

Festival Tourism in Nepal: A Study of White Horse Jatra of Bhaktapur

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes and highlights the festival tourism in Nepal with the special reference to white horse jatra of Bhaktapur. Bhaktapur is world renowned cultural tourism destinations of Nepal where one can observe, have a wonderful experience and encounter with tangible and intangible cultural tourism products. Historical, archeological, religious and secular monuments, treasures of arts and crafts and varied indigenous cultural activities as known as the mirrors of Bhaktapur that reflect overall folk life and culture. Due to these wonderful and heart breathing heritage every year plenty of tourists have been inspiring to pay their visit. Therefore, all these indigenous tangible and intangible cultural heritage such as historical, archeological, religious and secular monuments, traditional tools, utensils, technology and craftsmanship, folktales, music and dance, way of life, religious beliefs, costumes and customary laws, festivals and jatras, dress/ornaments, food and drink, dreams, pleasure and sorrows are known as the significance tourism products. Through the festival tourism perspective colourful festivals and jatras are also recognized as the renowned sources for attraction. Bhaktapur is already established its fame as a destination of cultural capital where annually celebrate different colourful festivals and Jatras on the special auspicious occasion. Among them, white horse Jatra is a renowned and an important one. White horse is a holy mount of goddess Taleju, which must be white in colour and should be pure too. It must not have been ridden and must not lose any part of the body. This is taken out in the street during the tenth day i.e., in Asmin shukla Dasami for the procession. It is an indigenous cultural identity and practice as a popular cultural tourism product of Bhaktapur. But, this Jatra is still unexposed; hence it is a hidden or veiled festival. It is necessary recognizing the prominence of this jatra as a prominent tourism product. There is lack of proper studies regarding these issues that is identified as its research gaps. Thus, to address the research problems and gaps this paper has been prepared. It is based on qualitative approach, descriptive, analytical and exploratory research designs and primary and secondary data as well.

Keywords: Festival tourism, white horse jatra, demonstration process, tourism product, problems and solution measures

INTRODUCTION

Bhaktapur is one of the oldest cities of Nepal. It was founded by King Ananda Deva in 889 CE, and was the capital of the *Malla* Kingdom during 12th to 15th century CE. King Yakshya Malla heavily fortified this capital city (Dulal, 2019, p. 91). It has been identified with different names throughout the ages. *Khopring, Khakampring, Makhopring, Khrupung, Bhaktagram, Bhaktpur, Bhaktpure, Bhaktapuri, Bhaktpuripattan, Bhaktapattan, Khwopa, Bhadagaon* are its locally known names through which *Bhaktapur* has been identified since the ancient period till today (Dhaubanjari, 2008, pp. 197-200). Out of the ten World Heritage Sites of Nepal, *Bhaktapur Durbar Square* is known as an important one which was enlisted in the list of UNESCO World Heritage

Sites in 1979 (Dulal, 2019, p. 103). About the culture, traditions and touristic point of view Kunwar & Chand (2016, pp. 16-17) state that:

Bhaktapur is said to be the "living heritage" with a strong 'sense of sacrality', a strong 'sense of community', a strong 'sense of historicity' and a strong 'sense of serenity' where the residents understand the symbolic importance and also the importance of preservation of their heritage. It is known from different names like, 'Living Cultural Heritage', 'Walking Museum' and an 'Open Museum', 'City of Devotees', 'City of Culture', 'Centre of Newar Culture', 'Durbar Square', 'Nepal's Cultural Gem' and 'Nepal's Cultural Capital' in the world.

Every year *Bhaktapur* hosts large number of tourists in its core. During the fiscal year 2072/073 BS and 2073/074 BS *Bhaktapur* received 95056 and 181350 total tourists from SAARC and non-SAARC countries respectively. *Bhaktapur* has been preserving several beautiful cultural tourism products of different test and experience which helps to attract the tourists with different purposes such as to observe art and architectural heritage, World Heritage Site, local culture and traditions, sightseeing, recreation and research and study of the heritages (Dulal, 2019, p. 291).

All the prevailing festivals are observed to celebrate annually some events in the scriptures, to pacify the gods, to thank them for the harvest, to honor their birth dates or to celebrate some miraculous performance attribute to them (Anderson, 1988, p. 27). As per the same doctrine, people of *Bhaktapur* celebrate *Bisket Jatra*, *Bhoto Jatra*, *Indrajatra*, *Nepal Sambat*, *Buddha Jayanti*, *Dashain*, *Tihar*, *Yomahri Punhi*, *Tamu Lhochhar*, *Sahi-manaa Punhi*, *Gajjatra*, *Krishna Janmasthanami*, *Teej*, *Janai Purnima*, *Naag Panchami*, *Gathemangal*, *Ram Nawami*, *Chaite Dashain*, *Holi*, *Shivaratri*, *Shree Panchami*, *Pishach Chaturdashi*, *Byaja Chaturdashi* etc. each and every year (Kunwar & Chand, 2016, p. 18).

Durga Pooja festival known as *Dashami*, is a Hindu festival in Nepal and India in which several animals are sacrificed every day to goddess *Durga* in different *Shaktipeeths*. Similarly, in *Bhaktapur*, on the tenth day or *dashami* of *Dashain* festival, white horse jatra has been performed. It is not only an event but also an important intangible cultural heritage of *Bhaktapur*. Therefore, through the tourist and tourism perspectives, the white horse procession is to be taken as one of the important festival tourism products of the destination. But it has still not been properly successful in commoditization of its several festive events including white horse *Jatra* in tourism markets as a significant tourism product. Hence, to address the specific issues and research gaps which this paper has been prepared.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

