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— Case of Gubhaju and Bare Castes of Kathmandu City —

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1. Introduction

This paper aims to explore the influence of modernization in Newar society in general and funeral ceremony of Newars in particular. The funeral ceremony is conducted through *guthi* (a socio-religious association), which is in the process of transformation due to social change in Newar society. This paper also attempts to show that in the process of transformation how funeral *guthi* is trying to secure their traditional beliefs and values. Additionally, it aims to study how people are changing their attitude towards traditional funeral *guthi* system due to dynamic social development in Kathmandu city of Kathmandu valley. Doing so, this paper picks up Gubhaju¹ and Bare² castes of two settlements of Kathmandu city i.e., Om bahah and Lagan as a case study in order to understand how people who were excluded from their former funeral *guthi* for conducting inter-caste marriage formed a new funeral *guthi*, which was not possible in Newar society many years ago. The study shows how people have overcome with the situation of exclusion from their former funeral *guthi*, forming their own new funeral *guthi*. This study not only helps to understand the influence of modernization in these two castes, but it also helps to study the transformation of Newar society in recent years. The methods of primary and secondary data collection are applied under this study. Under primary data collection, fieldworks encompassing one to one interviews, group discussions were conducted between 2012 to 2013. Funeral rituals of Gubhaju and Bare castes of Om bahah and Lagan are tried to describe as much as possible to understand the culture and its values among Gubhaju and Bare especially among Gubhaju and Bare of Om bahah and Lagan. The data used for funeral rituals accounts in this paper are collected through personal interviews with the key informants and group discussion. The literatures under secondary data collection comprises books and journals of Newar society and funeral *guthi*.

Many authors such as Nepali 1965; Quigley 1985; Vergati 2002; Vajracharya 2005 and Toffin 2007 have stated how inter-caste marriage becomes a problematic matter for funeral *guthi* and they have mentioned about the member's expulsion as a punishment when one conducts inter-caste marriage. Traditionally, marriage with lower caste woman or from other community or religion is not accepted in *guthi* and since the children possess the caste status of mother, the child is put out of paternal lineage. Expulsion from the *guthi* not only means social humiliation for the expelled individual or household, but also drops the social status of the respective family (Vergati 2002), which is equivalent to rejection of a family from the caste (Toffin 2007). Nepali (1965: 191) in his study has mentioned as denial of membership in the *guthi* is equivalent to 'social boycott which makes their social living quite miserable'. In some cases, the married man has no other choice than joining his wife's family and possess the same caste as his wife. The reason behind the restriction of an inter-caste marriage is that the funeral *guthi* provides one's caste status in the society and accepting inter-caste marriage in *guthi* will drop down the caste status of all the other members of *guthi*. The study conducted by Quigley (1985) in Dhulikhel Shrestha community mentioned that funeral *guthi* in Dhulikhel provides castes status that indicates acceptable marriage partners but they limit their marriage within the funeral *guthi* members of Dhulikhel. Another study by Vajracharya (2005) indicated that the expelled members of Gubhaju and Bare caste *guthi* due to inter-caste marriage formed a new funeral *guthi* to perform socio-religious practices.

The literatures mentioned above had raised issues of inter-caste marriage in funeral *guthi* of Newar community in particular the linkage of funeral *guthi* and caste identity that provides social status in Newar society. However, the literatures lack analysis and studies on the members who conduct inter-caste marriage. The existing literatures are preoccupied with inter-caste marriage as problem creating issue in Newar society and a disaster for the household where it is conducted. Although Vajracharya (2005) has put some light on the ongoing changes in funeral *guthi*, but it still limits study of the newly formed funeral *guthi*. Accordingly, this

study has tried to cover an in-depth study of modern funeral *guthi* of Newar society where it shows how the expelled members are facing difficulties and how they are tackling series of problems faced due to conducting inter-caste marriage establishing new funeral *guthi* and finally it shows how new management and new concepts are added in their *guthi* activities.

