will rescue, protect and blessed and people follow the worshipping Devis. Why goddesses were assigned for such task? Key informant replied that only Devis were given the power from the supreme gods or from the Lord Shiva or Mahadev so, they could accomplish the task and on the auspicious occasions and in everyday life the Devis or goddesses were worshipped. In production and reproduction female has great significance so, goddess were given priority in worshipping and performance. Ecologically, the sacrifice or slaughter of female goat or hen in temples of goddesses signify the gender i.e. population of female cattle and avian too in one hand and in another hand, control of female cattle population ultimately limit the population of cattle can help to maintain the balance or equilibrium between ecological components with population. i.e. reciprocity of population of cattle with available resources. Likewise, cultural common space for different performance is also perceived as the socialization of new generation through ritual performance, worshipping events, processes and procedures Dahal et al., 2025). People or villagers will know what to do, how to do, when to do and why to do and whom to do. So, worshipping activities are related to sacred, solution oriented, psycho-physical counseling etc. for newly participated generation and it has great significance that most of the interactionists and symbolic interactionst theorists have mentioned.

Symbolically, the events worshipping and performances, signifies in the various level as, it protects the village, villagers, economy, resources through the symbols that fabricated through the psycho-physical counseling to village members and participants in different level of worshipping and performances. Symbolically, worshipping events is the socially and religiously important ritual for villagers that comprise sacred things which open the way to do well, be good, perceive good, and think good that is the force to run family, society and community. It is traditions that empower the sacred things, sacred roles as role model in the society that motivate villagers towards peace, prosperity, progress and it provides physiological -psychological counseling to all villagers in different levels that helps how to cope or adjust various situation in the course of lifetime.

Symbolically, as parallel with Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Marry Douglas, Sherry Ortner, even in ritual events like Balinese Cockfights, common cultural space for different worshipping and conducting performances, some familial, social and economic and political problems that are faced by the people is resolved through the religious rituals that have been already mentioned by various anthropologists. Likewise, the fragile status of villagers from childhood to old age, the virgin girls are essential to begin the any rituals and after conduction any performances, she is allowed to participate in all religious functions that are celebrated. That's why worshipping village shrine has symbolically great significance in Khotelang village for not individual or particular group only, it is for beginning of any worships, family functions and ritual too. Goddesses are worshipped in every society as virgin worship is very auspicious task and gift of virgin and gift to virgin is sacred works that deliberated by the Hindu philosophy ultimately gave the higher status of worshipping goddesses. So, symbolically, worshipping goddess has great significance in mixed and complex societies that are not less than Ballinese Cockfight events described by Geertz and not less than Nyunge explained by Sherry Ortner and not thinly describe that the ethnographic notes of Nedembu society of Turner. That's why, the worshipping and performing culture that found common in the mid-hill of the Nepal is not less signifying that any other thick descriptions and ethnographic accounts of any native and foreign anthropologist's accounts in any fieldworks.

The village shrines of the deities observed during the fieldwork of the study appear to be natural. There are some man-made physical infrastructures. Although they follow different religions, it seems that the same place is considered as a holy and sacred religious place. This is a unique example of social unity and religious tolerance. The villagers consider as sacred place, holy shrine and worships them. Here, different communities are seen giving different symbols and meanings of the same place. A common holy place is a religious place to unite different communities and maintain emotional unity. Villagers perform religious activities at sacred day, or month and auspicious occasion. But the symbolic meaning of holiness is being created by the beliefs, values and ideology of one's own religion. The sacred religious places of the communities following the Hindus religion and the holy places of those following the Kirat religion are also found at the same place. Together they worship and perform religious rituals, but with different symbolic meanings of purity, they form a single religious community in the same place. As the layers of symbols and meanings are described in the upper layer, the meaning of those religious shrines superglue all communities can be understood. When analyzing another layer of performing religious activities deeply, the sacred symbolic meaning of those holy places is different for the Kirat Rai community. Similarly, the sacred symbolic meaning of Hindu ideals is building the collective consciousness of Hindus. In this way, even though the village as a whole has different religious affiliations, even though there are different symbols of holiness in the same place, it is seen that even though they are considered holy in different ways, they work to maintain religious and social emotional unity. Even though different communities perform different religious rituals in the same temple, there is a collective consciousness that this temple is a common holy place. With this idealism of theirs, it can be seen that there is unity in the religious diversity of Nepal.

In one way, it seems that there is religious diversity in this village and many caste and ethnic groups worships their own deities, gods and goddesses with their particular religious rituals are performed in the common temple but time

and schedule remains different. Therefore, the structural aspects of the religions and religious acts are not more important than the religious performance that are recently took place and that were happened currently. The religious acts and activities that performing at recently or are happened in present time are crucial for the determination of homogeneity or heterogeneity.

Generally, villagers worship in common place mostly named by any one god or goddess, even they do not participate in those particular worshipping (like sacrifice or others forms) gods or goddess particularly. Manifestly, all villagers goes the common cultural or religious places either to worship of performing, no one deny not going the holy place. But it does not mean that all take part in all worship and performance. They only take part in their own worship and performance, but exceptionally some are invited. Latently, the overall worship and performances of yearly cultural, religious and social calendar signify the meaning of harmony, unity; cooperation and collective consciousness that every villagers have strong beliefs of religious and cultural acts and activities that all villagers own even they have not celebrated the cultural and religious performances. This is the unique features of Nepalese society that every cultural, religious groups can share common space with full respects with each other maintaining syncretism.

5. Conclusion

This paper is focused on how common cultural space in village of Nepal is utilized by different cultural, religious, social and ethnic or caste group for different performances by the villagers in different time is best explained. How these diverse performances in complex, multiplex Nepalese societies have significant role to maintain the diversity, differences, inequalities for the welfare, cooperation, harmony through the interactions, socializations to reduce the gap between the contradict, conflicting societies. The role of such rituals, feast and festivals to resolve the disorder, conflict and misunderstanding as mechanism, events and act or activities of everyday life of the people in the study area, were found very significant. Eight different common cultural spaces were selected as the case study for ethnographic study from each ward. Three level analysis; family community and society indicated that *Khotelang* villagers have used the common cultural spaces for religious, social, political, economic etc by different communities, at different time can maintain the harmony, cooperation, unity and respect from one to another with religious syncritized, culturally melted and socially accepted and psychologically dignified identity with each other sounds the good example for all diverged, multiplexed and complex society in this world. From the idea of "religion is the Opium of the masses" to "religion is the societal glue of the society" to "religious ritual provide the common spaces for diverse believers" can be visualized clearly with the help of theoretical preposition of structuralism, functionalism, symbolism, interactionism, interpretativism of various contributors form Emile Durkheim to Red Cliff Brown, Malinowski, Clifford, Geertz, to Turner to Sherry Ortner.

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