There are several studies concerning festivals and *Jatras* but specific studies on white horse *Jatra* as a new tourism product of *Bhaktapur*, has still not been conducted so far. Thus, lack of proper studies and researches, several aspects of tourism product of this festival still remain unexplored. Obviously, the problems concerning this subject always inspire the scholars to find out the facts. Hence, the following research question such as why white horse *Jatra* is known as the new cultural tourism product of *Bhaktapur*? and what are the major causes of hindering for adequate utilization of white horse jatra as a new tourism product of the destination? these issues inspired to researchers to prepare this paper.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper deals with the festival tourism and its product with special reference to the white horse *Jatra* of Bhaktapur. In this process through the paper researcher has provided introduction of Bhaktapur as the cultural tourism destination and the concept of festival tourism in brief as the general objectives, whereas, to examine white horse *Jatra* as a new cultural tourism product of *Bhaktapur* and to identify the major causes of hindering for adequate utilization of such *jatra* as a new tourism product has been determined as the specific objectives of the paper.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

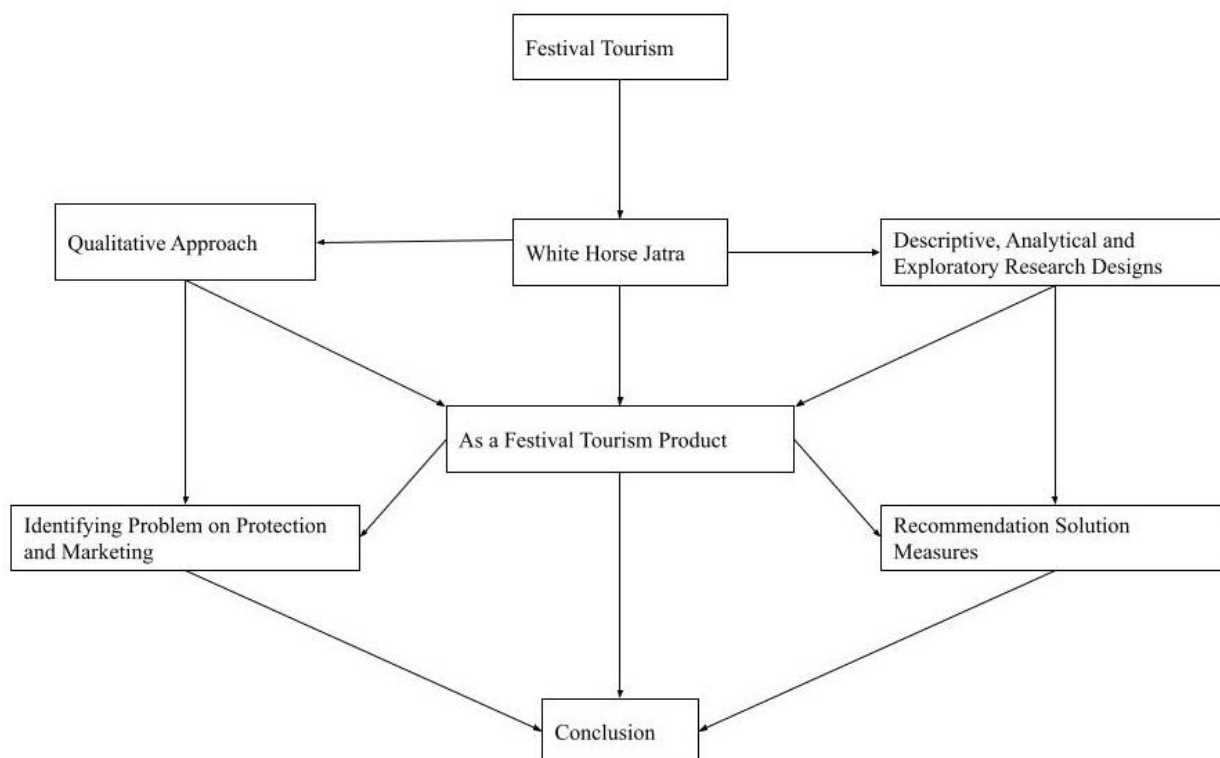
Reviewing the literature is only one approach of constructing solid theoretical foundation, thus in social science research it adopts as one of the major components which helps to determine what theories might be used to explore the questions in a scientific study. Therefore, in this research Anderson's (1988) the festivals of Nepal, Levy's (1990) Mesocosm, Hinduism and Organization of the Traditional Newar City in Nepal, Shrestha's (2016) Bhaktapur ka Aitihāsika Jatrauttsabharu (The Historical Festive Events of Bhaktapur), (2077) Kathmandu Upatyakako Samskritik Parampara (Cultural Tradition of Kathmandu Valley), Kunwar & Chand's (2016) Natural disaster and heritage tourism: A study on the impacts of earthquake in Bhaktapur Nepal, Dulal's (2019) doctoral study on cultural tourism of Bhaktapur, (2021) Kha Me *jatra* of Bhaktapur: an intangible cultural heritage of Nepal, (2022, pp. 1-22) Prospects of Promoting Festival Tourism: A Case Study of Khame *Jatra* in Bhaktapur have been reviewed in this paper.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative data regarding white horse *jatra* has been used more than the quantitative one, therefore it is based on qualitative approach. It has explored and described white horse *jatra* as an important festive tourism product; hence it is also based on exploratory, analytical and descriptive research designs as well. The methods and procedures have been followed to answer the research questions and explore its objectives and to generate valid data and information. Researcher has used both primary and secondary data in this study. Field work is the main source for primary data. By using observational and interview methods primary data have been explored. For exploring primary data, structured interviews were taken with the key informants. Similarly, in this study relevant chapter of the journals, books and sources of electronic versions have been reviewed to generate require secondary information.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The main aims of this paper help to explore the opportunities and overhanging threats of white horse *jatra* enhancing as an important festival tourism product of *Bhaktapur*. During the study researcher has applied theoretical and empirical approaches as per their requirements. For addressing the above mentioned research gaps and problems as well as fulfilling the determine objectives the following conceptual framework has been applied:



In this paper primary and secondary sources and information have been explored and analyzed for generating knowledge regarding the issues such as festival tourism, white horse *jatra*, demonstration process, rites and rituals, problems on protection and marketing of the same *jatra*. During the study researcher has applied qualitative approach and descriptive, analytical and exploratory research designs as well.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As already been mentioned above, this paper is based on field study. During the field survey, researcher has applied observation and an interview method for gathering primary data viz. What is symbolized by the white horse? What is white horse *jatra*? When and how is it celebrated? Why the people of *Bhaktapur* celebrate it? Why it is considered as a new cultural tourism product of *Bhaktapur*? What are the major causes of hindering for adequate utilization of white horse *jatra* as a new tourism product? How can address the problems? What are its solution measures? These are the major questions which have been asked to the local people during the field work. Similarly, during the field survey, the process, rites and rituals and participation of local and tourists have been observed. Finally, with calculating and comparing primary data and secondary information explored from the field and generated by the field study and literature review this paper has been prepared with the following findings and discussion.