2. Newars, *Guthi* with Traditional Beliefs and Modernization

2.1 Newars

Newar society is the integration of different groups (Gopala, Mahispala, Kirat, Licchavi, Vaisya Thakuri, Malla) that entered Kathmandu valley especially from India and China. At present Newars reside both inside and outside Kathmandu valley. More than 50% of the total Newar population lives outside the valley (CBS 2003). The population of Newars, inside Kathmandu valley comprises only 35% of the total population (CBS 2003). Newars are famous for their distinct and rich culture. They have their own language called Newah *bhae*, writing *lipi* (script) (Prachalit *lipi*, Ranjana *lipi*), lunar calendar (Nepal Samvat) and their society is constructed by their own caste system. Additionally, *guthi* plays imperative role practicing numerous rituals and festivals in the Newar society.

2.2 *Guthi* with Traditional Beliefs

The term '*guthi*' is derived from the Sanskrit word, '*gosthi*' which means an 'association' or an 'assembly'. According to historical evidences *guthi* existed in Kathmandu valley from the period of Manadev I of Licchavi period (Vajracharya 2005 and Tandon 2008). Under the reign of distinct rulers in Kathmandu valley, *guthi* could successfully sustain its important in the society (Vajracharya 2005 and Toffin 2007). Today, *guthi* plays an important role in sustaining traditional cultures of Newar communities.

Guthi for Newars is a socio-religious association. Different *guthi* with various objectives can be observed in Newar society. For example, *guthi* for worshipping a particular deity, *guthi* for conducting funeral rituals, *guthi* for the welfare of people (building rest houses, well etc.) and so on. Activities of *guthi* are mainly conducted by their members who are known as *guthiyar*, however, in some occasions household members are also involved in *guthi* activities, for example conducting *guthi* feast/s. The rules, regulations and management varies from one *guthi* to another.

However, it is worth to note that among all, the *guthi* related to funeral ceremony is the most important *guthi* in the Newar society (Nepali 1965; Quigley 1985; Toffin 2007 and Gellner 2009). Funeral *guthi*'s presence in every Newar castes makes it indispensable part of Newar society. The main objective of this *guthi* is to conduct the funeral when a death occurs among their *guthiyar* or their respective household members. Every funeral *guthi* has its own worshipping god/s which is worshiped annually by the group and conduct *guthi* feast/s which is widely known as *guthi bhwe* after annual worship.

Hindu Newars believe that through conducting funeral rituals it will help the soul of the dead to reach to Yamaraj (the God of death) where he/she is rewarded or punished according to the virtues practiced or sins committed by him/her when he/she was alive. Accordingly, he/she will get a new life in new world. Among Buddhist Newars, some believe the soul becoming Nirvana (the soul of the deceased becoming a mortal Buddha, Nepali 1965: 126) and other believe that the soul goes to Sukhavati bhuvana (heaven of Amitabha Buddha, Gellner 2009: 128). Although, the concept of Nirvana and Sukhavati bhuvana are known by Buddhist Newars, however under strong influence of Hindu culture they believe and follow Hindu ritual practices. Both Hindu and Buddhist stress on conducting funeral rituals and ceremonies properly to help the soul to reach Yamaraj, to become Nirvana or to reach Sukhavati bhuvana. Any delay, incompleteness or fail to conduct any ritual may lead to the soul of the deceased to become *preta* (ghost). Newars believe that if the soul becomes *preta*, then inauspicious incidents will occur among the family members. Accordingly, in order to avoid the soul becoming ghost, people try to conduct the funeral ceremony as quickly as the death occurs.

Another belief among Newars is that the corpse should not be touched by the household members, which Nepali (1965) have also pointed out. On this belief, there are different understandings. Some people believe that since the family members are in shock and tragedy of the death occurrence of their beloved ones, they are not in situation to control their emotion and focus in conducting necessary funeral rituals. Thus, *guthiyar* from same caste perform the funeral rituals. And others believe that getting into death pollution as the death occurs, restricts the polluted members of the family from performing religious practices. In order to complete the ritual quickly and also successfully, it is performed by the members of their own caste. Whatever might be the reason behind its origin, it has been a tradition in Newar society where *guthiyar* gather quickly in order to conduct the funeral ceremony as death occurs.

2.3 Modernization

Modernization brought a quick transformation of society which impacted the traditional customs of Newar society. Kathmandu being the capital city of Nepal was the first and the most exposed region to the phenomenon of modernization.

