



Jyapunhi Jatra of Panauti: Wonderful festival tourism product of Nepal

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Abstract

Purpose - This study examines Jyapunhi Jatra, a significant yet underrepresented intangible cultural heritage and festival tourism product of Panauti, Nepal. The research aims to explore its cultural relevance, celebration practices, and potential for tourism development.

Methodology/Design/Approach - Using a qualitative approach with analytical and descriptive research design, the study draws on both primary data (interviews, observations) and secondary sources.

Findings - Jyapunhi Jatra, held annually during Jestha's full moon, embodies Panauti's indigenous cultural identity through unique rites, processions, and customary practices. Despite its rich heritage value, the festival remains underutilized in the tourism sector.

Originality/Value - This paper fills a gap in the documentation and promotion of Jyapunhi Jatra by highlighting its potential as a vibrant cultural tourism asset. It contributes to broader efforts to integrate intangible heritage into sustainable tourism strategies.

Keywords: Jyapunhi Jatra, involving communities, means and materials, processes and procession, rites and rituals, tourism product

Introduction

Jyapunhi is one of the most significant and vibrant jatras celebrated joyfully by the residents of Panauti. The festival takes place in the Nepali month of Jestha; therefore, it is locally known as Jyapunhi Jatra. In Nepal Bhasa, the term "Jya" means "work," while "Punhi" refers to *purnima* or the full moon. The festival is also known as Panauti Jatra and Hille Jatra. It is primarily performed in the historic core of Panauti during the rainy season, which contributes to its alternative names. The chariot procession occurs during the full moon, specifically on the twelfth day of the waxing lunar phase (*Shuklapaksha Dwadashi*) in the month of Jestha. This day is referred to as "Dya: Kwaha Bijyaigu" in Nepal Bhasa, meaning the "descent of the deity" or the symbolic act of divine movement to the earthly realm (Lakoju, 2078).

Panauti is one of the most charming and culturally rich tourist destinations in Nepal. It is located approximately 32 kilometers southeast of Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. Administratively, it lies within the Bagmati Province and is part of the Panauti Municipality in the Kavrepalanchowk District. The town has been designated as a protected Monument Zone and was listed as a Tentative UNESCO World Heritage Site under the cultural category in 1996, recognized as an early medieval settlement. Geographically, Panauti is situated at approximately 27°35' N latitude and 85°31' E longitude (Ulak, 2012). The settlement lies at the confluence of the Punyamata River, which is critically endangered, and the Rosi River, a significant and living river in the region. It is traditionally believed that Panauti is built upon a single rock formation, further enhancing its uniqueness and cultural symbolism.

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A single Panauti home has been damaged by an earthquake; thus, there have been no significant earthquake impacts reported in this region since then. The city's triangular form results from the confluence of two rivers at Triveni Ghat. It is situated on a solid stone platform where the Punyamata (or Punyawati) River, originating from Tukcha Nala woodland, meets the Rosi (or Rudrawati) River from the Phulchowki forest. Local belief holds that the Rudrawati (associated with Rudra) and the Punyawati (associated with Parvati) converge at this sacred junction, where the mythical Lilawati (or Durga) is also believed to meet, forming the Triveni. The confluence of three rivers has long been regarded as a sacred and धार्मिक site in Hindu philosophy and Nepali society.

According to Hindu religious traditions and scriptures, visiting or performing ablution at sacred confluences such as Triveni is believed to cleanse individuals from sins and anxieties. It is further believed that a third river, Lilawati, invisibly joins the other two, forming a mystical Triveni that is perceptible only to spiritually enlightened individuals. This sacred status has significantly enhanced Panauti's religious importance, attracting large numbers of devotees during festivals to perform rituals and visit nearby temples, including Indreshwor Mahadev. In Hindu tradition, Triveni in Panauti is also referred to as Uttar Prayag Tirtha.

Panauti, located southeast of the Kathmandu Valley, is recognized for its cultural and historical significance and has been proposed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city flourished under the Malla dynasty between the 12th and 17th centuries, as reflected in its architecture and cultural heritage (Khanal, 2010). Historical records also indicate the influence of elite families, such as the Bardhan family, during this period. In addition to its unique geographical setting, Panauti has preserved numerous traditional festivals and rituals (Ulak, 2012). As noted by Ulak (2012), more than 50 festivals are celebrated annually in Panauti, with religious festivals determined according to the lunar calendar, maintaining their traditional forms and communal enthusiasm over time.

Overall, Panauti is rich in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, particularly its festivals and jatras. Among these, Jyapunhi is considered one of the most significant due to its role in fostering social unity, preserving cultural heritage, and supporting tourism development. Recently, Jyapunhi Jatra has been increasingly recognized as an indigenous cultural identity and a potential cultural tourism product. However, it remains underexplored from a tourism perspective, with limited research on its rituals, processions, customary practices, and potential as a festival tourism attraction.

Although numerous studies have examined festivals and jatras in Nepal, limited research has specifically focused on Jyapunhi Jatra in Panauti. Consequently, many aspects of its tourism potential remain underexplored. This research addresses this gap by investigating key questions: What is Jyapunhi Jatra of Panauti? How is it celebrated? Why is it considered a significant festival tourism product in Nepal? The primary objective of this study is to explore the historical significance of Panauti as a cultural heritage site, while the specific objectives are to examine the various dimensions of Jyapunhi Jatra and analyze its potential as a distinctive festival tourism product.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Since it will serve as the prism through which a researcher assesses the study problem and research questions, the theoretical foundation is a crucial tool for every kind of research project. In social science research, reviewing the literature is one of the main methods for developing a strong theoretical basis. This aids in identifying the theories that might be applied to investigate the research topics. The material listed below has been reviewed in this paper based on the aforementioned doctrine.

Majapuyria (1981) The festivals of Nepal, Anderson (1988) The Festivals of Nepal, Regmi (1966) Medieval Nepal (Vol-II), Smith (2003) Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies, Shinde (2010) Managing Hindu Festivals in Pilgrimage Sites: Emerging Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges, Bowdin, Allen, Toole, Harris, & Macdonnel (2011) Events Management, Page & Connel (2014) The Routledge Handbook of Events, Dulal (2022) Prospects of Promoting Festival Tourism: A Case Study of Khame Jatra in Bhaktapur and (2024) Mahalaxmi Jatra: An Amazing Festival Tourism Product of Lubhu, Nepal have been reviewed for generating theoretical approach for this paper.