Concept of Festival Tourism

Literary sources inform that, in the Eastern culture and civilization, the tradition of celebrating festivals and *Jatras* began from the Vedic period where one can find an episode that the emperors offer sacrifice of the horse at the festival of "*Ashomegha Yagna*" (Majapuria, 1981, p. 2). The words "*Maha*" and "*Jata*" were used as the synonyms of festival and "*Jatra*" respectively in the Vedic Period. According to *Haribanshapuran* Lord Krishna had lifted *Gobardhan* hill, the particular event is known as the "*Girimaha*" festival. A Jain literature '*Gayadhammakaha*' mentions different *Mahas* and *Jatas* such as *Indramaha*, *Skandamaha*, *Rudajata*, *Sivajata*, *Nagajata* (Agarawal, 1964,

pp. 4-5). The tradition of celebrating festivals and *Jatras* can also be observed in India. The *Viswamitra* and *Indrajatra* are very popular festivals of New Delhi (Sharma, 1978, p. 27). Regarding the *Jatra*, Levy (1992, p. 420) mentions that:

While many cylindrical events are associated with movement of people to one or another temple or pilgrimage site in a more or less haphazard manner some cylindrical events are characterized systematic and formalized movements through some unit of space. Sometime a deity is moved through space, sometimes and more rarely devotees a deity is temple or shrine or to a series of them, in some prescribed order. Both the carrying of the deity and the more formalized movements of worshipers through the city is called as it is elsewhere in South Asia, a *Jatra* (from the *Sanskrit* *Yatra*, a journey, festive train, procession, pilgrimage).

The term festival has been used for hundreds of years that can be used to a multitude of events. The Policy Studies Institute (PSI, 1992, p. 1; in Bowdin, Glen, Allen, O' Toole, Harris & Macdonnel, 2011, p. 19) note that a festival is traditionally a time of celebration, relaxation and recuperation which is often followed by a period of hard physical labour, sowing or harvesting of crops. The essential feature of festival is the celebration of reaffirmation community or culture. The artistic content of such event varies and many have a religious or ritualistic aspect, but music, dance and drama are the important features of any celebration.

Festival tourism is an important element in 'event tourism', so much so that the term 'festivalization' has been coined to suggest an over-commodification of festivals exploited by tourism and place marketers (Quinn, Richards, 2006; in Getz, 2012, p. 38). Indeed, a marked trend towards treating festivals as commodities has emerged. In this approach, drawing heavily upon consumer behaviour and other marketing concepts, motivations for attending festivals have been studied at length, and more recently the links between quality, satisfaction, and behaviour or future intentions have been modeled (Getz, 2012, p. 38).

Jatra is a kind of event performed, when the idol is decorated and carried about gala religious procession for a variety of reasons-to honor him, give him a pleasurable outing, present him to other gods and goddesses, take him for his annual bathing ceremony or simply to allow him, the opportunity of watching some festival or ceremony with the celebrating populace (Anderson, 1988, p. 26).

However, festival and *Jatras* are religious and cultural ceremonies which are celebrated for recalling of special events, keep patience to the gods and goddesses, protection of man and animals, and for the betterment of agro-farming. As cultural events, festivals are significant because they attract tourists. Festivals are important tourist assets of a given area; they are also tourist products sustaining the tourists' needs. Tourist movement, in which the motivation to travel is the willingness to attend festivals is referred to as festival tourism. In the context of event tourism research Page & Connel (2014, p. 38) state that:

Event tourism as a separate discourse takes an instrumentalist approach in which the dominant themes are the production and marketing of festivals for tourism and other forms of development with a heavy methodological emphasis on marketing and economic impact assessment. The roles of events in tourism include attracting tourist (to specific places, and to overcome seasonality), contributing to place marketing (including image formation and destination branding), amazing attractions and places, and acting as catalysts for other forms of development. Dominating this

discourse has been the assessment of economic impacts of events and event tourism, planning and marketing event tourism at the destination level, and studies of event-tourism motivation and various segmentation approaches. The study of negative impacts of events and event tourism is a more recent line of research.

Most research in the Western world that focuses on festivals explains them as cultural events reinvented by communities to fulfill their desire and recreational needs, for construction of their identities, and for socioeconomic development (Derrett, 2003; in Shinde, 2010). The nature of festivals in two different contexts also leads to a difference in their academic studies: homothetic approach is common in the west, while idiosyncratic approaches the studies of non-Western festivals; that is researchers in the West often are interested in spotting features that are widely observable across a range of festivals while in the East festivals are studies for their intrinsic importance (Walmsely, 2008; in Shinde, 2010).

As a multiethnic, multilingual, multi-religious country with diverse caste, religion and races, the tradition of celebrating festivals and *Jatras* seem very old and is deeply rooted in the Nepalese society. Most of the festivals are religious and related with the procession of the gods and goddesses venerated in Kathmandu Valley. Even in the past, festivals were strictly observed by the people (Pandey, 2008, p. 231). Inscriptional records suggest that these practices existed as the *Kailash* and *Varaha Jatras* during the *Lichchhavi* period (Vajracharya, 2030, pp. 275-278). With diversifying nature, several colorful festivals and *Jatras* in different territories can be found.

