Article

A Case of the Guthi System in Nepal: The Backbone of the Conservation and Management of the Cultural Heritage

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Abstract: *Guthi*, deeply rooted in the social, cultural, and economic fabric of Nepal, has traditionally managed temples, shrines, festivals, and heritage sites since the *Lichchhavi* era (400–750). Since 1960, however, this system has been challenged by government land reforms, which have impacted its influence on sustainable heritage conservation. Nevertheless, there is compelling evidence that land nationalization and the *guthi's* declining authority have harmed local heritage conservation. Nevertheless, the *guthi* system has endured, serving as an important informal means of heritage conservation and highlighting the adaptability of traditional institutions. These community-based trusts, originally established for social and religious purposes, have played a pivotal role in preserving cultural heritage for future generations. This article aims to demonstrate the central role of the *guthi* as the cornerstone of Nepal's efforts to conserve and manage both tangible and intangible cultural treasures. Using observational techniques, case studies, and a qualitative approach, it explores the historical evolution of heritage conservation through the lens of the *guthi*, taking into account subjective, valued, and constructed realities. This paper concludes by urging policymakers to recognize the significant contribution of indigenous systems such as the *guthi* system in achieving the backbone of sustainable heritage conservation and management.

Keywords: backbone; conservation and management; cultural heritage; *guthi* system

1. Introduction

Nepal's forefathers created cultural heritage to preserve Nepal's cultural identity and history. From the *Lichchhavi* era onwards, a plethora of civic, social, religious, and cultural institutions, known as *guthi*, emerged in Nepal to manage and preserve the nation's cultural heritage. These institutions were deeply rooted in ancient legal systems and cultural beliefs. However, during the *Lichchhavi* period, there were no specific guidelines for the systematic preservation of history [1–5]. The term "*guthi*" comes from the *Sanskrit* word "*gosthi*", which means "gathering" or "association", with a particular emphasis on religious and socio-cultural values [6,7]. A *guthi* is a collective formed by an individual or members of a family united by a common caste, patrilineal lineage, or specific geographical characteristics [8,9]. "*Guthis*" simply refers to the plural form of "*guthi*", which designates a variety of these trusts or organizations that are part of the Newari community living in the Kathmandu Valley. A *guthi* usually has a particular focus or performs a specific task, such as maintaining community buildings, planning festivals, maintaining temples, or providing social services [10–12].

According to Harvey [13], the lack of consensus on the definition of cultural heritage persists, despite its significant presence in academic inquiry, research, and media discussions of preservation [13–15]. "Conservation" includes actions to preserve the cultural significance of a site [16–19]. UNESCO distinguishes "heritage" from "cultural heritage", which refers to irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration, including monuments, architectural works, archaeological elements, inscriptions, and more [20–23].

In Europe, trusts, foundations, or government agencies often oversaw the management of heritage sites and sometimes owned the land or assets associated with them for the effective conservation of cultural heritage. However, the information available does not explicitly mention systems of land donation for heritage conservation dating back to the establishment of monuments [24]. In addition, many countries use public–private partnerships to preserve their cultural heritage. In these collaborations, organizations offer financial support in exchange for exclusive rights or benefits [25]. In Africa, heritage conservation and management often intersect with land or natural resources for the purpose of proper heritage conservation. However, Nepal's *guthi* system stands out for its distinctive approach to sustainability in heritage conservation and management. For example, community-based conservation strategies may involve local people owning or managing property in a way that supports both the conservation of cultural sites and their livelihoods [26–30].

Guthi is a longstanding framework rooted in social cooperation that aims to impart moral teachings, promote religious values, preserve traditional methods, and foster discipline. It introduces an ancient approach that effectively preserves history through authentic designs and local resources, and a technology approach that is relevant even in the absence of modern engineering education or technology. Through cooperative land ownership, *guthi* contributed to the development of both social and material wealth. It supported the maintenance of culturally important structures and artifacts while involving the local community in rituals and festivals [4,31,32]. The government's implementation of land nationalization policies since 1960 poses a significant threat to the essential functions of traditional community *guthis* [6]. This paper seeks to fill a current gap by highlighting the importance of ancient heritage conservation methods that show increased effectiveness through greater community involvement and the use of indigenous knowledge linked to financial aspects through land connections. This approach differs from the prevailing Nepalese trend in heritage conservation and management, as it relies on traditional Nepalese ancestral practices such as the *guthi* system.