Development in various sectors has led to transformation of Newar society including establishment of schools that integrated pupils from different castes and groups under one educational curriculum. Further, modernization has transformed the Kathmandu city as an economic zone for diverse castes and communities. This development led to inter-caste and community interactions. Eventually, this phenomenon led to increase inter-caste relationships. In one way or another these developments become one of the causes of increase of inter-caste marriages in Newar society. On the other hand, *guthi* for sustaining its traditional role and social status in the Newar society, denies to accept inter-caste marriages.

3. Traditional Funeral *Guthi* of Gubhaju and Bare

3.1 Background

Funeral *guthi* of Gubhaju and Bare of Om bahah and Lagan are established to conduct funeral ceremony and the initiation ritual, known as *chudakarma*, of the male child which symbolizes the acceptance of member entry in the community at Kwahpahdyah (temple of the main deity of the community). They also conduct annual gathering which holds a worship at Kwahpahdyah and a feast with the participation of all the members. The senior most members by age are known as *thakali* (elder/leader) who are respected by all members throughout *guthi* activities. The *guthi* activities are conducted by all the members rotationally. The member who is nominated for the incharge of the respective year is known as *pahlah*. *Pahlah* takes all the major responsibility of *guthi* activities for a year and his household members assist in fulfilling his duty. For funeral ceremony they have *gwan* (traditional cremation caretaker from Jyapu³ caste). The cremation site is located near from their settlement, approx. 10-15 minutes on foot.

All the members' participation are expected in all *guthi* activities. When one fails to fulfill the duty, certain amount of *baun* (fine) is levied. In some cases, member/household is even expelled from *guthi* as severe punishment. When a *guthiyar* or any household member of the *guthiyar* conducts inter-caste marriage, the respective wife who belongs from other caste/community is not accepted and the son/s are also not accepted by the *guthi*. According to traditional Newar caste system, Gubhaju and Bare belongs to high castes group of Newar Buddhist community. They not only restrict marriage with lower Newar castes, they also restrict marriage with other communities and even with high castes of Hindu Newar castes. *Guthi* excludes the member by the following actions:

- 1) By not conducting funeral ceremony and also by not providing *dewan* (a yellow shroud which is rotated among the members of the *guthi* showing their solidarity) at the time of funeral,
- 2) By not allowing the wife and son/s to enter Kwahpahdyah that eventually restrict the son/s from conducting the *chudakarma* ritual and,
- 3) By not allowing to participate in any *guthi* events such as *guthi* feast.

3.2 Traditional Funeral Ceremony

When a person is about to die, all the family members offer *argha jal* (water offered to deities in a conch shaped vessel) to the person. It is done with the belief that the person may have plenty of water in the next world when he/she goes after the death. Female members of the house, daughter-in-law or the daughter in absence of daughter-in-law purifies *sau bahn ila* (floor cleaned with a liquid made by the mixture of red mud, water and cow dung). Male house members shift the person above the purified ground and *palca mata* (a small clay pot in which cotton thread is dipped in oil is lightened) are placed on each sides of the shoulder and toe and an iron object is placed over the body so that the evil spirits will not be able to enter the body. The house members convey the information of death to *pahlah*. The *pahlah* then circulates the information to all the *guthiyar*, their *gwan* and funeral music playing group.

3.2.1 At Deceased House

As soon as the *guthiyar* get the message of death, the *guthiyar* (or any other male member from registered household can attend in place of *guthiyar* if he cannot attend due to any reason) gathers at the deceased house as quickly as possible. *Pahlah* takes *dewan* together with him. The other *guthiyar* takes the necessary materials for conducting funeral rituals such as *su kale* (bunch of straw), *pahn* (bamboo), *pulu* (bamboo mat), *swan mala* (garland), *abir* (red vermilion), *sindur* (blood red vermilion), *mo* (dust of rice paddy), *wa* (paddy), *jaki* (rice grain), *chhwo chun* (wheat flour), *tuyu kapa* (white cloth), *kachika* (cotton thread), long and short *si* (wood), *bhajan* (clay pot), *khola* (a container/ cup which is used in drinking *aela*, alcohol made from rice), *dhupayn* (incense stick), *hanthan* (seed of soapnut tree; scientific name "sapidus trifolatus"), *kau* (conch shell), *choka baji* (broken piece of beaten rice), *saduru* (cow milk), *hamwa* (sesame), *situ* (scientific name "cynodondactylon"; holy grass) etc. *Guthiyar* prepare and conduct all the necessary funeral rituals and cremation rituals.