Therefore, it is said that Nepal is the only unique country in the world with more festivals and feasts than the working days. Though an exaggeration, Nepalese observe numerous festivals of different natures and categories. Some festivals are celebrated on a national scale, some regionally and some only by certain communities in certain areas and localities (Amatya, 2011, p. 39). Abided by the lunar calendar, different festivals are celebrated all the year round. The celebration of these festivals may be nation-wide, regional or just confined to the village or city (Satyal, 2001, pp. 22-23). Grand festivals are occasionally observed which lasts four months, commencing in *Baisakh*, and ending in *Shrawan*. It consists in viding the shrines of the Gods in Nepal, which are said to be 2733 (Kirkpatrick, 2013, p. 196).

Bhaktapur is famous for its wonderful fairs and festivals which can be observed throughout the year. It was the cultural capital of Nepal from the thirteenth to sixteen century CE, for more than three hundred years (Amatya, 2011, p. 40). Nowadays, *Bhaktapur* is famous for the celebration of colourful festivals in and around the Durbar Square. Many festivals are celebrated throughout the year to mark the seasons, to pay tribute to gods, and in remembrance to the historical and legendary events (Dulal, 2021, p. 95). Among them, through the cultural, religious, tourist and tourism perspectives, white horse *Jatra* is considered important one.

Symbol and Significance of White Horse

Humans began to domesticate horses about 6,000 years ago in the grasslands of what is now Ukraine. Over time, these domesticated horses bred with wild horses. Eventually, they spread throughout Europe and Asia, and then the rest of the world. So, the horse is an important figure in the mythology and folklore of many cultures (Stanton, 2021). The horse is a majestic animal that embodies the spiritual power of independence, freedom, nobleness, endurance, confidence, triumph, heroism and competition. A Horse spirit animal can symbolize freedom, power, nobility,

beauty, courage, sexuality, fertility, endurance, competitiveness, triumph, extermination, impulsiveness, desire, motivation and instinctive impulses (Tutora, 2021).

The horse figures in various cultures, history, mythology and folklore where it's known to have helped humans travel along tiresome and difficult paths. For five thousand years, the horse has been an ever-present ally in war and peace. Civilizations have risen and fallen on their backs and evidences of it can be seen everywhere (<https://www.thefortunateone.com>, (Retrieved 4 Oct, 2022)). Horses are beloved by people around the world, so they have been important figures in the mythology and folklore of many cultures, as well as in people's personal lives. In fact, it's impossible to quantify the amount of art, music, literature, and other forms of expression that have been inspired by these magnificent creatures (Stanton, 2021). In this regard Clifford (2021) writes that:

The main symbols that depict the horse are courage and freedom. This majestic animal is a being of power, independence, freedom, nobleness, endurance, confidence, triumph, heroism, and competition. The horse is an essential part of history, mythology, and folklore as it was man's most loyal companion in battle. People revered them almost and even as actual deities. On many occasions, horses would enjoy more respect and better life than a human being because of their noble nature, the wealth and power that they brought to their owner, and the loyalty this animal is capable of. One of the most present figures in various cultures is horse symbolism. From a straightforward omen to an actual emblem of war, the horse symbol is present in most parts of the world. Understanding this phenomenon is crucial since we will encounter the horse spirit in many moments of our lives, and we must catch its message.

Horse dreams are one of the most common dreams. If horse emerged in a dream, it could convey different messages depending on the color or the behavior of the horse. White horse usually appears in dreams to deliver a spiritual message while black horse comes to urge you to move in a positive direction in life. It could indicate marriage happening soon. Either you or someone in your family might be getting hitched sooner. If you were riding a white horse in your dream it could signify great friendships and support coming on your way (<https://www.thefortunateone.com> (Retrieved 4 Oct, 2022)).

A black horse can appear in your dreams to warn you about a relationship. It's worth reconsidering the relationships in your life and stop wasting energy on people who do not deserve your trust or attention. When you see horses pulling a carriage, your dream signifies hurdles. You have to move forward in life overcoming challenges. If you see one or multiple horses running in the dream it could indicate your real-life situation. In the dream if you see the horse in a barn, it signifies a new start. You will get rid of the old and begin a new life. When you see a flying Horse in the dream it suggests someone else is going to overtake you in life. In dream interpretation Horse is a symbol of sexual drive. If you dream about riding a tame Horse it indicates your strong erotic desires. But if the Horse in your dream is uncontrollable it indicates your exceeding sexual desires that need to be controlled (<https://www.thefortunateone.com> (Retrieved 4 Oct, 2022)).

Native American: freedom or a token of war, Chinese Zodiac: a powerful spirit, unrivalled, full of nobleness and faithfulness, Japanese culture: a spirit animal, a divine being and the carrier of Gods when they entered the world, Christianity's symbolism: courage, speed, nobleness, generosity and resurrection. A white horse is a sign of death, a black horse as a symbol is seen as of evil and destructive nature, Celtic culture: envisioned as their first, but not only, deity and was

a symbol of the Sun, Celtic zodiac: identifies people that love attention, being admired, and have a noble stature, African culture: confidence, nobleness, fortitude, heroism, battle and victory (<https://www.thefortunateone.com>, Retrieved 4 Oct, 2022).

On the one hand, horse symbolism asks you to own your power, on the other, it urges you to believe in your intuition and follow the path as suggested to you. The color of the horse spirit animal is important because the message would differ in terms of their body color. The black horse is a sign of death and rebirth. It could indicate the closing of one door and opening of another for you. This horse urges you to have faith. Trust your gut feeling and take action. You don't have to see the whole picture, just take a leap of faith and proceed in your life journey. The brown horse is symbolic of trusting the higher power or the universe. This spirit animal reminds you that the universe always provides us everything we need. You must let go of attachments and you will definitely receive what you need. The red horse is a symbol of anger. If you see a red steed, it indicates that you are warned of your anger and vengefulness. Control your emotions or you will be in trouble. The black and white horse animal totem appears in your life to urge you to have balance in life. Do some self-reflection and find out in which areas of your life you are off balance. You must take appropriate action to improve your life. The grey-colored equine appears in your life to urge you to dive within. Look for the silver lining and keep pushing. Grey horses appear in your life if things are not going in your favor, it would soon enough. The golden horse is a symbol of spiritual awakening. It asks you to trust in yourself. You will receive divine help. Just keep going on (Tutora, 2021).