The *Guthi* founders contributed property, often in the form of land, to ensure the enduring sustainability of the institution. For many generations, land was considered the most valuable and enduring asset, funding all of the organization's activities. As custodians of our cultural heritage, the *guthi* system oversees over "12,000" significant religious structures, about half of which are under its jurisdiction, according to Guthi Corporation records. The Corporation manages and preserves approximately 2300 government-registered monuments, while there are numerous other families, individuals, and organizational *guthi*. Under the Guthi Corporation Act of 1976, government-managed *guthis* are categorized as *Rajguthi* and take three forms: *Amanat guthi* (directly managed by the Guthi Corporation), *Chhut guthi* (supervised by the head of the shrine, appointed by the Guthi Corporation), and Private *guthi* (not under the supervision of the Guthi Corporation). *Rajguthi* refers to designated land or its income that is specifically earmarked for the maintenance of temples, riverbanks (*ghats*), or both. These funds support charitable endeavors, including aid to *Brahmins* and the underprivileged, under the wishes of the benefactors [9].

Nepal has an enduring cultural legacy left by its ancestors, but piecing together our rich heritage is challenging due to a lack of historical understanding. After the destruction of the Buddhist civilization at Kapilavastu in the late 6th century BC, a new civilization took root in Nepal. From literary and archaeological evidence, it's clear that various groups who migrated from northern India in Buddha's later days played a pivotal role in shaping Nepal's distinct civilization [2,33,34].

In Nepalese society, social ideals, interests, and preferences changed between 1950 and 1951. The introduction of democracy brought about significant developments that initiated the modernization of the nation in 1950. As a result, the inclination of individuals to invest surplus resources and savings in spiritual, cultural, and religious pursuits declined, leading to the diminishing influence of traditional institutions such as the *guthi*. During this period, our social goals, attitudes, and tastes evolved. The advent of democracy had a significant

impact on our established way of life and facilitated national modernization. Over time, people devoted fewer resources and savings to religious, cultural, and pious activities, contributing to the decline of long-standing institutions such as the *guthi* [2,9,35,36].

The primary objective of this study is to examine how the *guthi* system serves as a foundation/backbone for the conservation and management of the cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley. The specific objectives of this study are to preserve Nepal's cultural heritage sites, monuments, and traditions by encouraging community participation, providing financial support, and promoting indigenous knowledge within the *guthi* system.

2. Methodology

Qualitative research is a systematic and subjective approach to understanding human behavior, experiences, perspectives, and social phenomena. It involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as words, images, observations, and narratives, to explore complex phenomena in depth. Qualitative research seeks to uncover meanings, patterns, and relationships within the data, often focusing on the context and subjective interpretations of participants. It emphasizes flexibility, reflexivity, and interpretive analysis, allowing researchers to generate rich, descriptive insights into the phenomena under study. Qualitative research methods include techniques such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation, content analysis, and ethnography [37–39].

By conducting a thorough review of the existing literature, including historical documents, academic papers, and government reports, researchers aim to comprehend the historical development and functioning of the *guthi* system in Nepal. Fieldwork involves firsthand observation of *guthi* institutions, heritage sites, and community interactions, including attendance at ceremonies, meetings, and daily activities, to gain insight into how the *guthi* operate and manage their cultural heritage. Structured or semi-structured interviews are conducted with key stakeholders, such as *guthi* members, community leaders, government officials, and heritage conservation experts, while surveys may also be utilized to collect quantitative data on perceptions, attitudes, and practices related to the *guthi* system. Archival materials, such as documents, photographs, and maps, are examined to trace the historical development of *guthi* institutions, their role in heritage conservation, and their interactions with colonial and postcolonial governance structures. Ethnographic methods, including participant observation, informal interviews, and immersion in local traditions, are employed to understand the social dynamics, belief systems, and heritage conservation practices within *guthi* communities. Analysis of legal documents, government policies, and institutional records of *guthi* governance, land tenure, and cultural heritage management helps identify legal frameworks, challenges, and opportunities for conservation efforts. Collaborative research partnerships with local communities, academic institutions, and heritage organizations facilitate co-designing research agendas, sharing knowledge, and fostering mutual learning, ensuring that research results are relevant, accessible, and useful to stakeholders. Comparing the *guthi* system in Nepal with analogous traditional governance structures and heritage management approaches in other countries reveals commonalities, differences, and valuable insights, thereby enhancing understanding and guiding policy proposals. The use of various research methods, such as observational techniques, thematic analysis, open-ended questionnaires, key informant interviews, and qualitative approaches, enables scholars to gain a holistic understanding of the *guthi* system's role in heritage conservation and management. A significant amount of secondary data was collected from the Scopus database using keywords from journal titles and abstracts to identify relevant articles, as detailed in Table 1. This resource serves as a comprehensive repository, collecting materials essential for in-depth research efforts, whether general or specialized [40].

Table 1. Keywords used in literature research.