Likewise, for generating empirical knowledge and finding the research gaps the following literatures such as Pradhan (2053 BS) Panautiko samskritik sampadako ek adyayan (a study of cultural heritage of Panauti), Khanal (2010) Panauti dig Seeks New Light on Medieval Nepal, Tamrakar (2069 BS) Panautika Prachin Kathaharu-1 (Ancient Legendaries of Panauti 1), Ulak (2012) Heritage tourism in Panauti, Lakoju (2078BS) Panauti, Dulal (2079 BS) Purbamadyakalin sahar Panautiko aithasik tatha samskritik mahatwa (Historical and cultural significance of Panauti an early medieval city) have been reviewed in this study.

In order to generate theoretical and practical knowledge, researchers have employed both theoretical and empirical methodologies throughout the study. This study contributes to the exploration of the *Jyapunhi Jatra* as a fantastic festival tourism product and various concerns related to the *jatra*, in addition to sketching the historicity of festivals and *jatras* in the world and Nepal. Thus, the following conceptual framework has been used in this study in order to address the aforementioned research gaps, issues, and goals.

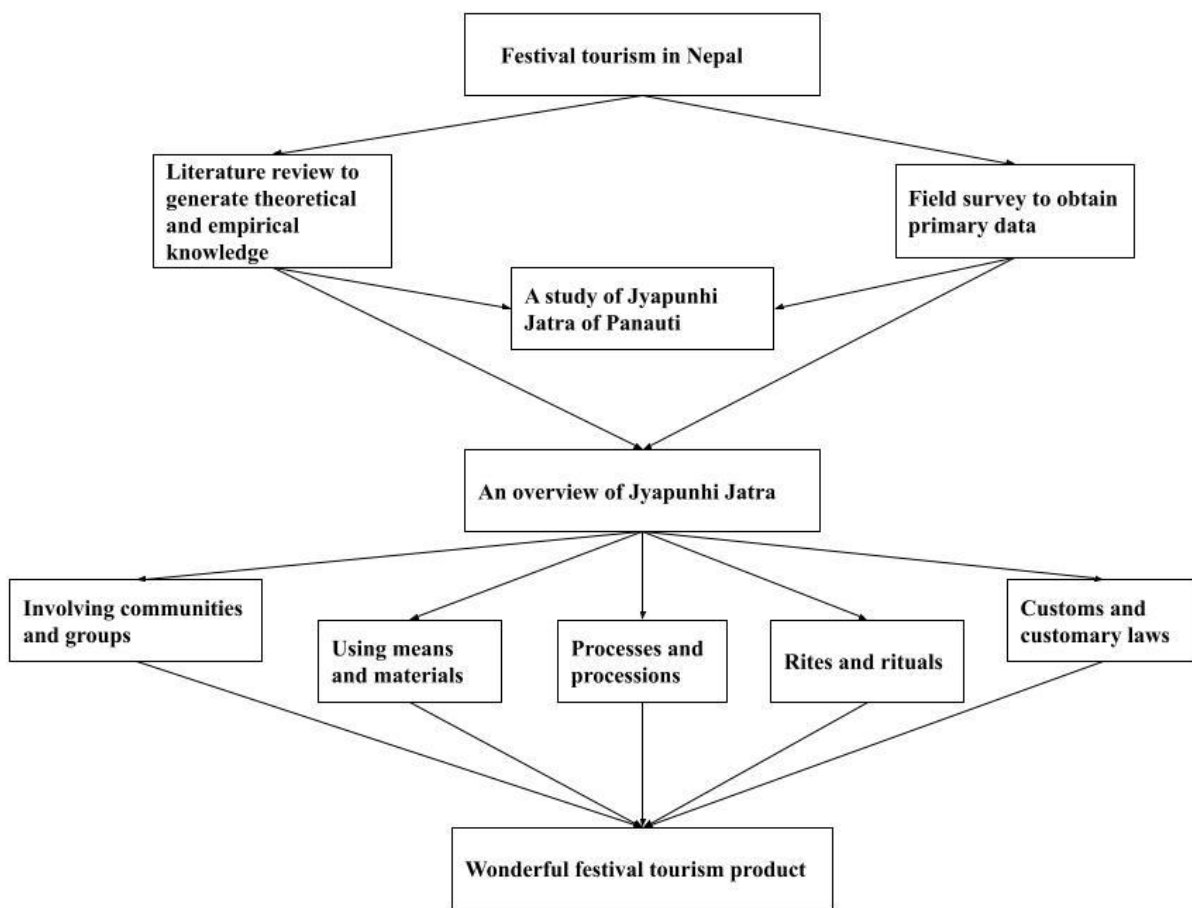


Figure 1. Conceptual framework. Source: Author’s field work, 2024

According to the key words, objectives, and figure mentioned above, this paper has discussed issues related to protecting cultural heritage and promoting tourism, as well as issues involving clans and communities, using means and materials, processes and procession, rites and rituals, customs and customary law, and sources of attraction as festival tourism products.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature since it examines religious belief, deities, worship systems, festivals, *Jatra*, rituals and procedures, customs, and customary laws. In this study, primary and secondary data were also employed. The primary source of original data is field work. First-hand information has been gathered through interview and observation techniques. In order to get detailed information about the specific *Jyapunhi Jatra* events in *Panauti*, researchers used a participant observation approach. Similarly, organized interviews with

the key informants were conducted in order to gather primary data. The secondary data were gathered by means of a literature review of various published and unpublished sources, including books, journals, reports, and electronic versions.

Findings and Discussion

In order to collect primary data for the field survey, researchers used the methods of interviewing and observation. What is it *Jyapunhi Jatra*? When and how is it observed? Why is it celebrated by the *Panauti* community? What are the conventions, customary law, and conducting rites and rituals? To what extent is it regarded as an excellent festival tourist offering in Nepal? These are the main inquiries that were made of the locals while conducting the fieldwork. In a similar vein, the field survey revealed the procedure, customs, and involvement of both locals and visitors. Finally, *Jyapunhi Jatra's* history, customs, involvement of clans and communities, use of materials and processes, rites and rituals, customs and customary law, and sources of attraction as a wonderful festival tourism product are just a few of the subheadings that have been used to present the findings and discussions.