The white horse is another horse archetypal type that holds cultural and symbolic significance. It has been an important symbol in mythology and religion for centuries. It is known to symbolize purity, heroism, enlightenment, triumph of good over evil and serves as a holy animal. It is commonly considered to be the purest animal and the only one worthy to carry a hero into battle (Stanton, 2021).

From earliest times, white horses have been mythologized as possessing exceptional properties, transcending the normal world by having wings (e.g., Pegasus from Greek mythology), or having horns (the unicorn). As part of its legendary dimension, the white horse in myth may be depicted with seven heads (Uchaisravas) or eight feet (Sleipnir), sometimes in groups or singly. There are also white horses which are divinatory, who prophesy or warn of danger. As a rare or distinguished symbol, a white horse typically bears the hero- or God-figure in ceremonial roles or in triumph over negative forces. Herodotus reported that white horses were held as sacred animals in the Achaemenid court of Xerxes the Great (ruled 486–465 BC), while in other traditions the reverse happens when it was sacrificed to the gods (Jewelry, 2021).

The white stallion is symbolic of knowledge and spirituality. If you see a white horse, it could indicate that you will encounter a spiritual lesson soon enough or maybe you will meet a spiritual teacher who would have a great impact in your life. The ancient Bach Ma temple in Vietnam honors a white horse. According to a legend, a Vietnamese king got to see the location to build a citadel in his dream. He dreamed of a white horse that instructed the location to construct the citadel (Tutora, 2021).

White horses have a special significance in the mythologies of cultures around the world. They are often associated with the sun chariot (Jack, 2005, pp. 241). More or less in the several countries and their civilizations, cultures and religions in the world such as in Greek, Slavic, Norse, Hungarian, Iranian, Zoroastrianism, Hindu, Buddhist, Abrahamic, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Far East, Korean, Philippines, Vietnamese, Native American white horse was kept symbolic meaning and significance from the very earlier than up to now as well (Jewelry, 2021).

In Hinduism, white horses appear many times in Hindu mythology and stand for the sun (Kak, 2002). The Vedic horse sacrifice of *Ashvamedha* was a fertility and kingship ritual involving the sacrifice of a sacred grey or white stallion. In the Puranas, while the gods and demons were churning the milky ocean Uchaisravas, a snow-white horse with seven heads was emerged. Turaga was another divine white horse that emerged from the ocean and taken by the sun god Surya (Dalal, 2010).

Hayagriva the incarnation of Lord Vishnu is worshipped as the God of knowledge and wisdom, with a human body and a horse's head, brilliant white in colour, with white garments and seated on a white lotus. Kalki, the tenth avatar of Vishnu and final world savior, is predicted to appear riding on a white horse, or in the form of a white horse (Jewelry, 2021). In Buddhism, Kanthaka is a white horse that is described as being the loyal servant of Gautama Buddha which is part of every major event before the renunciation that is said to have caused the white horse to die from a broken heart (Malasekera, 1996).

White Horse Jatra

Especially, there are two festivals celebrate associated with horse in Kathmandu Valley one is Ghodejatra and other is white horse Jatra. First one is a grand horse parade or horse festival to native of Kathmandu, Nepal which celebrates annually on the New Moon of *Chaitra Shukla Pakshya* (Shrestha, 2077, pp. 217-218), around mid-march or early April. The second one is special festival among the people of Bhaktapur which celebrates during the tenth day of Dashain festival. *Dashain* is the longest festival of the year; it takes about 15 days. Especially it is celebrated as the *Mahani* festival in the *Newar* community. Before the origin and practices of *Dashain*, *Newar* people have celebrate the *Mahani* as the great festival in their community. *Dashain* festival was popular among the *Newar* community in the late Middle Ages (Regmi, 1966, p. 678). There are special rites and rituals perform in *Bhaktapur* during the *Dashain* festival. *Ghatasthapana* is a first day in which holy water pot is placed as the main religious performance. The priests like *Rajopadyaya* (Brahmin priest), *Moolacharya* (main *Acharya* i.e., tantric priest) and Joshi (astrologer) have paid the special contribution for performing *pooja* to the goddesses (Dulal, 2019, p. 257).

On the seventh day, i.e., *saptami* the symbol i.e., *Khadga* (sword) of Goddess *Taleju* is taken from its secret shrine to the *Kumarichok* by way of a procession, which consists of the females booming with swords and scimitars in their hands, as the security personnel's, some with other symbols related to the Goddess and lastly the main priests (*Acharya*) carrying the symbol of Goddess *Taleju* (Vaidya & Shrestha, 2002, p. 110). The eighth day is celebrated as the day of *Mahaastami* or *Kalaratri*. In this night in the memory of *Mahisasur* (buffalo Demon) 25 buffaloes have been sacrificed. In the ninth day i.e., *Nawami* is also special day in which tantric *pooja* is performed for the welcoming of *Ekanta Kumari* and *Gana Kumari* as well. On this day, the *Moolacharya* i.e. main tantric priest goes to the *Kumarighar* for performing rituals to the goddess. Finishing special *pooja*,

he comes back to the *Taleju* temple and *Ekanta Kumari* is also brought into the *Kumarichowk* from outside the palace in the regal way (Dulal, 2019, p. 258).

During the tenth day i.e. *Dasami*, the *Khadga* (symbol of goddess) is taken around the city which is called *Payojatra*. In local language 'Pa' means sword and 'Ya' stands for the procession. During the procession, participants carries the sword a symbol of goddess *Taleju* in their hands, thus it is also called *Paya Jatra* (Shrestha, 2073, p. 35; in Dulal, 2019, p. 261). *Paya Jatra* takes in procession from the Royal Palace during the *Asmin shukla Dasami*. Therefore, this festival is said to be a part of *Dashain*.

