

PARADOXES IN THE RATAULI PERFORMANCE AMONG HINDU WOMEN OF NEPAL; AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN KATHMANDU VALLEY

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Abstract: Ratauli is the main event to analyze the construction of sexuality of women paradoxically and through Ratauli social order is maintained in Hindu orthodox society where society's paradoxical, sexual construction is identified which is the main theme of this research article. The contradictions between the myths about gender and real experiences are also over looked and tried to analyze the situation experienced by women in terms of sexuality in Nepalese society. To understand the socio-cultural settings, situations and status of gender, power relationships within and outside the family are the fundamental factors for the determining factors for role, characters, and personality of women in physical as well as socio-cultural sphere in particular society and culture. Despite the construction of sexuality of women, specifically, the power relation binds the society and culture to maintain the harmony and social order among women are also studied.

Keywords: Ratauli, Women's Sexuality, Wedding Ritual, Patriarchy, Hindu.

INTRODUCTION

In Hinduism, patriarchy also defines dialectical role of women religiously; goddesses as women are worshipped as equal or even greater than men. *Kali Ma* (Dark Mother) is worshipped as Hindu goddess of creation, preservation, and goddess of destruction. According to the mythological point of view, this leads to a higher status for the woman than the man, because everyone has to respect her in order to have a smooth life and to live longer.

In Hindu society, women enjoy high status in their filiafocal relationships, because of their superior ritual purity within these relationships. Consanguineous women through certain rituals which symbolically shield their sexuality from filiafocally related males, remain categorically "pure". Dual statuses of women i.e. pure vs pollution are marked in various religious rituals like Dashain, Tihar, etc. where role and status of women are also reflected.

Usually, the gift is the symbol of what one should give his or her choice to another(who is very close) i.e. the gift giver and gift taker are close with each other. But in Hindu society, usually "virgin" girls (mostly before puberty or before menstruation) are given the gift from her "birth home" or natal home to "work home" (or *karma ghar*). During the period of marriage, the parents of bride give the gift of "virgin daughter" for their son-in laws (or groom) by saying "Mare Pap, Pale Punya". If we rethink the statement given by parents of bride, we can draw the conclusion that, parents surrender their daughter with their son-in-law. By this,

marriage also helps to perpetuate inequality, discrimination and abuse.

Sexuality of women is always considered a matter of shame and is never supposed to be discussed openly in the context of orthodox Hindu society of Nepal and also attaches to much value to men's freedom (sexual and otherwise) but never considers women's desires and aspirations outside men's interests.

Marriage Ritual and Ratauli

Marriage at one and the same time is a cultural system of beliefs and ideals, an institutional arrangement of males and norms and a complex of interactions, experiences for individual women and men. Culturally marriage is idealized as the destiny and source of fulfillment for female; a mixed blessing of domesticity, responsibility and constraint for men. Marriage rituals have been studied by various anthropologists in which they paid more attention on paradoxical situation and lives of women, their sexuality and ritual associated it; pure vs pollution, patrifocal vs fliafocal etc.

Ratauli as a part of wedding ceremony is an event of the Hindu wedding rituals that takes place in the groom's house after the male participants of the men's wedding party have departed to the bride's house, leaving behind all women allegedly 'safe' in the home. It is also important to know that the Ratauli events take place on the occasion of the wedding of so-called high caste people of Nepal particularly in Brahmins and Chhetris. Ratauli ceremony is an exclusively female events or processes without male participation. Males of all ages are prohibited to participate; they might face insults, teases or even beating should they only try to approach. Mainly Ratauli is primarily associated with the groom's mother, sisters, and his other female relatives who may participate in the Ratauli until the wedding party of the groom returns with the bride next morning, but nowadays the wedding ceremony held during day time. This is a closed ceremony where the women of the groom's household must stay up night, keeping the light burning while the groom and the bride are performing actual marriage ritual scheduled at the bride's house. The important components or the focus of the Ratauli are to make fun of heterosexuality, to make jocks about the sexual interaction through women dancing impersonating the male part as well (Kondos, 2004)