History of Panauti

Panauti has been identified by various names throughout history. During the epic period, it was known as Panchal Desha, while in ancient times it was referred to as Panawati, Purnawati, and Asmanagar. Epigraphic evidence further reveals diverse nomenclature; a golden plate inscription at the Indreshwor Temple identifies the town as Asmapur, whereas the *Bhasa Vansawali* refers to it as Panatigram. Similarly, inscriptions from different periods mention names such as Punyawati and Punyawatipuri, while copper plate inscriptions identify it as Panati and Palanti. In recent times, Panauti has also been recognized as a sacred pilgrimage site under various names, including Shachi Tirtha, Mokshyadayani Sthal, Punyadham, Trivenidham, and Prayaga Tirtha (Dulal, 2079).

Historically, during the epic period, the Pancha Pandavas are believed to have taken shelter in this region for one year, leading to its identification as Panchal Desh (Lakoju, 2078). Archaeological findings further support the antiquity of the settlement. Neolithic stone tools have been discovered in Jugu village near Khopasi (Sharma, 1983), while several stone sculptures from the Licchavi period have been identified in the area (Pradhan, 2053). In addition, coins from the late Licchavi period were discovered during archaeological excavations at Layaku (palace square) (Lakoju, 2078). An inscription of King Shivadeva and Amshuvarma dated Sambat 520 (598 AD) has also been found in Khopasi, indicating the historical importance of the region (Vajracharya, 2030).

The historical development of Panauti is closely associated with the political transformations of medieval Nepal. It is considered one of the oldest cities in the country, with numerous temples dating back to the 15th century or earlier. The origin of the town remains debated; some sources attribute its establishment to Ananda Malla, while others suggest King Harisingh Dev based on epigraphic evidence from the Indreshwor Temple. By the late 13th century, Panauti, along with Banepa, Sanga, Nala, and Palanchowk, became part of the unified kingdom centered in Kathmandu. Following the death of King Yaksha Malla, the kingdom fragmented into smaller states, with Bhaktapur emerging as a dominant *सत्ता*, under which Panauti was incorporated. Historical accounts also note that Panauti was granted as a dowry by King Bhupatindra Malla to his sister (Ulak, 2012).

Panauti has long been recognized as a historic city, with many of its existing architectural structures either constructed or restored during the Malla period. During the unification of Nepal, King Prithvi Narayan Shah faced a moral dilemma in annexing Panauti, as it was ruled by a queen. According to the ethical principles derived from the *Bhagavad Gita*, a warrior should not engage in battle against a weaker opponent (Ulak, 2012). This created a strategic challenge, as the king sought to expand his territory toward the Kathmandu Valley while maintaining his reputation.

Historical narratives suggest that, following strategic deliberation, Prithvi Narayan Shah employed an indirect approach. During the queen's visit to Triveni Ghat, he ordered a gunshot aimed at the pinnacle (*gajur*) of the Indreshwor Temple from across the Punyamata River. The sudden noise caused panic, leading to the queen's departure from Panauti. Consequently, Panauti was incorporated into the unified Nepalese state in

1763 (1820 BS) without direct conflict. Local accounts suggest that the impact mark of the गौली remains visible on the temple pinnacle, although this claim is primarily based on oral tradition.

Culturally, Panauti shares strong similarities with Bhaktapur, particularly in terms of traditions and ritual practices. Due to its geographical location at the confluence of the Punyamata and Rosi rivers, the settlement has historically been vulnerable to flooding. In response, the ruling authority commissioned the construction of *Aastha Matrika* temples, representing the eight mother goddesses, modeled after Bhaktapur's protective religious system. Key shrines such as Maneswori (Maheswori), Kathang Kumari (Ganesh), and Itawari (Sankata) were strategically established around the settlement to safeguard the city. Additionally, an irrigation canal was constructed along the Rosi River to protect agricultural land and urban areas (Ulak, 2012).

This canal, locally known as Ga Dyang, was designed to mitigate the impact of the Rosi River, extending from Kathang Kumari to Triveni Ghat. However, with the integration of Panauti into the unified Nepalese state, certain traditional practices, including tantric rituals, gradually declined. As a result, environmental challenges resurfaced, with the Rosi River once again encroaching upon the settlement and eroding parts of the Ga Dyang structure. The fertile land between the present course of the Rosi River and the former canal alignment is locally known as Khusi Bu, reflecting its agricultural significance (Ulak, 2012).

An Over View of Jyapunhi

Jyapunhi is also known as the *Panauti Jatra* and *Hille Jatra* as well. It is the most important and special *Jatra* is celebrated joyfully by all the residents of *Panauti* as per their financial potentiality. Relatives are invited to witness the grandeur of the *jatra* and the guests are treated with warm hospitality upon their arrival. The *jatra* falls in the Nepali month of *Jestha*, therefore, it is also called '*Hille Jatra*'. In *Nepal Bhasa*, the *jatra* is called '*Jyapunhi jatra*'. In local dialect the term '*Jya*' stands 'work' and '*punhi*' means *purnima* i.e. full-moon.

This *jatra* is also known as "*Jya-punhi Jatra*" because it takes place during the farming season of the Nepali month of *Jestha-Asadh*, when farmers are hard at work in the fields and the chariot of *Panauti* collides on *Purnima*. While the chariot procession occurs on full moon days throughout the *Panauti Jatra*, the *jatra* proper starts on the twelfth lunar day of *Jestha Shuklapaksha*, or *Dwadashi* in Nepali, the month of *Jestha* during the Waxing Moon period. The twelfth lunar day of *Jestha* month during the Waxing Moon cycle is known in *Nepal Bhasa* as "*Dya: Kwaha Bijyaigu*," which translates to "Descension of God." The image of *Bhramhayini* is moved from the main room into a new one on this day. In a same manner, the image of Goddess *Bhadrakali* is taken from the main chamber and set on a new room's throne. The residents of *Panauti* consider that day to be the official start of the *jatra*.



Figure 2. Jyapunhi Jatra Festival. Source: Author's collection, 2024

The festival's myth holds that *Bhadrakali* is the super goddess *Parvati* took on in order to eradicate evils that made people more irrational and passionate. *Indreswor Mahadev* made an effort to appease her. He was driven by *Bhadrakali* and was unable to please her. Immediately after, *Indreswor Mahadev* changed into *Unmatta Bhairav* and dove into *Triveni Ghat*. *Unmatta Bhairav* was given a large organ. After that, he traveled directly to *Bhadrakali*, where they met at the *Dabali*, where he presented *Layaku*. They had sex there, to her complete satisfaction (An Interview with Local people).