On this occasion, there is a tradition taking a white horse along with in the procession because of the mount of the goddess. White horse is referred to as the vehicle of goddess *Taleju*. *Tuyumha* and *sala* are two *Newari* words which mean white horse. During the medieval period, a white horse was reared in the palace of *Bhaktapur* as the mount of goddess *Taleju* and a procession was demonstrated with horse on the tenth day of *Dashain* festival. This tradition is still in existence. There is a post of civil servant who rears the horse in the palace. And remaining other provisions has to be managed from the income of *Taleju guthi* (Dulal, 2019, p. 262).

Khadga jatra i.e., performing of sword festival some time it is locally called *Taleju Paya*. This festival has been seen in practices especially in *Newar* community which can also observe in Tibet as well, where it known as *Ha Laba Lhosar*. In this festival the chief of the local community leader is called 'Ajudhya' ride on a horse, remaining other participants with swords, Kasai with their musical instruments *Nayakhi* and a group of *Dafa Bhajan* have taken participation (Shrestha, 2077, p. 182). But there observe some differentiate between the *Paya* festival of Tibet and white horse *jatra* in *Bhaktapur* specially on using horse. In Tibet horse is used for riding to the community leader *Ajudhya* while in *Bhaktapur* white horse is being used for the symbol of holy mount of goddess *Taleju*.

Demonstrations Process, Rites and Rituals

The Seto Ghoda Jatra (White Horse Festival) that was observed on the night of the tenth day of Bada Dashain in Bhaktapur city. As per the tradition, the festival commences as the main four priests of the Taleju Bhawani temple as well as other priests perform puja according to the tantric tradition at the Taleju Bhawani temple. Thereafter, a white sheep is offered to the white horse, considered the conveyance of goddess Taleju Bhawani, as a sacrifice. The decked-out white horse is towed around the city. Before the festival concludes, the horse is also gotten to break into gallop for thrice to display dance to the Pashupatinath in the Bhaktapur Durbar Square (<https://kathmandupost.com>).

Before the white horse *jatra* started, at early morning of tenth day, in the *Brahmayani peeth*, for the first *Aachaju* (priest) provides maces and clothes of goddesses *Navadurgaganas* and the other representatives who perform dances as the forms of such deities. After wearing clothes all the *Navadurgaganas* move from *Brahmayani* temple toward the Durbar Square. They enter from the eastern gateway and gradually reaching into the *Tachapala*, *Inacho*, *Golmadi*, *Sukudhoka*, *Tibukchhne*, *Kwanchhe*, *Taumadi*, *Ipanchhe* and finally into the square of goddess *Taleju*. While they reached into *Taleju* square, *Aachaju* (priest) handovers a sacrifice bowl to an individual who belongs to Kasai a lower caste within a *Newar* community, where the head of *Kha Me* is kept, sword of king's *Nanya Dev* to the *Rajopadhyay* (priest of Hindu *Newar*) and remaining swords to the others.

The procession is systematically managed and step forward within nine rows on chronological order in accordance with the cultural responsibility and social hierarchy. During the demonstration some musicians have taken part in the front with their musical instruments such as *nayankhi*, *khin*, and *kanya*. A people belong to Kasai community followed them with the head of *Kha Me* on a sacrifice bowl. Locally *Kha'* and *'Me'* means *'Kha'* pure and *'Me'* stands for male buffalo which does not have any wounds and also has no physical defects that has been sacrificed to the goddess *Brahmayani* during the ninth day of Dashain festival (Dulal, 2021, p. 97).

Whereas, a people with a bowl of double drum and another with *baupa* a pot which keeps sacrifice materials for demons in the second and third rows respectively. Then after a person wearing combats costumes and shield carrying trident and thunderbolt on his hands in the fourth row and following him a person with specific sword of King *Nanya Dev* in the fifth. Similarly, officials of goddess *Taleju* with burning flames and remaining swords and a *Rajopadhyay* (priest of Hindu *Newar*) with an image of goddess *Taleju* followed in the sixth and seventh rows respectively. In the eighth row there is white horse a holy mount of goddess *Taleju* and on the last or ninth row there observe *Navadurgaganas* participating of the procession. Regarding the system, process rites and rituals Levy (1992, p. 553) pointed out that:

The *Taleju Jatra* takes in front of the temple. First in order are two *Jyapus*, who will walk abreast carrying representations of *Bhairav*. Next comes a *Pa (n)cthariya* who carries a sword. He is followed by the two other high status sword bearers, the second a member of the *chathar Ta: cabhari thar*, and third a Brahman. Each of the three sword bearers represents an esoteric warrior form of Devi. At the center of the procession is the *Taleju* image carried by the king, and followed by a white horse, *Tajeju* vehicle.

The procession of the white horse is worshiped as a vehicle of religious and cultural importance, which is traditionally held every year at midnight on *Baradshah* and *Ekadashi*. According to the Tantric method of *Taleju Bhavani*, the procession is worshiped by the original heroes of *Taleju*, *Achaju*, *Joshi*, *Rajopadhyay*. After bringing the horse out from the main square of *Khauma*, *Itache*, *Bharwacho*, *Vanshgopal*, *Bhujikokha*, *Narayan Chowk* as well as the upper palace area of *Bhaktapur* town, *Khichen*, *Chochen*, *Bholachen*, *Thalachen*, *Taleju*, *Golmarhi*, *Sukuldhoka* and *Tomadhi* is performed. During the procession, *Pashupatinath* present at *Durbar Chowk* is run three times to show the horse (<https://himalsanchar.com>).

White horse *jatra* begins from *Durbar Square* and finally come to an end after reaching *Taleju* square. Meanwhile, specially, the procession reached and covered different sites such as *thane*, *Kwane*, *taumadi toles* (Shrestha, 2077, p. 290). Finally, after reaching *Dattatreya* square the procession returned to back into the *Durbar Square* without heading towards the *Chyamasing* square and *Brahmayani* temple. White horse is also a vehicle of goddess *Brahmayani*. Local people believe that, goddess *Brahmayani* keeps the horse with her as vehicle if she sees it. Therefore, during the *Jatra*, the procession is not progressed toward the *Chyamasing* and the *Brahmayani Peeth* (Dulal, 2019, p. 262). Altogether during the procession thousands of local people and domestic and tourists from aboard take part except senior citizens, children and unwell and unhealthy people.