The participants of the Ratauli were women of all ages but now the trend has been going on changing due to the participation of women in departure of party with groom to bride's house. Mostly, women participants in Ratauli perform the rowdy and licentious songs and dances, and mimicry of males. Just before the Ratauli begins, the son bids farewell to his mother, while the mother stays behind in the home, in charge of the light by keeping the lamps alight for the whole night, (but now a days it is celebrated in day time) singing and dancing with the Ratauli friends. The mother of the groom is responsible for guarding the lamps until the

two wicks of the flame join and form one flame, representing the union of the bride and groom, while the actual marriage ritual takes place at the bride's place in the absence of the groom's female relatives. The reason for the prohibition is that the groom's mother is seen to have become 'shakti' that is the embodiment of female power for she has borne a son and thereby realized her female potential.

Here the objective of this research or focus of the research is to identify the paradoxical ideology of Hindus on women's sexuality with the help of analysis of Ratauli.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

The sexuality of Hindu women can be visualized through the 'order in paradox'. The aim of this visualization aims to draw and conceptualise the sexuality of Hindu women in two different perspectives. In one hand, sexuality of Hindu women is associated with the Hindu orthodox system of society through the perspective of structuralism which was propounded by Levi-Strauss and it emphasizes mainly on the study of Hindu myth and marriage systems and their components in which sexuality of women is treated as the most shameful, sinful and dangerous to talk about it when the women is in unmarried stage or in the stage of puberty. In this stage filiafocal practices are common, where girls are worshiped as symbol of goddess and virgin power. Virgin girls get priority and they get privilege culturally in rituals but controlled socially and sexually by patriarchy and its artifacts like brothers, fathers etc. in this stage. In Ratauli unmarried girls do not actively participate in the expression of women's sexuality, vulgarity because of shame or they are treated as virgins and worshiped in society. Secondly, the dangerous role of women is perceived when she is in the stage of expressing her sexuality with other, i.e. in Hindu orthodox system the expression of sexual related talks are shameful and sinful, that is why, Ratauli is the event where married women give out or do their expression, vulgar notes, stories, mimicry of men etc. is quite opposite to the worship of virgin in the same society. This paradoxical construction of sexuality in Hindu orthodox society outlines the Hindu cultural symbols and their interpretations, which is closely associated with the Geertzian, Turnerian and other symbolic anthropologists' theories and its primary concentration is along with symbolic meanings.

The construction of women's sexuality in Hindu orthodox society can be visualized through the concepts of "models of" and "model for reality", from Greetz and which - shape experience and orient action. Here, Ratauli can be divided in the three stages of entertainment; dance and song is the first part, where young married and unmarried women form lines and dance and sing responding to each other. In this stage, the songs that are sung; are more of general types of dance and songs, the main theme of the songs and dance are of love, separation, work and other female activities carried out in daily lives. In the second stage, auspicious so-called

“mangal’ songs are sung by middle-aged women, mostly post menopausal women. These mangal songs are less religious and they are songs of joy. In the third stage, the ritual reaches its peak. Satirical songs, dramas are performed by elderly married women that mock men. These women are dressed in men’s clothes and use long poles as the main propose of the performance which is used as a phallic icon, this is used in a non-religious context which is against the religious context of use of *linga*, the phallic symbol of Lord Shiva, so boys and men are not supposed to view Ratauli. There are great contractions on expressing shameful of women, who are unmarried, the auspicious songs by married women and the sexual expression or expression of vulgarity by married older women can be visualized through the paradoxical construction of sexuality of women in Ratauli in Hindu society. The contradictory construction of sexuality is also found on the events associated with the role playing events of male by female. The main satirist is the groom’s mother (sister-in-law, in case the groom does not have a mother), who is helped by her Ratauli friends to dress up like a man and perform the sexual parody (Camerone, 1993).

But its theoretical viability and reliability is quite mentionable and appreciable. Similarly, Ratauli helps to create the balance and harmony within the dynamic tension in orthodox Hindu society and culture. That’s why construction of sexuality of women in Hindu society resembles more with the Geertzian model rather than the Turner’s.