The main *Jatra*, which falls on the day of the full moon, begins early in the morning. After a rear-end collision with Goddess *Bhadrakali's* chariot, the god *Bhairava's* is drawn out. Then, representing the divine sexual encounter with Goddess *Bhadrakali*, the chariots of the god *Unmantta Bhairava* and Goddess *Bhadrakali* collide. Three times, this activity is repeated. Every time the chariots clash, worshipers celebrate the joyous coupling of the celestial pair by flinging vermilion at one another. The chariot bearing Goddess *Bhadrakali* and the palanquin with God *Indreswore Mahadev* also clash head-on. Before the palanquin eventually collides with the chariot of Goddess *Bhadrakali*, it is transported back and forth several times. Subsequently, the palanquin collides with the chariot one last time before being removed. This represents the divine mating ritual between Goddess *Bhadrakali* and God *Indreswore Mahadev* (<http://hamropanauti.com.np/panauti>).

A well-known folktale surrounds *Panauti Jatra*. According to mythology, long ago, *Mahadev* begged Shree Krishna to give him one of his wives in order to test Shree Krishna's character. Krishna instructed *Mahadev* to grab one from a room where he wasn't present in order to satisfy his request. Every room that *Mahadev* entered had Krishna and his wives. After failing, he went back to *Kailash* and told *Parvati* everything. *Parvati* chose to put *Mahadev's* character to the test after learning about his experiences. When *Parvati* became lusty, she took on the appearance of a 64-*yogini* and pursued *Mahadev*. *Mahadev* fled and took refuge in a river in *Panauti's Triveni* after becoming scared. Knowing all of this, *Parvati* took on the appearance of 64 *Yoginis* and continued to await Shiva around *Triveni*. Additionally, *Mahadev* manifested as *Unmattabhairab*. When *Parvati* saw *Bhairab's* hideous, frantic incarnation, she became terrified and changed into *Bhadrakali*, sprinting along the banks of the *Roshi* River. Once they arrived in *Layaku Dabali*, *Bhadrakali* eventually became peaceful after *Unmattabhairab* had sex with him from behind. Satisfied, *Bhadrakali* addressed her desire to have another sexual encounter with him in his true form. Then, *Bhairab* transformed back into *Mahadev's* original form and had three more front-facing sex sessions with her (Tamrakar, 2069).

Involving community and groups

The population of the town is around 10,000 mainly the *Newars*, *Brahmins*, *Chhetris*, *Giris*, *Magars* and *Tamangs*. *Newar* are the main dwellers of the core of *Panauti*. The core area of settlement of the *Panauti* is populated by the same ethnic community. They are mainly belonged to various *Newar* sub-castes, such as *Achaju* (*Archarya*), *Amatya*, *Bajracharya*, *Banmali*, *Basi*, *Bhaa*, *Bhaju Bijukchhen*, *Bikhala*, *Buddhacharya*, *Deula*, *Dhanju*, *Dhaugoda*, *Dhrajju*, *Dhussa*, *Dobate*, *Duiie*, *Duwal*, *Ghoraju*, *Hatti*, *Horaju*, *Hyaju*, *Hyanju*, *Jakibarjar*, *Jhyaba*, *Joshi*, *Kapil*, *Karmacharya*, *Kasaju*, *Khadgi*, *Khimbanjar*, *Khyaju*, *Kisane*, *Konga*, *Lako*, *Lathya*, *Madhikarnikar*, *Mahaju*, *Majhi Shrestha*, *Manandhar*, *Maskey*, *Matanchhen*, *Minna*, *Misanayo*, *Napit*, *Nasnani*, *Pasachhen*, *Phachhi*, *Piya*, *Poju*, *Pote*, *Pradhan*, *Pradhananga*, *Prajapati*, *Putuwar*, *Raghu Shrestha*, *Rajbhandari*, *Rajkarnikar*, *Rajoupadhyia*, *Ranjitkar*, *Sainju*, *Sanyasi*, *Shahi*, *Shakya*, *Shrestha*, *Singamu*, *Sipani*, *Somname*(*Sonam*), *Sudhakar*, *Suryabansi*, *Sutibanjar*, *Suwal*, *Syaula*, *Takha*, *Tamrakar*, *Taujeja*, *Udas* and *Ulak* and so on (www.hamropanauti.com.np).

Jyapuni Jatra is a Hindu festival where majorities of Hindu *Newar* take part whereas; Buddhist *Newars* also participate during the celebration of festival. This is the time of the year when the whole of the *Newar* community of *Panauti* gets out of their daily monotonies to celebrate in a truly carefree fashion. As the roles and responsibilities *Thakali* a leader and an eldest member of *guthi*, Priest, a *Duin* (woman) and a *Jyapu* (porter), *Dware*, musicians, *Deulas*, *Duincha*, the female '*Duincha*', *Panchapradhan*, leaders of village, *Suwal* and *Karmacharya* (*Achaju*) people are seemed very important personal during the celebration of this *jatra*.

Using Means and Materials

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

As per the same doctrine during the *Jatra* of *Jyapunhi* gold plated masks of different deities such as *Indreshwor Mahadev*, *Bhadrakali*, *Unmattabhairab*, idol of Lord *Ganesh* and their *khatas* i.e. chariots, *nols* i.e. polls use for carrying *khata*, '*Khadga*', i.e. a sword brought from *Hanumandhoka*, two green bamboos, different types of dresses and ornaments of gods and goddesses, musical instruments especially *Newari baja* such as *Dha*, *Khin*, *Daha*, *Dam Khin*, *Mag Khin*, *Bhushya*, *chushya*, *Ta*, *Tai-nai*, *Piwach*, *Sarangi*, *Guitar*, *Sitar*, *Violin*, *Basuri*, *Murali*, *panche baja* a set of five types of musical instruments (*Narsinga*, *Sanahi*, *Jhyali*, *Damaha* and *Temko*), and nine *baja* i.e. a group of nine musical instruments including *Latakhing*, *Dhan*, *Dhaluk*, *Dhimaya*, *Nayakhin*, *Kokhi*, *Nagada*, *Pachhima* and *Tatali*, rice, *koncha* a pot of alcohol which represent the god *Bhairav*, alcohol, male goat for sacrifice, buffalo, duck for sacrifice, different species of flowers and fruits, flowers and plants leaves, incents, oil lamps, nectars, white and coloring rice and so on are the most needed things as the basic means and materials.