As per the information provided by the local people, the horse is kept inside the palace within a small room. Once a year it is brought out from the palace and is circumambulated through the core with an image of *Taleju* at the front. Unfortunately, three years ago, the white horse which

was being kept in the palace for thirty years died. After completing the procession while returning into the stable he collided with the main gate of the *Taleju*. This made him injured and a few days later he left the world. Finally, the funeral procession and all the death rituals of the dead horse were performed in accordance with the Vedic tradition (Dulal, 2019, pp. 261-262).

There is no particular custom regarding the places to bring the white horse. The pigment of the horse must be white and should be pure too. It must not have been ridden and must not have any part of the body lost. These are the major characters the horse must possess. So, it is very difficult task to search the appropriate one. After passing of the old horse three years ago it took about one and half year to search and manage another. As mentioned by the local people the new horse which is kept in palace and available in *Jatra* has been donated by *Krishna Gopal Pyath* (Dulal, 2019, p. 262).

After completing white horse or *Payojatra*, the *Khadga* is brought to the golden gate, the *Navadurgagana* i.e. nine goddesses attain the *mantrasiddhi* by touching it. When the goddesses *Navadurga* are brought into the palace complex the dance of *Navadurgagana* is also performed. This festival honors the goddess *Devi Durga*, who is said to have slain the demon *Durga*, son of *Ruru* (Dulal, 2019, p. 258).

As the Tourism Product

The concept of tourism product is complex as it involves element of service, hospitality, free choice, consumer involvement, and consumption of experiences that must be actualized in some way (Hsu et al. 2008; in du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 153). The tourist product is a composite product consisting of several components (Burkart & Medlik, 1981, p. 195). It is also labeled as a "package" (Jeffries, 1971, p. 4), an "amalgam" (Medlik & Middleton, 1973, p. 132) or a "bundle" (Middleton, 1988, p. 79) of tangible and intangible components. These components complement each other, i.e. they are functionally interdependent as each one provides only a part of the total sum of benefits sought by tourists (Mrnjavac, 1992, p. 122). In this respect Koutoulas (2004, pp. 9-10) mentions that:

The tourist product is the total bundle of functionally interdependent tangible and intangible elements that are found in different geographical location and in different time periods (before, during and after the trip). These elements are considered as the recipes that enable the tourist on the one hand to engage in a specific activity at one or at several consecutive destinations and on the other hand to facilitate the transition to the destination(s) and the social reproduction during the trip.

Products can be natural, build, fixed or mobile, ongoing or temporary. At its core, though, a product has been defined as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy and need (Kotler & Turner, 1989, p. 435; in du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 153). Failte Ireland (2012) talks about the need to create memorable moments to make customers feel valued, by providing the right product, right quality, right quantity, right time, and right place (du Cros & McKercher, 2015, p. 153).

Tourism product should not be seen from the point of view of the individual producer, but from the view of the consumer, thus equating the tourist product with his/her total travel experience. The tourist product should be perceived as including all the elements that are part of a trip

(Koutoulas, 2004, p. 6). These types of elements can be found at the destinations of the trip, the transit routes and the places of residence (Leiper, 1990, p. 81).

Festivals can provide the heart of a community (Wheatley & Kellner- Rogers, 1998, p. 14; in Derrett, 2003) as their celebratory nature provides residents with conditions of freedom and connectedness rather than a fixation on the forms and structure of the community. Festivals reflect the dynamic value systems of individuals united by the same customs, images, collective memory, habits and experiences which can be replicated and each generation can pass on something of its content to the next (Derrett, 2003, p. 51). Because of the close association with culture, festival tourism is the subset of cultural tourism. In this respect Smith (2003, p. 140) mention that:

Festivals celebrated in a particular location from small villages to large towns aims to bring people together to celebrate their local area. These festivals are subdivided into different groups viz. those run by voluntary groups and those run by local authorities. Today, although many festivals aim to cater primary for the local community, they succeed nevertheless in attracting tourists, and around 56% of all festivals are created with a tourist audience in mind. Festivals have a higher concentration of visitors in areas of the country that are already established as tourist destinations, and the majority of festival organizers therefore design the program content with the attraction of tourists in mind.

Attraction is considered as one of the important components and motivating factors which attracts the attention of tourist and plays the leading role for the promotion of tourism activities in the destination. In the field of tourist and tourism, attraction is the pulling factor, which continuously inspires tourists in the destinations either that is accommodation or tourism products (Dulal, 2022, pp. 9-10). Kunwar (2017, p 30) has categorized attraction into two major folds which are on the inventory as a core attraction and a supporting one.

White horse *Jatra* as a primary tourism attraction and as a festival tourism product, the core attraction is the local 'culture', dependent on the particular *Bhaktapure Newari* culture and background, potential enough to promote the tourism development and driving the economic development of the region by attracting more and more number of tourists. During the procession except senior citizens, children and unwell and unhealthy people who could not participant, generally remaining others take part in the procession. It is the concluding event of *Dashain* festival, so on the occasion the streets, pavilions and roofs of the houses and public building of Durbar Square, *Taumadi* Square, *Dattatreya* Square are fully covered by the local people, people of the neighboring districts and tourists also are known to observe (Dulal, 2019, p. 260).

With a package of tangible and intangible components, white horse *Jatra* is mainly an intangible cultural heritage and a new festival tourism product. It holds an authenticity of an immense socio-cultural and religious significance amongst the Newar community of *Bhaktapur*. White horse *Jatra* is still not properly explore and utilize it as a cultural tourism heritages, a hidden or veiled festival is considered a product of great importance. This *Jatra* is an essential festival where thousands of people including tourists gather at the streets of *Bhaktapur* to watch the activities and ceremonies. It is a typical *Jatra* which is not observed in any part of Nepal except *Bhaktapur*, thus, it is considered an indigenous identity. It is enriched in mysterious, colourful and amusing

procession and rituals, mythological, religious and historical backgrounds of the ceremonies, and the wealth of delightful legends and folktales surrounding it.