In order to inform the neighbours about the death, *guthiyar* puts *su kale* and *bhajan* on the right side of the entrance of the house, which are later taken to cremation site to light the corpse. *Pahlah* places *dewan* beside the corpse. *Pulu* is placed on the ground. Above *pulu*, *tuyu kapa* is placed and above it the corpse is laid. The corpse is wrapped by *tuyu kapa*. It is then sewed by *kachika* and the needle in seven⁴ stitches so that the death body is firmly wrapped. This process of sewing is known as *duka pika*. A piece of gold is kept in the mouth and the mouth is covered by *khola*. The corpse is wrapped by *pulu* and finally it is tightened by *kachika*. The death body wrapped by *pulu* is placed on *kotah* (bamboo bier), which is made by *guthiyar*. On the top most *dewan* is placed and is tightened in *kotah* by *kachika*. Married daughters cleans the floor. Then the daughter-in-law throws deceased's clothes and other belongings (mattress, shoe, etc.) to *chwas*a (cross-road near house which is considered as funeral pit). This act informs the *chwas*a *ajima* (mother goddess) and the neighbours about death happened in the locality. They take corpse to cremation site after they return from *chwas*a.

3.2.2 On the Way to Cremation Site

A group playing funeral music *bhujah* (played by Jyapu caste) leads the funeral procession. If the person is above 50 years old *kah baja* (played by Jyapu caste) and *bhujah* musics are played in order to pay respect. *Gwan* carries *su*, woods and *bhajan* in which dried cow dung cake is burnt along the way. Deceased sons (*guthiyar* if necessary) follows carrying corpse. Male members of the family led by the son who lights the pyre follow the corpse. After that, *guthiyar*, relatives, neighbors and friends follow in the order. All the members follow the procession burning incense sticks in their hands. Caps, shoes or any leather items are not allowed to wear.

3.2.3 At Cremation Site

Gwan prepares pyre by piling the long and short woods in different layers. Family members conducts *lah twankegu* ritual. The son of the death person drips water dipped in *hamwa* and *situ* in the mouth of the corpse and then he lights the pyre and the other family members follows it serially. This is done with the belief that the person who is died to have plenty of water in the next world. When the pyre is ready, the corpse is taken out from the bier and make circle around the pyre for three times and then it is placed over, putting head towards south and leg towards north direction. *Dewan* is taken away from the corpse. Then a wood is lightened from the flame in *bhajan*. The son, holding fire in his hand walks around the corpse. After completing third round he bows to the corpse and lights the fire on the head of the corpse. When the corpse is put on fire, the music stops and the musician return from cremation site receiving their payment. When the corpse turns into ashes, an effigy of the deceased is made with the ash and bone. Two *hanthan* represents eyes, *kau* represents mouth and five heaps of *choka baji* are made to make other parts of the body. *Saduru* is poured on those heaps and *tantric puja* is conducted. This ends the duties of *guthiyar*. *Guthiyar* can return to their respective houses at this stage. *Gwan* disposes ash on river flowing near the cremation site.

Before leaving from cremation site, people wash their face and hands for purification. After they reach their houses again purification is conducted by washing eyes before entering the house. At the deceased house, for purification *palu* (ginger), *choka baji* along with key representing iron object is given. On the following day, the *guthiyar* visits the house of the bereaved family to present their condolences, this action is known as *bica wanegu*. From the second day onwards, the family members conduct all the death rituals.

Those *guthiyar* who are *phuki* (lineage brothers), along with the family members, observe death pollution for seven days during which they are restricted from many food items and religious practice. Within a year in different periods *shraddha* (ritual for deceased well being) is conducted and feasts are held in which relatives, friends and *guthiyar* are invited.