Lynn Bennett in her popular monograph mentioned about the “Hindu Women’s World” as they can not be understood in isolation from their own Hindu culture. Culture is seen as the “web of meaning” or “system of meaning”. That is why without cultural studies; no one can explain the role of women in Hindu society. So, Bennett first tries to operationalize the Hindu culture through symbolic anthropological perspective parallel with the gender perspective. Her analysis is based on the non-materialist’s perspective rather than materialist’s perspective because of the non- material one. Like Sherry Ortner, Bennett stresses on sex status of Hindu women with the help of Hindu ideology, Hindu religions, perceptions and practices. Agreeing with other, Bennett tries to explain the universalities of Hindu women’s sub-ordination rather than variation in sex status from homogeneous to heterogeneous (Dahal, 2008).

Bennett’s gender symbolic approach to study the Hindu way of life shows that the importance of symbolic cultural configurations in the construction and maintenance of a society’s “sex role plan”. According to Bennett, such plans include a gendered division of labor, as well as ideas and beliefs about the nature of Hindu women and men. Her main thesis is that in Hindu culture; sex role plan is intrinsically tied to its worldview i.e. Hindu religion or Hindu philosophical stance, and that these plans reflect the interpretative meaning of Hindu social and cultural relations with its environment. As parallel with Peggy Sunday, Bennett

focuses on how Hindu women understand the Hindu socio-cultural circumstances and how they explain or express their behavior in symbolic terms. In my opinion, Bennett focuses on three areas 1) the gender symbolism in Hindu origin stories, 2) the Hindu practices and Hindu cultural meaning of sex segregation, especially in the Hindu cultural purity and pollution, 3) the historical pattern of the emergency of male dominance along with cultural taboos, myths, religions etc (Dahal, 2008).

Parallel with Mary Douglas's notion "power and dangers credited to social structure are reproduced in small in the human body", Bennett believes on the notion that menstruation restrictions are seen as a means of controlling the danger in Hindu society. Agreeing with Sandy's theory of "female power and male dominance", Bennett argued that, in Hindu society, cultural and social factors by projecting various myths, ethos, religions weenies, etc. try to control the female sexuality as dangerous forces in the name of menstrual pollution and purity. Thus, in Hindu society, according to Bennett, cultural beliefs about the danger of menstrual blood symbolically reserve the equation of femaleness with life and growth.

There is always binary opposition between two contradictory roles in dharma or religion or merit making in Hindu society, which is opposite or anti-thesis between "life cycle" and ascetic life (no sex life) or Sanskrit life vs liberal life, religious purity vs pollution and conditional immorality (worshipping deities for giving birth of son) vs women's oppressions etc. There are two opposing ideologies, attitudes in Hindu religions, one may contradict another. But without any one of these may not balance and order the Hindu life. In Hindu society merit making (*Dharma Kamayune*) in one is the symbol of purity, while non-merit making (*Pap Garune*) is the symbol of pollution, through which social roles are determined and controlled in this sense Hindus are always try to get "heaven place" by merit making; through which male and patriarchal ideology (followed by mother-in-laws) control the Hindu women's mobility and sexuality.

Religions as the roots of sacredness also expresses in a series of rituals and symbolic acts. Usually, daughter-in-law is considered as outsiders, while mothers-in-law once was borrowing, so there is threat to solidarity for women especially daughter-in-law in intra-gender conflict. This analysis covers the role of wife, relations between co-wives, role or place and position of daughter-in-law in family, role of sister and mother-in-law in detail.

Julie Leslie (1992), in *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*, uses two distinct approaches to elaborate the religious roles and rituals of Hindu women; textual approach which is based on the interpretation of women's religious roles and rituals in Hindu texts through the masculine perspectives in which Hindu texts are based generally but roles of women and significance of rituals in particular (Leslie, 1992). The approach, Leslie adopts is an empirical one to interpret the feelings and voices of women.