Research Area	Keywords
Cultural heritage	Religious, social, cultural, and financial
Guthi system	Use of indigenous technology, conservation, and management during the *Lichchhivi*, *Malla*, and *Shah* eras.
Policies	National and international

The *guthi* system plays a pivotal role in the protection and monitoring of cultural heritage, and a comprehensive search identified 96 relevant publications for systematic review.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Function of Guthi

The Guthi Corporation Act of 1976 defines a "*guthi*" as a socio-religious institution established by a philanthropist through the donation of movable or immovable property, income-producing assets, or funds. This dedication is for the support of shrines, festivals, temples, construction, maintenance of various facilities, or religious and philanthropic purposes [41].

A body known as the *guthi* fulfills social and religious duties within *Newar* society. The functions of the *guthi* are intertwined with the life cycle events of clan groups and various aspects of social, religious, and cultural life. It has been emphasized that the *guthi* plays a crucial role in ensuring financial stability within the community, as asserted by Tiwari. "*The Lichchhavi inscriptions illustrate the well-established practice of managing, operating, and preserving religious, social, and cultural elements in urban areas. These inscriptions, found in places such as Patan within the valley, highlight the gosthi system—a corporate organization sustained by continuous land grants or fixed deposits. Both government agencies and private individuals established these entities to ensure the continued operation and maintenance of community-serving elements and activities. This was done to protect them from future financial challenges or decline. The permanence in both institutional and financial aspects ensured their continuity and evolved into the present-day guthi system*" [42,43].

According to Pant and Pant [44] and Pant and Shrestha [45], each inhabitant of the town joins community associations known as *guthi*, which is one of the *Newar* community's most significant characteristics. *Guthi* are organizations set up to keep an eye on communal, social, and religious events, including musical performances, ancestral worship, burial ceremonies, and caring for and performing daily rituals for temples and their upkeep [44,45]. The Newar community in Nepal is an indigenous ethnic group with a distinct culture, language, and traditions, primarily residing in the Kathmandu Valley and surrounding areas [46–48].

Tandon [32] draws on Nepalese history to show how accustomed Nepalese society is to the Nepali model of trust, a cooperative organization devoted to communal activities, both religious and secular, with distributions of property intended to generate income. The first records of *guthi* date back to the reign of King Manadeva in 578 A.D. and were discovered in inscriptions at Changunarayan. This system has persisted and continued to function through time, despite various difficulties. Tandon goes on to say that *guthi* is the permanent endowment of assets with the potential to generate income for certain charitable, religious, or altruistic endeavors [32].

Guthis was originally established to promote public welfare through religious endeavors such as the erection of idols, the construction of temples, and the performance of rituals. Currently, *guthi* lands that have economic value are attracting interest from buyers or cultivators who wish to convert them into *raikar* property. *Raikar* property (land) tenure was a type of land ownership in which families or individuals had the legal right to cultivate and use land. There is ongoing uncertainty about the merits of selling or converting all *guthi* holdings in the Kathmandu Valley and Nepal into *raikar* lands. Rumors are circulating in the Valley that the government may soon end dual land ownership [4,9,32,49,50].

Table 2 provides a brief overview of the historical development of the *guthi* system in Nepal, highlighting its important role in preserving cultural riches throughout the ages [10,51–57].

Table 2. Brief overview of the historical development of the *guthi* system in Nepal.

Period	Development of the guthi System	Contribution to Cultural Heritage Conservation
Ancient period (from 800 BC to 300 AD)	The emergence of the *guthi* system with roots in religious and social practices.	Initial role in supporting religious ceremonies, maintaining sacred spaces, and sustaining local traditions.
	Primarily focused on temple upkeep and religious rituals.	
Medieval period (from 880 to 1769)	Expansion of *guthis* to encompass broader community welfare activities.	*Guthis* plays a pivotal role in social and economic development, managing land, and contributing to the well-being of the community.
	Diversification of *guthis* into various sectors like education and health.	Participation in education, healthcare, and infrastructure development shapes the socio-cultural fabric of the community.
Shah dynasty rule (from 1769 to 1846)	Formalization and legal recognition of *guthi* practices.	Integration of *guthis* into the administrative and economic structures of the state.
	Guthis gained prominence in land management and revenue collection.	Key contributors to revenue generation for the state, supporting cultural and religious institutions.
Rana dynasty rule (from 1846 to 1951)	Further institutionalization with increased control by the ruling elite.	*Guthis* continues to play a significant role in land management and contribute to state functions.
	Some *guthis* face challenges as power dynamics shift during political changes.	
Mid-20th century	Social and political changes impact the *guthi* system.	Some *guthis* dissolve or undergo modifications, facing challenges in the changing socio-political landscape.
	Dissolution of certain *guthis* during political reforms.	
Post-1950s	Political changes influence the *guthi* system.	Ongoing challenges and adaptations as the *guthi* system navigates the evolving socio-economic and political environment of modern Nepal.
	Some *guthis* continue traditional roles, while others face challenges.	
21st century	Renewed interest in cultural heritage preservation leads to *guthi* revitalization.	*Guthis* actively involved in heritage conservation, balancing tradition with contemporary needs.
	Integration of *guthis* into broader heritage conservation strategies.	Emphasis on sustainable practices, community engagement, and the preservation of cultural heritage in modern Nepal.
Present	*Guthis* continues to evolve, facing challenges and opportunities in modern Nepal.	Ongoing efforts to strike a balance between tradition and contemporary needs, ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage for future generations.