4. Modern Funeral *Guthi* of Gubhaju and Bare 'Sarvahit Sana Guthi'

4.1 Background

Gubhaju and Bare castes of Om bahah and Lagan of Kathmandu city who have conducted inter-caste marriage formed Sarvahit (welfare to all) Sana Guthi (funeral *guthi*). The traditional *guthi* do not accept the inter-caste marriages, due to which the wife who belonged to other caste/community and their son/s are not accepted in the *guthi*. This exclusion arose discrimination and humiliation of the member and their family members for conducting inter-caste marriage. Gubhaju and Bare of Om bahah and Lagan going through same sort of problems came together to establish a separate new funeral *guthi*, Sarvahit Sana Guthi, in 1972. It was founded with a motivation to overcome the challenges that many Newars experience for conducting inter-caste marriage and to bring changes in Newar society. There are thirty-nine *guthiyar* in 2013. The number of *guthiyar* is not constant from the year of its establishment until 2013. Some of the members have left *guthi*. The reasons behind leaving *guthi* are such as due to migration to another city, discontinuation of membership by younger generation etc.

4.2 Objectives

1. To secure the funeral ritual of their wife, children and other household members who have accepted the inter-marriage.
2. To secure the *chudakarma* ritual.
3. To fight against the discrimination and exclusion that a member experiences after conducting inter-caste marriage.
4. To establish a *guthi* which benefits and makes the members easy to participate in *guthi* activities.

4.3 Modern Funeral *Guthi*

The newly formed *guthi* performs their funeral ceremony, as same as they used to perform in their traditional funeral *guthi* which is mentioned above in section 3.2 of section 3. However, *guthi* has made several reforms to overcome the challenges and to become an example for the other *guthi* facing similar problems. Such as:

a) Made metal bier instead of using bamboo bier and circulate among the *guthiyar*.

Generally, funeral *guthi* uses bamboo for making bier. This is because, traditionally, every household used to have some bamboos at their house and at the time of funeral bamboos were collected from every households to make bier. But in recent years, bamboos are rarely used in daily life style and there is scarce availability of bamboos in the market. This is creating difficulty in all funeral *guthi* to buy bamboos for cremation. This has led many members to use hearse eventhough paying fine to *guthi*, for not following the rule of *guthi*. This is because preparation of bamboos consume time which delays funeral and cremation ceremony. So, people prefers to pay fine in the *guthi* to conduct the cremation quickly. This has not only affected the *guthi* tradition, but it has also affected in fading the culture of mutual aid. Simultaneously, the knowledge of making bier from bamboo sticks in younger generations is another problem been faced by funeral *guthi* when a death occurs. This not only limits the responsibility to those *guthiyar* who has the knowledge of bier, but it also creates disputes between the *guthiyar* who does regularly and those who do not do. Therefore, in order to avoid such complications and difficulties which *guthiyar* were facing in their traditional funeral *guthi* and which other funeral *guthi* were also facing, Sarvahit Sana Guthi changed the custom of using bamboo bier into metal bier. Metal bier was ordered to be as smiliar as bamboo bier that is made by bamboo. Metal biers are stored at *guthiyar*'s house rotationally and it is circulated when any death occur in *guthi*. This resolved the issue of searching for scarcely available bamboos in the market. Additionally, it decreased the time for making bier, it does not burden specific *guthiyar* for making bier and it also helps in sustaining the culture of mutual aid, which is one of the key element of *guthi* tradition.

b) Replace of *bhajan* with lighter for the fire at cremation site.

Bhajan is prepared with dried cow dung burning inside it. The reason for taking *bhajan* at cremation site is for the flame that is necessary to light up the wood for putting fire to the corpse. Since the motive behind taking *bhajan* is just for fire, *guthi* has replaced *bhajan* with lighter, which is easily available in the market at anytime, anywhere. The change has lessened the burden of preparing *bhajan* which needs to buy *bhajan*, and dried cow dung which is not easily available in the market.

c) Allow to wear cloth shoes during funeral procession.