Processes and procession

Although the *jatra* commences from twelfth lunar day, the festivities span only three days of *Trayodashi*, *Chaturdashi*, and *Purnima* i.e. the thirteenth day, fourteenth day and full moon day of *Jestha's* Waxing Moon period. The thirteenth day of *Jestha's* Waxing Moon period, *Trayodashi* is referred to as '*Duincha Dyakegu*'. In the local community, the day of *Trayodashi* is also called '*Kulakya*'. Whatsoever, *Panauti Jatra* is a combination of the palanquin and chariot festivals. It is the fourth day festival starting off on the tenth day of the bright fortnight of *Jyestha* (May-June) and ending on the third day of the dark fortnight in *Ashad* (June-July).

Formally, *Jyapunhi jatra* starts from the *Trayodashi* i.e. the thirteenth day and came to an end in the *Purnima* i.e. the thirteenth day, fourteenth day and full moon day of *Jestha's* Waxing Moon period. Altogether, it takes fourth days for reaching its concluding remark. Therefore, the whole celebration processes and processions can be classified into the preparation stage, first day, second day, third day and fourth day in which different rites and rituals perform in different places where the procession arrive.

In those days the procession circumambulated all the villages such as *Brahmayani* temple, *Triveni ghat*, bank of *Rosi* River, *Indreswor* temple complex, *Layaku tol*, *Police pati*, *Dumangal*, *Syaulatole*, *Sohrakhutte pati* and reaches *Lampati*, *Nawadurga Dabali* of the core of *Panauti*. The details of performing rites and rituals and customs and customary law associated with the *jatra* given separately in below.

Rites and rituals

During the primary farming season, which involves planting rice plants and harvesting wheat, *Jyapunhi Jatra* is observed. This *Jatra* was finished in the early days before daylight arrived. On it, there are two variants. In the first form, the *Jatra* is finished at night or before daylight arrives, allowing the people to continue to their farm and work. In the second version, the primary goal of the *Jatra* is for *Unmatta Bhairab* and *Bhadrakali* to have sex. The goddesses believe that sexual relations should only take place in secret and in the shadows. *Jatra* must therefore take place before daylight. But these days, the *Jatra* begins after daybreak and ends before afternoon, typically at 12:00 PM (Ulak, 2012). In general, *Jyapunhi Jatra* is a four-day celebration held in *Panauti* Core. Consequently, an analytical discussion of the entire set of rites and rituals, ceremonies, and activities related to this *jatra* is conducted based on the celebration days.

Preparation Stage

Jyapunhi Jatra officially begins on the thirteenth day, or *Trayodashi*, and ends on the thirteenth, fourteenth, and full moon days of *Jestha's* Waxing Moon period, or *Purnima*. But, it takes long times for its preparation. Since the previous days, *Thakalis*, *Guthi* members, locals, and relevant authorities have been performing

managerial duties in order to ensure thorough preparation. The day before *Trayodashi*, *Thakalis* and every *Guthi* member completed all the tasks pertaining to the temple's cleanliness and the locations that the procession would pass through. Gold-plated masks of various deities, an idol of Lord *Ganesh* and his *khata*s, polls, *Khadga*, two green bamboos, necessary dresses and ornaments of gods and goddesses, musical instruments particularly *Newari baja* and *panche baja*, a pot of alcohol, male goats, buffalo, and ducks, as well as various flowers and fruits, incense, oil lamps, nectars, white and coloring rice, and so forth, are among the essentials they manage.

First Day Celebration

In the morning of *Trayodashi*, the '*Duincha*' brings two green bamboos and places them outside of the place where *Bramhayini* is kept. In the evening, the '*Dware*' receives a '*Khadga*', a sword brought from *Hanumandhoka*, in temple of goddess *Maneshwori* near bus-park. After the '*Dware*' receives the sword, he carries it and goes to worship different deities of *Panauti* while being accompanied by musicians. At night, the statue of *Bramhayini* is brought out from the place where it is kept and put in the chariot. Upon reaching the *Bramhayini* temple, the statue of *Bramhayini* along with her throne, is welcomed and placed inside the temple.

During the evening of *Trayodashi*, after the chariot of *Bramhayini* reaches near the bridge, the main priest, *Suwal* sub-caste of *Newar* community, and the *Duin* perform a worship ceremony and cross the bridge slowly and carefully, in a unique walking style to reach the *Bramhayini* temple that is across the river. They walk normally till half way through the bridge. After that, they walk in a special manner. The special and unique walking style is called '*Duincha Dyakegu*'. Such special kind of walk is done for more than half an hour. According to a folktale, once there was a flood in '*Punyamata*' river and it was impossible to cross the river, so, the people started praying to '*Basukinaag*', a serpent god, who extended himself along the river banks, acting as a bridge. After that, the people walked on the *naag's* body and crossed the river to reach the *Bramhayini* temple. The *naag's* body being slippery, they had to walk very slowly and carefully. Since then, the tradition of walking slowly while crossing the bridge is still continued and is called '*Duincha Dyakegu*'. There is always a large crowd of spectators during the ritual of '*Duincha Dyakegu*' on the day of *Trayodashi*.

Late in the evening is when the *Duin* awakening, or *cha-nya-ya-ke-gu*, is demonstrated. One of the main draws of the *Panauti Jatra* is this ordinary stroll. A priest, a *duin* (a lady), and a *gyapu* (a porter) go together with Goddess *Bhadrakali* and cross the bridge of *Punyamati* River for performing Tantric sacrifices to Goddess *Brahmayani*. In the past, there was a lot of rain and flow in *Punyamata* during the nighttime *puja*. Midway through the night, *Puja* must be carried to *Brahmayani*. Not a bridge. *Basukinaga* consented to act as a mediator between them. No *Panauti* woman reported using the back of the *Basukinaga*, or serpent, to cross the river. The only one ready to do so was a *Duin* (cast or professionally by a midwife). In order to cross the river with the other members of her team, the *Duin* crept ahead by using her fingers on the back of the *naga*, or serpent god. The current 20-meter-long wooden/suspension bridge, which attracts devotees, carries on this tradition.