Bennett again argues that, belief system provides balance and order evenly both intra-and inter-gender practices. In intra-gender relation there is always cleavage between mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws. While, in inter-gender relation there is always contradictions between male and female in role taking and domestic power sharing in Hindu society, but, Hindu values, beliefs and functioning as the balance between these opposing ideologies. According to Bennett, wives are danger because they encourage and sometime force to separate their husbands from family while, sisters are attained to resolve the internal contradictions between inter gender and intra gender in natal home i.e. mother-father, mother-in laws and daughter –in laws, brother-brother, brother-father. Even sisters are not given the property and rights of their birth-house, while wivese gained their rights, property and powers when they get married. Though Bennett applied the appropriate model to study the Hindu women's world with symbolic feminist perspective by using various concepts, she did not get more attention on paradoxical construction of women (female) sexuality in Hindu context (Bennett, 1983). By using Bennett's model this paper tries to identify the paradoxical construction of women's sexuality.

Women's status is associated with her position as a sexual being, and in Hindu societies, a woman's status (marital) and her sexuality constitute a category which changes with her age in the marital relation. It can also be argued that constructions of sexuality within the categories of Hindu women are different from those of other religious and that most of which are evidenced through many local rituals among them Ratauli is one which expresses the paradox of female sexuality in Hindu ideology.

In case of visualization of paradox in Ratauli performance the structuralist theories have been particularly interested in class differences of married and unmarried as working-class resistance to structural systems of control of women's sexuality for concerted action, expressive or political. The main tenet of poststructuralist analyses of paradox in Ratauli performance is that texts are multivocal in nature and they are seen as having variety of potential meanings, none of which is the real meaning to be derived by some superior reader. While understanding or studying the paradox in Ratauli performance the poststructuralists effectively move towards the 'inter- textual'; and just as they subtly or openly, intentionally or unconsciously, allude to or incorporate other texts, so they make themselves inevitably open to multiple readings. Jacques Derrida argues that the world of performance especially Ratauli has its own life, and its performance is part of how it communicates to the others of their world. So language, meanings, general symbols in Ratauli songs have their own meanings, problems, and possibilities and become "a new metaphysical ground of being" (Docker: 1994; 130). This enables analysts like Derrida and his followers to seek out the conceptual contradictions or say paradox in Ratauli performance whose contradictions so severe that cultural performance work is its own criticism. There is reciprocal relationship between sex

and power, that have been particularly important categories in feminist theories, in which culture can be made and used, and they look for an “authentically female culture” (Bennett, 1995: 348). Similarly, feminists have also contended that cultural performance is by its nature political as well sensual and establishes systems of power in its every day use.

Foucault suggests that we have so long kept standard ideas about cultural performance in large part because without them the cultural critic could no longer identify great work by its great author, that would be dangerous because it would upset the system of power, which is “gained through discourse” (Selden, 1989: 102), in cultural performance, known as discourse theory, including the stratified relationship of sexuality of mature women to culture of Ratauli performance of Hindu society of Kathmandu. Foucault’s analysis of literary authorship unravels so revealingly the politics of Ratauli performance of cultural stratification that it is so important to the students of popular culture. Foucault calls into question what it means to be an author, but critics of what it means to be a reader.

The significance of the Ratauli is the actions around Ratauli, i.e. the dancing, the male impersonation and the sexual joking, could undermine the notion of the social importance of men in Hindu society and the seriousness with which men take their masculinity. Ratauli is in fact women business only and the secrecy in this ritual, as put by Kondos, is the mock of masculinity where ‘all men are being subjected to the laughing inquisition (Kondos, 2004: 22). So according to Kondos, Ratauli is the occasion where women can “make fun of sexuality” and ‘enjoy the ribaldry’. She brings into the controversial issues related with female sexuality in the ritual of Ratauli. Women’s expressive forms on Ratauli have a subversive value as women’s behavior in Ratauli does not conform usual expectations and there is the mixture of “ritual and ribaldry”(Kondos, 2004: 21). Ratauli is the occasion for female sociality, but it is also the occasion where they can prevail over the restrictions put on their sexuality.

Cameron's (1993: 216) interpretations indicate that all age group of women participate in Ratauli but their performance varies according to the marital status, and their knowledge on sexuality. In brief, if Kondos elaborated the performance of women in Ratauli where, Cameron extended the performance of women in terms of categories in every stages in culture of Hindu society.