Traditionally, it is not allowed to wear shoes or slippers by the *guthiyar* and family members while participating funeral procession. During old days, Kathmandu city was mainly populated by Newars which was comparatively less in population than now. The life styles of people were less materialistic, people used to mainly use the products that are naturally and easily available in their surrounding for their daily living and rituals. Now, the city is populated with multi-ethnic communities of Nepal and the population does not limit to ethnic groups of Nepal. Particularly after 1960s when the country was opened for the outsiders, migrations from neighbouring countries overcrowded the Kathmandu city. Due to increase in population with limited public services the Kathmandu city has become overly polluted. Thus, the custom of walking bare foot in funeral procession on the streets of Kathmandu is getting difficult. This has become one of the reasons for many *guthiyar* to not participate in funeral procession. To make a better environment for *guthiyar* to participate in *guthi* activities, *guthi* allowed the use of cloth shoes while participating in funeral procession.

d) Deceased household are not allowed to invite *guthiyar* in feasts related to death.

Different funeral rituals for deceased should be conducted by the family members in different periods especially in the first year after death. Traditionally, each rituals are followed by feasts for relatives, friends and *guthiyar*. Due to this tradition some economically poor *guthiyar* are facing difficulty in conducting feasts for large numbers of people. In order to lessen the economic burden especially, *guthi* has restricted the invitation of *guthiyar* for any feasts related to death.

e) Increased the number of members for conducting *guthi's* annual duties.

The *guthi's* annual tasks are performed with the cooperation of twelve selected *guthiyar*. Those *guthiyar* conducts all the *guthi* related activities including the task of *gwan*. Therefore, they do not have *gwan* from Jyapu caste for cremation as they used to have in their traditional *guthi*. The main responsibility of the *guthi's* annual tasks is given to four *guthiyar* who are called *pahlah*. Eight other *guthiyar* (four *guthiyar* who had conducted the task of *pahlah* in the last year and four *guthiyar* who are scheduled for the task of *pahlah* for the next year) assists *pahlah* to accomplish their tasks. Therefore, a team of twelve members cooperate each other to conduct annual *guthi* activities.

f) Rule for the quantity of *aela* during *guthi* feast

Generally, *guthi* are famous for quarrels during *guthi* feasts in which high amount of *aela* is consumed. Therefore, Sarvahit Sana Guthi has fixed the quantity of *aela* that is served during *guthi* feast in order to maintain peace in *guthi*.

5. Findings

Case of traditional Gubhaju and Bare funeral *guthi* of Om bahah and Lagan shows the unacceptance of all inter-caste marriages whether it is with high castes or with low castes or from any other communities. The life that is considered miserable after expulsion from funeral *guthi*, is not as miserable as it used to be many years ago. Traditionally, the number of inter-caste marriages use to occur in very less number hence, it could be easily recognized and get highlighted in the localities and due to less number of inter-caste marriages in the society, people did not have place to discuss and make a way to deal with the problems.

However, Gubhaju and Bare of Om bahah and Lagan has brought the change in the society with an attempt by establishing a new funeral *guthi* known as Sarvahit Sana Guthi, which is comprised of members who have been expelled from their former funeral *guthi* for conducting inter-caste marriage. Formation of new *guthi* by expelled members is a big step and a message for a change in the Newar society. Firstly, it shows the increase in number of inter-caste marriages due to modernization and globalization in the country. Secondly, it shows the unity of the people who are traditionally discriminated in the society due to inter-caste marriage to secure their identity in the society. The attempt has secured the funeral ceremony of the bride belonged from other caste/community and the son/s. It has also secured the initiation ritual of boys which was been restricted to conduct due to unallowance from entering Kwahpahdyah by conducting *chudakarma* ritual of male child at Chintamani Vihar.

It has also made many reforms in *guthi* for its sustainability. *Guthi* gives importance more to the fundamental principles of Newar funeral culture than just following the customs blindly.

Absence of *gwan* in Sarvahit Sana Guthi shows the change in Newar society where today, *gwan* does not just belong from Jyapu caste as it used to be traditionally. As shown in the case, *guthiyar* takes the charge of *gwan* tasks rotationally. Effort for lessening the burden of *pahlah* and for the knowledge transfer of Newar culture among younger generation are seen. *Guthi* makes a team of twelve members to conduct activities that not only increase manpower, it also helps in exchanging knowledge between *guthiyar*.