On completion of the process of '*Duincha Dyakegu*', the chariot of Goddess *Bhadrakali* with a '*Dware*' and the statue of *Bhadrakali* itself are pulled while being accompanied by traditional music. The chariot is also filled with local people who climb on the chariot to watch the chariot being pulled and get a rush of adrenaline flowing through their blood. Just like *Bramhayini's* chariot, the chariot of *Bhadrakali* also crosses the river and reaches the *Bramhayini* temple and is welcomed inside. The statue of *Bhadrakali* is kept inside the temple with *Bhadrakali's* stone statue of the temple. After that, no one is allowed to enter the temple. Tantric rituals are performed all night inside the temple. Before the ritual is performed, a goat sacrifice is offered to *Bramhayini*. After the ritual begins, a goat sacrifice is offered to *Bhadrakali*. At the same time, the *Basukinaag*, that is right opposite to the *Bramhayini* temple, is offered milk.

Second Day Celebration

On *Chaturdashi*, the next day morning, the '*Deulas*' put red and white cloths on the bamboos brought by the '*Duincha*' and take them away. Then, the female '*Duincha*', along with *Panchapradhan*, leaders of village, *Suwal* people, and *Karmacharya (Achaju)*, carries worship materials and follows the chariot. At that time, the chariot

of *Bramhayini* is carried while musical instruments accompany the procession. Eventually, the chariot of *Bramhayini* reaches a bridge near *Panauti's Trivenighat* marking the commencement of 'Duincha Dyakegu' ritual. There is a huge crowd of people at the *Bramhayini* temple early in the morning. On this day, the public worship and offer animal sacrifice at the temple as per their potential.

This day is also called *Mu: Jatra* i.e. *Mul Jatra* which means main festival. On this day, the locals prepare and enjoy varieties of delicious meals. On the same day, *Ganesh Jatra* is held splendidly. During the *jatra*, the idol of Lord *Ganesh* is carried around the town with traditional music's accompany. Similarly, a buffalo sacrifice is offered to *Bhairav* inside the courtyard of *Indreshwor* temple after the completion of worshipping rituals. Only on the day of *Chaturdashi*, buffalo sacrifice is allowed and it is the same day when the *Deulas* are given permit to enter the temple once. Then, the sacrificed buffalo's head and local alcohol is taken to the *Bramhayini* temple. The next day, during the *jatra*, the buffalo head is put on *Unmattabhairab* and *Bhadrakali* like a garland. On the same day, in the courtyard of *Bramhayini's* abode, three small jars made out of mud are kept and a goat is sacrificed to conduct a ritual called *Jogichakra* which is a ritual performed after somebody's death on 5th or 7th day of the death.

Third Day Procession

Third day i.e. fourteenth day of the bright fortnight is the last day of the *jatra*, the *Purnima*, is celebrated splendidly. There is often a huge crowd of people those who have come from farther places to witness and celebrate the *jatra*. On this day, the chariots of god and goddess *Indreshwor Mahadev*, *Bhadrakali*, and *Unmattabhairab* are brought together and collided at *Layaku Dabali*, a central open stage like space. In the morning of *Purnima*, a pair of goats is sacrificed at the *Bramhayini* temple. Subsequently, the statues of *Bramhayani* and *Bhadrakali* are taken out from the temple and placed on a northern platform. Then, the two priests who are assigned for the worship offer a duck as a sacrifice after bringing worship materials from their respective homes. Once the worshipping rituals are completed, one of the priests hand 'Khadga' i.e. sword, to the 'Dware'. The sword is kept on the chariot of *Bramhayani*, which is positioned opposite the temple and then the chariot is taken around the town, accompanied by traditional music, and finally rests facing west in *Layaku Dabali's* 'Police-pati' that is a shelter-like public place where people gather.

From there, the *Dware*, Priest (*Panchapama*) and the public proceed to the *Indreshwor* temple, rejoicing with music. After the worshipping rituals, *Jangam*, the priest of temple dedicated to four-faced golden *Indreshwor Mahadev*, carries the statue of *Indreshwor* outside of the temple, passing through the 'Dakshini Dhoka' southern door to reach the chariot where the four-faced *Mahadev* is placed. Thereafter, the three chariots of *Mahadev*, *Bhairav* and *Bhadrakali* that are near the *Indreshor Chowk (Haataa)*, are taken to the river bank of a place called *Lampati*, accompanied by traditional music.

First, the chariot of Lord *Mahadev* is taken, followed by *Bhadrakali's* and then *Bhairav's*. Only one priest accompanies chariot of *Indreshwor Mahadev* while the local people ride on the chariots of *Unmattabhairav* and *Bhadrakali*. The chariot of *Mahadev* is taken through *Dumangal*, *Syaulatole*, *Sohrakhutte pati* and reaches *Lampati*. Along the way, in the middle of the path, worshiped to Lord *Mahadev* is conducted at a place with *Shivlinga*. Eventually, the chariots are taken to *Lampati* with the chariot of *Bhadrakali* in the center and the chariots of *Bhairav* and *Mahadev* on the either sides and then the chariot of *Mahadev* is carried by all and placed next to the main road in front of *Layaku Dabali*.

Likewise, the chariot goddess *Bhadrakali* is pulled and kept a further away from *Police-pati*. In the same way, the chariot of Lord *Bhairav* is also pulled and collided with the chariot of *Bhadrakali* kept near the *Police-pati*. When the two chariots collide, the riders of the chariots show their excitement by throwing and smearing "Abir," or scarlet powder, on one another. After this is done, the chariot god *Bhairav* is taken back and kept a little further from *Nawadurga Dabali*. When the chariot Lord *Unmattabhairav* reaches its destination, the chariot of goddess *Bhadrakali* is pulled and collided with that of *Bhairav* from behind. Similarly, the chariots of *Bhairav* and *Bhadrakali* are collided with each other three times and then the chariots of *Bhadrakali* and *Mahadev* are collided with each other from the front three times.

When the chariots collide, the people smear color on one another to show their joy. This is known as *Naubaja*, or a set of nine *baja*, which is a set of nine musical instruments, including *LatakHING*, *Dhan*, *Dhaluk*,

Dhimaya, Nayakhin, Kokhi, Nagada, Pachhima and Tatali. Even to protect themselves from the colors, spectators are not allowed to open umbrellas throughout the show. Additionally, it is not customary to give the devotees "*Prasad*," or nectar offerings of the gods and goddesses. It is customary to raise Lord *Mahadev*'s chariot high and then let it fall to the ground after the procession in which it collides with the goddess *Bhadrakali*'s chariot is finished. This is because it is thought that the people who carry the priest, who has fallen to the ground, when the chariot of *Mahadev* is stomped, will receive priceless treasures from the treasury of the *Indreshwor* temple.