The actual fun sets in when women start “dressing up”, “wearing disguises” and “uttering sexual innuendoes”. Sexuality is not taken as shameful and threatening but as liberating and joyful, which is vast opposite to the concepts and social construction of knowledge about women’s sexuality is associated with family prestige, shameful ideology and sinful practice in orthodox Hindu norms and values. This is contradictory practices of sexuality of women in Hindu society that widely expressed in Ratauli ritual is one fun creating ritual through which construction of sexuality of women in different stages can be seen.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Kageshwori- Manahara Municipality and Shankarapur Municipality, typically they are well known by the name of 'Katha'-peri-urban area of Kathmandu Valley, on the day of marriage ritual of groom from- 2018 to 2019, when women were celebrating the marriage ritual of groom after the male departure to the bride's house in the village. So my keen interest was to explore the construction of sexuality of women in Hindu society through the Ratauli. 50 women were selected as respondents and 5 women in Ratauli of each marriage ceremony were selected as respondent for this research work.

Out of 50 respondent participants 5 key informants were selected for narrative inquiry, in which researcher conducted semi-structured interview so as to identify the experiences of women about their life time activity performances in Ratauli through their reflexive thinking. Life story is a temporally discontinuous unit told over many occasions and altered to fit the specific occasions of speaking as well as specific addresses, and to reflect changes in the speakers' long term situation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In agreeing with Levi Strauss, I have considered that myth and ritual do not always correspond to each other in domains already presenting a complementary character. The value of the ritual as meaning resides in instruments and questions; it is para language, the cultural tradition on the other hand, manifests itself as a meta language; it makes full use of discourse but does so by situating its own significant oppositions at a higher level of complexity than that required by language operating for profane ends. It is believed that the cultural traditions clearly confirm ritual reality. Though women are well educated, more aware about their rights, duties and their responsibilities but they are still in verge of accepting those traditional irrational values and norms in the name of cultural traditions and preservation of cultural heritage.

The traditional cultural disruption of ritual reality plays on, but does not resolve the opposition between construction of women's sexuality in terms of "sacred or auspicious" and "dangerous". The variants of these cultural tradition and religious ideologies speculate on insurmountable contradiction just as the variants of cultural tradition, religious rites, Ratauli events expose an essential paradox in Hindu world view. The Ratauli rituals as cultural tradition counterpoises challenging expression against the orthodox Hindu norms and values associated with discriminatory hierarchical social and power relation with and within genders associated with marriage rituals and life experiences. The cultural tradition rescues discriminations, oppression, subordination between and among the genders. Paradoxically the construction of sexuality of women concludes with the irrepressible auspicious status and role with dangerous role and statues based on sexuality of women symbolically.

Ratauli Performance, Mimicry and Satires

Performance in Ratauli, in a way, was the challenge to dominant construction of their femininity, sexuality and the space provided to them in the orthodox Hindu society. While in performance in Ratauli, it is found that the most of the women want to act as men as they were more comfortable enacting it as a closed ceremony and there was no fear of society. The highlights of their performance were that they try to unfold the social stratification existing in the society; mostly performed as a drunkard men's role, a wife batterer and an eve-teaser. During fieldwork, it was found that, the performance in Ratauli showed the gender problems prevalent in unequal social order of society. The secrecy of the Ratauli ceremony, a traditional regulation that women can appropriate to their advantage, with no hindrance from society and men, women use their power of the ritual, they cannot have any exact idea about what actually happens in Ratauli. They do not know for real if their wives are making fun of their dignity and masculinity simply because men are required to be absent on this occasion. Ratauli has its value in that it is a closed ceremony where there are so many satires, mimicry and no fear of society and together women can do what they want to. Even if women dressed as men and they had tied a banana in between her legs as a symbol of penis, and along with other women they danced in a duet, and except these there were making of many sexual jokes by many older women. Most of the songs sang were found the songs that were abusing their husbands. Dances were in such a way that most of the audiences were do of giggling and whispers. Old women sang vulgar songs relating to sexual activities and their performances were to some extent vulgar too. Usually, unmarried girls felt uncomfortable may be the reason that they are socialized to keep silence concerning sexuality issues and not to discuss them in public.