Obviously, white horse *jatra* can be utilized and consumed by selling its wonderful thematic values and aesthetic emotions in tourism market. If it can do, as a festival tourism product, white horse *Jatra* has played a vital role in extending the fame of local culture and tradition. It has helped in the propagation of *Bhaktapur's and its ancient cultural heritage at the international level. Still, it has helped engender a unique experience for tourists and the whole tourism industry hence contributing positively to nation's vanity, belief and traditional identity.* It is the range of experiences tourist get while travelling to *Bhaktapur* that satisfy their thirst of cultural attractions. In broad-spectrum, this *Jatra* is not always associated with socio-cultural and religious aspects but an economic aspect of profit if utilized properly as tourism product. Further, it has to be analyzed in the local situational context. If *Bhaktapur* systematically marketed to the white horse *Jatra* as a new festival tourism product, no doubt it can help to develop and enhance the present situation of cultural tourism in *Bhaktapur*.

Problems on Protection and Marketing

Obviously, it is said that tourism has been playing double standard role in the society and culture. On the one side, it is playing positive role somehow to preserve the socio-cultural and environmental values and to boost the economic status and life style of the people and the entire country. On the other, if it is not properly managed, it brings reverse impact on the society and culture.

The native people of *Bhaktapur* believe that the guest always rich, educated and superior than the host. Due to this inferiority complex, gradually, host people started to change their behavior, perception, lifestyle, dress and ornaments, language, and other cultural values likewise the guest. This attitude tends to weaken the hosts in front of the stronger guest (Kunwar, 2002, p. 105). This is the situation we can observe in and around the *Bhaktapur* Durbar square.

Here in *Bhaktapur* when tourism was introduced, meanwhile, it brought both positive and negative impact on economy, environment and culture as well. Unfortunately, because of this unsuitable situation the native people of *Bhaktapur* slowly adopting the tourist culture in their life style. This might be the strong cause for cultural degradation of *Bhaktapur*, which is considered as a weakness or weak point of the tourism of *Bhaktapur*. Earlier study reveals cultural degradation as the main weakness of *Bhaktapur* for the promotion of cultural tourism destination (Dulal, 2019, pp. 359-360).

Publicity or advertisement is one of the important means of communication which helps to identify the destination in the world tourism markets. Publications of different books, journals, brochures, and other materials and electronic verse are known as the key factors of publications. As like others, *Bhaktapur* needs to globalization of her tourism products in the international markets which helps to identify *Bhaktapur* as the cultural tourism destination in the world. Earlier study reveals that lack of proper publicity as the main weakness of *Bhaktapur* for the promotion of cultural tourism destination (Dulal, 2019, pp. 359-362).

Today, *Bhaktapur* is going to rapid commercialization of its culture and cultural heritages as the salable commodities for the promotion of cultural tourism in the destination. This commercialization process can be harmful in many ways. The selection of art, architecture,

cultural heritage, folk music, monuments and others can have two ways effect can be conserved. Only their fame can be spread, but remained things will be vanished. This type of unplanned and shortsighted policy sometimes makes all the lifestyle hidden in the shadow of the domination. Obviously, this situation generates huge threats and challenges to the stakeholders those who keep interest for the promotion of tourism in *Bhaktapur*. This study explores the following issues as the overhanging threats regarding on the cultural tourism in *Bhaktapur*.

Regarding the threats after development to the *Bhaktapur* as the cultural tourism destination researchers have tried to collect the information through the local people during the field survey. Disaster management, challenges over the protection on heritage, threats over traditional technology and craftsmanship, keeping peace, healthy and tourist-friendly environment, maintaining affordable tourist accommodation, controlling the negative impact of tourism, equitable distribution of income, total respondents are the major threats which might be faced *Bhaktapur* while developing it as a tourism destination.

Solution Measures

As per the situation mentioned earlier, for the adequate enhancement of white horse jatra as a tourism product of the destination, the problems which has already discussed should be considered very seriously. Therefore, the government, concerned authorities, municipality, local people, concerned community and stakeholders should make earnest efforts for maintain, protection and marketing of this *Jatra* as a new festival tourism product. The people of *Bhaktapur* have been enjoying from the tourism, it is because of its unique cultural lifestyle and its living heritage. However, it is deduced that if *Bhaktapur* can properly manage white horse *Jatra* as a new and an important intangible authentic festival tourism product, event-based cultural tourism will be further boosted in this destination.

White horse *Jatra* has a package of tangible and intangible components and heritages, its connotation as a prodigious tourism product, but, which has been less realized, highlighted and utilized as a cultural tourism product. As an indigenous practice and the product of the *Newari* community, the local community is a direct consumer of its benefit. Hence, first and foremost responsibility of preserving, practicing and commodification of this festival in tourism market also goes to the same community that can help branding and marketing to the event and destination as well. Finally, continuous research, systematic planning, internationalization, marketization and utilization of local unique culture are the major focus areas for adequate development of tourism products and destinations, hence, by doing it as a breakthrough, this *Jatra* will further expand and thrive as a powerful tourism product of this 21st century.

CONCLUSION

Along with the recognition and enlisting in UNESCO list, *Bhaktapur* was also included in the monument preservation list and more frequently, monuments preservation schemes and projects here are launched. The Durbar Square of *Bhaktapur* remains in a relatively better shape and is better maintained, if it had not been for the people visiting from the outside world this wouldn't have been possible. Among the five domains of intangible heritage, *Jatras* and festivals are categorized under the social practices, rituals and festive events. Nepal is an exceptional country for the researchers to study colorful and meaningful festivals and *Jatras*. As whole, Nepal celebrates several festivals and *Jatras* within a year as the national, regional, local and community level.

This paper deals with white horse *Jatra*, which is celebrated during the tenth day of *Dashain* festival especially in the *Newar* community of *Bhaktapur*. It is one of the important intangible cultural heritages and an indigenous feature and identity of *Bhaktapur*.

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