Concluding Activities

Bramhayini jatra is held at night after the afternoon's *jatra* of chariot collisions is over. Carrying a traditional torch and singing traditional music, the people go from *Bramhayini*'s home to *Police-pati* to greet him. The chariot is used to transport *Bramhayini* across the town. After that, Goddess *Bramhayini* is invited to return to her own home. A celebration feast known as "*Walan Bhwe*" is held after the buffalo sacrifice that was offered on the grounds of the *Indreshwor* shrine the day before is prepared. *Panauti Jatra*'s fourth day comes to an end in this manner. Ultimately, the offerings are dispersed among the devotees once all of the chariots are brought close to their individual temples. Finally, when the sun was low in the evening, this *Jatra* would come to an end. Today, though, this *jatra* is held at daytime. This *jatra* was traditionally ended at night since it is believed that women and children should not be shown it because it is directly tied to sex.

Customs and Customary Law

One of the key components of any indigenous ethnic group's identity that sets them apart from one another is their customs and customary law. Within the norms, values, privileges, traditions, and discipline of that specific ethnic group, it aids in the control, management, guidance, and regulation of a member, family, and community. Customs are the institutions that carry out their institutional duties in the community (Dulal, 2024 & Singh, p. 24). In general, each ethnic group has a unique organization. In their community, they carry out various tasks in accordance with social norms and needs. These organizations are referred to as indigenous institutions of the community since they were established in compliance with the provisions of customary law (ILO, 2009).

In order to achieve the goals of the members of that particular civilization, the communities are establishing traditional or indigenous institutions. It is a functional system that is regulated by the laws, rules, and community regulations that are in place. According to the system, the *Newar* community has its own set of customs and regulations. Since ancient times, the *Guthi* and *Thakali* systems have served many purposes in *Newar* culture. *Guthi*, or diverse organizations of people, have been a part of *Newar* society since very early times. They were founded for a variety of specific objectives. The word is derived from the word *gosthi* in Sanskrit (Levy, 1992). The community's leader is the *Thakali*. He is the group's oldest member. Because of his advanced age, he knew enough about people and things to worry the entire tribe. His views were solicited on all issues pertaining to the clan, specifically caste customs and religious observances (Regmi, 1966).

According to the locals, the *Guthi* and the community leader *Thakali* are likewise connected to the *Newar* of *Panauti*. In earlier days, there were a number of *Guthis*. However, as a result of the locals' carelessness, the *Guthis* are gradually becoming less numerous. These days, the *Newar* population in *Panauti* follows the practices and rules of the *Guthis*, including *Sona Guthi*, *Sei Guthi*, *Dauwali Guthi*, and others. According to the same doctrine, *Jyapunhi Jatra* is entirely dependent on *Guthi* and *Panch Pradhan* and is governed by the following customary laws.

- The chariot procession is held annually during the full moon, and the actual *jatra* starts on the twelfth lunar day of *Jestha Shuklapaksha's Dwadashi*, which falls during the Nepali month of *Jestha's Waxing Moon* period.
- This *jatra* is believed to be off-limits to women and children because it deals directly with sex, which may be why the scene depicting the sexual encounter between the goddess *Bhadrakali* and the god *Unmatta Bhairav* is performed.

- Because of the display of sexual activity and the need to avoid women and children, jatra used to end at night.
- *Duin-cha-nya-ya-ke-gu'*, or the actions of *Duin* awakening, take place in the late evening on the fourth day, or the fourteenth day of the light fortnight.
- During the procession of "*Khadga*" a sword from *Hanumandhoka* was displayed at the temple dedicated to the goddess *Maneshwori*, which is located close to the bus park. With the sword in hand, *Dware* travels to worship various *Panauti* deities while being escorted by musicians.
- No one is permitted to enter the temple while the statue of *Bhadrakali* is kept along with *Bhadrakali's* following that.
- Tantric rites are carried out inside the temple all night long, including the sacrifice of a goat to *Bramhayini*, following the placement of the goddess *Bhadrakali* sculpture. At the same time, milk is offered to the *Basukinaag*, which is directly across from the *Bramhayini* temple.
- A buffalo sacrifice is sacrificed to *Bhairav* inside the *Indreshwor* temple courtyard following the conclusion of the third-day procession.
- When Lord *Unmattabhairav's* chariot reaches its *Layaku* during the procession, the goddess *Bhadrakali's* chariot is drawn and collides with *Bhairav's* from behind. Similar to this, *Bhairav* and *Bhadrakali's* chariots collide three times before *Bhadrakali* and *Mahadev's* chariots collide three times from the front respectively. It represented the actions of the intercourse between gods and goddess.
- The people splatter color on one another when the chariots collide, signifying their joy. Even to protect themselves from the colors, spectators are not allowed to open umbrellas throughout the show.
- Additionally, it is not customary to give devotees "Prasad," or nectar offerings of the gods and goddesses.

As a Wonderful Festival Tourism Product

Literary sources suggest that the celebration of festivals and jatra in Eastern culture and civilization dates back to the Vedic period, where rituals such as the *Ashvamedha Yajna* were performed by rulers as significant ceremonial events (Majapuria, 1981). During this period, the terms "*Maha*" and "*Jata*" were used to denote festivals and ritual processions. Religious texts such as the *Haribansha Purana* describe events like the lifting of Govardhan Hill by Lord Krishna, commemorated as the *Girimaha* festival. Similarly, texts such as *Gayadhammakaha* mention various ritual events including Indramaha, Skandamaha, Rudrajata, Shivajata, and Nagajata (Agarawal, 1964). The tradition of celebrating festivals and jatra is also prevalent in the Indian subcontinent, reflecting deep-rooted cultural and religious practices (Sharma, 1978).

In South Asia, the concept of *jatra* is closely associated with ritual movement and processions. It may involve either the ceremonial transportation of deities or the organized movement of devotees across sacred spaces. Derived from the Sanskrit term *yatra*, meaning journey or pilgrimage, a jatra signifies both religious procession and collective participation in sacred mobility (Levy, 1992). A festival, in a broader sense, is a customary communal celebration centered on cultural, religious, or social values, often observed as a local or national holiday.