In some cases the same situations of the Ratauli event was to comfortable seeing of some women performing the activities which mimicked sexual activities, but mostly it is perceived as entertainment and fun, but some women were enacting how a husband makes love to his wife, how he behaves and speaks on the night of Suhagraat. These kinds of activities ruin the essence of this ritual and moreover will badly affect the unmarried girls who participated in Ratauli. For this the performance and enactment in Ratauli have given women of different categories, old, young, married and unmarried, an opportunity to be self-critical and conscious about the gendering aspects of the social order and the social role of their own sexuality.

Ratauli Performance; Women's Expression and Experiences

Ratauli is a platform for the expression of sexuality and sexual desire for Hindu women. Ratauli is perceived as a special ritual which brings close ties between the new bride and groom, and this ritual is a symbol for long unification of blissful married life, and this event is really auspicious. Ratauli is their tradition and it

is very significant to them, as during this event all the female relatives meet and can relate their personal stories with each other and get opportunity to understand each other. It is found that there is no shame in expressing oneself, participating in Ratauli gave participants a platform to be free. It is appropriate forum to share the women's sexuality; control of men on women's body and mind makes them lose the self-esteem and confidence. Ratauli helps to formulate the opinion on female sexuality and that Ratauli which marks Hindu women as sexualized beings and through the recognition of their sexuality, women are given importance, and female gender is celebrated in Ratauli.

Gender is socially constructed and sexuality comes to mean in our life, seems natural. Our culture and religion recognise and embedded it as a part of life experience not only bio-physiologically but psycho-culturally too. In case of experienced and the older women Ratauli was the opportunity to challenge these restrictions, in hindsight, after becoming familiar with feminist scholars, as another source of knowing about sexuality. So, Ratauli as the potential area for the unsaid aspects of sexuality are also laid out, educating the young women, telling them about aspects of female experience that otherwise, outside of the ritual's space should remain unsaid.

Ratauli Performance; Socialization of Women's Sexuality

General perception of female sexuality and of their performances in Ratauli is presented here with the help of their knowledge of the ritual and their cultural practices interact coexist within powerful Hindu religious ideology and help in shaping new dimension of women's sexuality in society where I have conducted the field work. Although most of the informants performed in Ratauli, very few were only aware that their performance could be related to their sexuality. Actually, Ratauli has a cultural and religious value in the Nepalese societies and especially in marriages; it is celebrated with much vigor. It is important events that women can enjoy thoroughly and this is only the ritual event in which women can express their satires, jokes and mimicry about oppressing themselves against the Hindu patriarchal cultural system and ideology.

Hindu women had no freedom in the past to express themselves as compared to today, and therefore Ratauli could be that platform where they actually got opportunity to showcase their talents and speak their minds. Women in Nepal have to live under the patriarchal oppression of men and Ratauli is one such event, where women do not have to be conscious of the patriarchal oppression and enjoy their freedom. Ratauli is perceived as blissful events needs to spend some quality time with each other. Ratauli as a form of dance which starts with a slow tempo at first, gradually mounting to an exciting climax when women participants sing and dance to a fast rhythm with full of fun and joy. In Hindu orthodox society, Ratauli is the event where groom's mother, sisters and female relatives dances all night.

The dance images about sexuality and gender reveal aspects of communication and dominance patterns and social and cultural change which may affirm or challenge the existing social order. While in most of the other occasions dancing is traditionally restricted because of its overt sensuality and sexuality. Ratauli is such an event where even such dances are allowed (Judith, 1988). It is found that from the study, not only sexuality is repressed and not openly discussed even amongst women in Hindu society, but this sexually repressive culture has been actually restricting women especially high caste Hindu women, to embody sexual purity and not to make it public. Informants had misconception about sexuality and were totally ignorant of the celebration of Ratauli, but their understanding could not bring out the details about the underlying factors of the ritual. They perceive that Ratauli is still a taboo to acknowledge the verbal expression and pleasure of sexuality in orthodox Hindu society of Nepal. Issues of sexuality in contemporary Nepalese Hindu society are not challenged even after the various waves of globalization, modernization, westernization, neither is there an additional understanding on dynamics to how Ratauli functions now.