Using metal bier instead of bamboo bier shows change in life style of Newars where the storage of bamboos at people's house is getting less common, which resulted in scarcity of bamboo in the market. Less attachment with bamboo using life style has resulted the less knowledge of making bier for younger generation of Newars. Development of metal bier and circulating it among the *guthiyar* has made the funeral task quicker and easier.

Allowance of wearing cloth shoes during funeral procession has made people easy to participate in funeral procession and it has also increased the number of member's to join the procession. Use of lighter instead of taking *bhajan* during funeral procession has lessened the burden of buying and preparing *bhajan*. Making rule in serving *aela* during *guthi* feast has avoided quarrels during *guthi* feast which is not healthy for *guthi* that emphasizes cooperation and contribution of every members. Making rule of not inviting *guthiyar* in any feasts related to death has lessened extra economic burden and formalities to *guthiyar*.

Guthi has made the above stated reforms to decrease various burdens on *guthiyar*. This resulted healthy environment of *guthi* and to work in a group for certain purpose. However, it is to be noted that those modern changes are not made under the ignorance and negligence of *guthiyar* towards traditional values and beliefs of Newar culture. Indeed they are made securing the fundamental principles of funeral *guthi* functions and funeral rituals which are based on mutual aid. Hence, the changes do not impact negatively on the core principles of funeral *guthi* and its rituals, rather, it emphasizes friendly and healthy environment that *guthi* wants to maintain among the people in the same and/or nearby locality and it is also a demonstration to the traditional society for the changes that *guthi* needs to bring in Newar society.

6. Conclusion

Through out the history, *guthi* played an important role in people's life in Newar society in Kathmandu valley. The increasing number of inter-caste marriages due to the modernization not only effected the people, but also their traditional beliefs and values. Traditional funeral *guthi* in Om bahah and Lagan tries to reserve their status as social identity and do not easily make changes in rules of *guthi*. This has arose discrimination, humiliation and has also weakened the unity that *guthi* keeps among the members. Simultaneously, people's attitude towards their society and their customs are changing with the influence of modernization. This change is helping to enhance the culture of Newar society that is sustained through *guthi* i.e., religiously and socially. Things which were not even possible to think about is happening in the contemporary Newar society. This is discussed in the case study of traditional Gubhaju and Bare funeral *guthi* and modern Sarvahit Sana Guthi of Om bahah and Lagan of Kathmandu city.

On the one hand, this article limits its focus on the study of funeral *guthi* of Gubhaju and Bare castes of Om bahah and Lagan. Moreover, other limitation comprises unavailability of the statistical data of the focused castes. On the other hand, this study assists the readers to understand how modernization is influencing Newar beliefs, traditions and particularly their values regarding funeral rituals in Kathmandu city. Funeral *guthi* which marks people's caste status in Newar society, is playing a hidden but a crucial role in sustaining caste system in the society. This is because, the basic motivation of funeral *guthi* is to conduct funeral ceremony but its fundamental concept is made on the basis of caste system. The paper shows how funeral *guthi* plays central role in Newar society. Procedure of funeral process contributes in understanding of the role of the *guthi* and *guthiyar* in funeral ceremony. Additionally, the study also shows how funeral *guthi* and Newar society are in the process of transformation due to the influence of modernization. Many reforms have been made in modern *guthi* for the convenience of the members with the due understanding of their cultural meaning and also to demonstrate to the traditional society to bring changes in the society. Accordingly, modernization in Kathmandu city is bringing changes in both individual and community level of Gubhaju and Bare castes of Om bahah and Lagan.

This paper focuses only funeral *guthi* that is comprised of Gubhaju and Bare castes residing in Lagan and Om bahah settlements of Kathmandu, however, it is also necessary to study other funeral *guthi* of Newar castes to understand how funeral *guthi* of Newar society are influenced by modernization.

Endnotes

- ¹ A traditional Buddhist priest caste (Nepali 1965).
- ² A Buddhist caste, having traditional occupation as goldsmith and bronze workers (Nepali 1965).
- ³ A traditional cultivator caste (Nepali 1965)
- ⁴ Seven represents *sapta lok* (seven heavens).

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