During jatra, deities are typically adorned and carried in elaborate processions for various purposes, including ritual worship, symbolic journeys, interaction with other deities, and participation in communal festivities (Anderson, 1988). Festivals and jatra also serve broader socio-cultural functions, such as reinforcing religious beliefs, ensuring protection for communities and livestock, and supporting agricultural cycles (Dulal, 2022). In addition, they play a significant role in tourism, as they attract visitors and function as important cultural tourism products that meet tourists' experiential needs (Dulal, 2022).

From a Western academic perspective, festivals are often analyzed as cultural constructs that communities reinterpret to fulfill leisure needs, strengthen identity, and contribute to socioeconomic development (Derrett, 2003, as cited in Shinde, 2010). Western scholarship tends to adopt a comparative or generalizing approach, whereas Eastern perspectives emphasize the intrinsic cultural and spiritual meanings of festivals. This distinction reflects broader methodological differences, where homothetic approaches dominate Western

studies, while idiosyncratic approaches are more common in non-Western contexts (Walmsley, 2008, as cited in Shinde, 2010).

Within the context of event tourism, festivals are increasingly recognized as strategic tools for destination development. Event tourism focuses on the production and marketing of festivals to attract visitors, enhance destination image, and stimulate economic growth (Page & Connell, 2014). Festivals can reduce seasonality, contribute to place branding, and act as catalysts for broader development initiatives. Consequently, research in this field often emphasizes economic impact, marketing strategies, and visitor motivation.

Festivals, jattras, and melas also serve as expressions of national identity and cultural continuity. Traditionally, they are associated with periods of celebration, rest, and social cohesion, often linked to agricultural cycles (Bowdin et al., 2011). Cultural performances such as music, dance, and theater are integral components of festivals, many of which also carry religious or ceremonial significance. Moreover, festivals help strengthen community bonds while simultaneously attracting tourists, with many events increasingly designed to appeal to both local residents and visitors (Smith, 2003).

Table 1. Non SAARC and SAARC Tourist Arrival Statistics in Panauti

S. N.	Country	2023	2024
1	France	332	777
2	Italy	113	403
3	Germany	268	458
4	Spain	132	181
5	USA	33	126
6	Korea	19	56
7	England	25	18
8	Switzerland	13	7
9	Austria	13	30
10	Australia	5	46
11	Belgium	7	16
12	New Zealand	6	9
13	Brazil	11	30
14	India	5	27
15	Taiwan	21	12
16	Singapore	4	35
17	Bangladesh	6	16
18	Vietnam	7	9
19	Iceland	8	5
20	Slovenia	17	7
21	others	20	69
Total		1062	2337

Source: Panauti Tourism Development Center, 2024

Panauti, a medieval town surrounded by historic settlements such as Khopasi, Malpi, Taukhal, Subba Gaun, and Sunthan, represents an important cultural tourism destination in Nepal. Its proximity to attractions such as Namobuddha and Dhulikhel further enhances its tourism potential. The town is known for its rich cultural heritage, where visitors can experience not only scenic landscapes but also deeply rooted traditions, rituals, and historical narratives passed down through generations (Ulak, 2012).

Heritage tourism in Panauti extends beyond physical attractions to include intangible cultural elements such as festivals and jattras. These cultural expressions reflect the identity and continuity of the community and contribute to the growing interest among tourists in authentic cultural experiences. As a living heritage site, Panauti offers a unique combination of history, tradition, and cultural practices that appeal to both domestic and international visitors (Ulak, 2012).

Among the many festivals celebrated in Panauti, Jyapunhi Jatra holds particular significance as an important intangible cultural heritage. Celebrated during the month of Jestha, this festival represents an indigenous cultural identity and serves as a potential tourism product. Over the past decades, local communities have utilized such festivals to promote cultural tourism, attracting visitors interested in both tangible and intangible heritage.

The main celebration of Jyapunhi Jatra lasts for about a week, featuring elaborate rituals and processions. Deities such as Bhadrakali, Unmatta Bhairav, Mahadev, and Ganesh are carried in palanquins (*khats*) around the central areas of Panauti. The visual spectacle and cultural richness of the festival create a strong attraction for tourists, highlighting its potential as a key tourism asset.

However, despite its cultural richness, Panauti has not yet fully capitalized on its tourism potential, particularly in attracting international visitors. Recent statistics indicate relatively low numbers of tourist arrivals from both SAARC and non-SAARC countries in 2023 and 2024. This suggests that existing cultural tourism products, including Jyapunhi Jatra, have not been optimally promoted in the global tourism market.

Therefore, it is essential for local communities, government authorities, and relevant stakeholders to strengthen the promotion and development of Jyapunhi Jatra and other cultural assets. By enhancing marketing strategies and improving tourism management, Panauti can better position itself as a distinctive cultural tourism destination and increase its appeal to international visitors.

Conclusion

Festivals and Jatras are regarded as religious and cultural rituals observed to commemorate significant occasions, maintain faith in gods and goddesses, mark the incarnation of the main characters, safeguard humans and animals, and advance agro-farming. Festival tourism is that specific alternative kind of tourism that allows a visitor to witness celebratory festivities up close. In Panauti, the Jyapunhi Jatra is a well-liked tourist attraction, much like other things that one might see while strolling around the streets. The uniqueness of Panauti's Jyapunhi Jatra is demonstrated by its diverse effects on various aspects of the tourism industry that encourage and facilitate the experience of culture, entertain visitors, and give them a chance to pass the time in an engaging manner. It can therefore be marketed as Panauti's fantastic festival tourist offering.

Even though Jatra is a significant collection of both tangible and intangible elements and cultural legacies, its potential as a magnificent tourism product has not received as much attention or use as it could as a cultural tourism offering. The Newar an ethnic group in the area directly benefits from this traditional practice, which is a product of the Newar community. Therefore, the same community has primary responsibility for the preservation, practice, and commercialization of this festival in the global tourism markets and travel industry as well.

Finally, besides Jyapunhi Jatra Panauti creates an opportunity to experience historic and traditional homes, natural palaces, and traditional, religious locations are all accessible to heritage tourists who come to learn about the way of life such as clothing, farming, industry, dietary habits, rituals, etc. and to breathe new life into historic rivers, Panauti's culture, and the customs of her community. Notwithstanding the antiquated myths surrounding the Jyapunhi Jatra, it continues to be an essential and indispensable aspect of our culture and civilization. It is our job and responsibility to protect and promote the cultures of Panauti, which are our priceless assets.

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Not applicable.

Consent for publication

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The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this work.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies

During the preparation of this work the author used Grammarly in order to correct spelling mistakes and help me make better sentences. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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