Ratauli Performance; Cultural Traditions and Events

Hindu women is regarded as “dangerous” if she is alone or unmarried and “auspicious” if she is married, as married women’s sexuality is confined within a marital relationship and inside the space of the home. In Hinduism, when goddesses are worshipped alone, they are regarded as dangerous and when a married woman is seen as auspicious, a clear message is sent to women that female sexuality is best contained and explored within marriage. Motherhood is celebrated in Ratauli, it is celebrated assuming that their sexuality is auspicious instead of dangerous, because in the Ratauli event, the mother of the groom raises her status from “dangerous wife” to that of pure and auspicious mother-in-law. The concept of “dangerous wife” shows how daughters-in law in Nepalese are seen to be threat to the lineage.

Ratauli is also an event for celebration of female sexuality and strategies for claiming power. In Hindu society, the reality is that women at every level are dependent on men for their livelihood and support, and their sexuality is in complete control of men’s authority. Women are also enjoying certain amount of power in Hindu society mostly by mother-in-law and Ratauli shows this power of Hindu women, which is derived from their capacity to resist the prescribed social order of orthodox Hindu beliefs about their own sexuality and gender roles. The participants and performance in Ratauli can actually teach women about their own roles in maintain prescribed gender norms within the patriarchal marriage relation as well as how they may have the agency to transform their role in Ratauli with breaking up of oppressive gender construction and have a break from all these norms.

Ratauli performances are not perceived as something threatening and shameful, but as an important part of the ritual and taken in a form of entertainment, which in

itself are the paradoxical aspects. Impersonation of men and sexual parody, which are the integral part of Ratauli performance, may begin as a source of arousal, but for many women participants and performers, other aspects become important, such as making fun of masculinity, and achieving a masculine sense of self and also trying to escape from the feminine gender norms.

The dual role of women which is paradoxical in nature in Nepalese society can be seen clearly. For an unmarried girl, Ratauli is a socialization process which restricts girls to open sexuality issues. An unmarried Hindu girl's sexuality is extremely important to honor and prestige of her own family and of the society as a whole. Unmarried girls are often kept ignorance about sexuality issues. The unmarried girls' roles are valued as religious gift which is to be "given away", therefore, unmarried girls are not to be used or possessed sexually before marriage (Fisher, 1978). Ratauli is the ritual that not only simply manifests the orthodox Hindu beliefs and ideology but also provides an important insight into the way in which sexuality is constructed in different categories of women in Nepal, and also demonstrates the cultural practices and opinions of sexual nature of these different categories of women through the ritual of Ratauli.

CONCLUSION

Ratauli ritual or event in Hindu society and culture is changing day by day. Generally, social, economic, political, and developmental and many other factors are acting for such changes in cultures in general and Ratauli in particular. Nepalese society especially in Kathmandu and its adjacent rural as well as urban communities are in the situation of verge of collapse in traditional nature of cultural traits, customs, and characters because of global, local and national development and changes on overall and integrative developmental approaches. Mainly, the shift of agro-based to remittance - based national economy, opened our access to the global world, development of technology, and mass communication which are the key and determining factors for transformation of festival celebrating pattern.

In this regard, the changes in Ratauli and its associates - material aspects like dress patterns, food habits, cosmetics, etc. and non-material aspects like expression pattern, jokes etc. like psycho-social, rituals, attitudes, norms etc. are also changing. Both push as well as pull factors are acting to influence the socio-cultural and politico-natural matrix. So, as parallel with Harris's argument- the shiftment in society's infrastructure and techno-environmental determinism along with adoption as well as adaptation of new cultural trend mainly determine what is, what was and what will be the values, norms, process, procedures, significance of both material and non material cultural components associated with Ratauli ritual. So, in my opinion, what changes occur are not so important but that changed or new one, whether adapted or not, is the important part because it is directly associated with the Harris arguments and likewise, whether it is survived or not is the main

theme of the principle of Darwinism. The construction of women's sexuality was found dialectical or say paradoxical in Hindu orthodox society through Ratauli rituals symbolically.

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