The detail of the contribution of the conservation and management of the cultural heritage of Nepal through the *guthi* system are given in the following ways [3,10,12,36,58,59]:

Temple and monument preservation: *Guthis* often take on the responsibility of maintaining temples, monasteries, and historical landmarks, playing an important role in preserving their architectural and artistic heritage.

Cultural celebrations: *Guthis* organizes and sponsors cultural festivals and events that are crucial to preserving ancient customs, rituals, and artistic expressions. These events serve as a bridge to pass on cultural traditions to future generations.

Education and cultural awareness: Many *guthis* are involved in educational initiatives, supporting schools and institutions that teach traditional arts, crafts, and religious practices. This promotes awareness of the importance of cultural heritage among younger generations.

Community development: *Guthi*-managed funds often support community development projects that include infrastructure improvements, health care, and social welfare. This holistic approach indirectly supports heritage conservation by empowering the community.

Resource sustainability: Certain *guthis* oversee land, forests, and natural resources, implementing sustainable practices to actively conserve the environment. These efforts are critical to protecting the surroundings of heritage sites.

Guardianship of sacred sites: *Guthis* often serve as guardians of revered sites and artifacts, tasked with protecting these areas, maintaining reverence, and preventing unauthorized activities or intrusions.

3.2. Contribution of the Guthi System to Cultural Heritage Conservation

Since the *Lichchhavi* period, the Nepalese ancestors have developed their own methods of heritage conservation. However, the traditional *guthi* system has faced contemporary challenges. Ongoing discussions focus on modernization and regulation to increase transparency, accountability, and adaptability to changing social and economic conditions. Below, detailed descriptions of various Nepalese eras highlight the intricate contributions of the *guthi* system. Below are explanations of different Nepalese eras with very minute works by the *guthi* system [11,12,60,61]:

3.2.1. Lichchhavi Period

The *Lichchhavi* era (400–750) marked an era of exceptional tranquility, prosperity, and cultural progress. It was during this time that the *guthi* system, a distinctive approach to conservation, emerged. The earliest written records mentioning the *guthi* system date back to the *Lichchhavi* period. The *Panchali*, a council of monks and village priests, also existed during this period [62]. The inscription on the *Chabahil* chaitya, believed to date from the reign of the *Lichchhavi* king *Manadeva I* (5th century AD), records the donation of arable land. This land was not only for the daily worship at the Chaitya but also to support the *Bhikshu Sangha*, the group of monks who perform these rituals. Similarly, King *Jayalambha* allotted land to ensure the continued worship of the *Jayaswor Shiva linga* that he had dedicated. An inscription at Pashupati in 491 mentions the worship of the deity on certain days, using the *Sanskrit* term *karana puja* for occasional worship. The inscription emphasizes the importance of sustainability with the phrase "*yanarthandattam ksheyaniyam*". King *Manadeva I's* inscription at *Pashupati Chhatrachandeshwor* mentions a donation of land for deity worship and emphasizes the donor's explicit instructions to ensure its longevity and proper care. Remarkable for its warning against the selfish use of the *guthi*, this inscription underscores the responsibilities associated with its use (Bajracharya, 1996). A *Bharavi* inscription in *Mangal Bazar* records the construction of a water tap and the provision of land for ongoing funding to maintain it [63–65].

Shivadev Amshuvarma's Lele inscription of 604 mentions the *guthi* and shows different types: *Brahma gosthi* (members associated with the *Brahmin* community), *Pradeepa gosthi* (lighting lamps in temples), *Paniya gosthi* (providing water to remote areas), *Malla Youddha gosthi* (managing entertainment), *Dhup gosthi* (managing incense), *Indra gosthi* (overseeing the festival of god *Indra*), *Baditra gosthi* (managing music), *Archa gosthi* (carving images), and *Archaniya gosthi* (managing worship). These *gosthi* were initially divided into two types: the first managed by family members and the second by a collective of individuals from the same clan, similar to the later division into *ghar guthi* and institutional *guthi* [2,64].

Narendradev, a *Lichchhavi* monarch, noted in an inscription that the *guthi* of local users was responsible for the maintenance and cleaning of the temple, funded entirely by the proceeds of donated land. The *Brahmins* and *Pashupat* were supported by the surplus funds. This arrangement fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community for its heritage. The Acharyas of the *Vamsha Pashupat* sect were entrusted with

the management, maintenance, and restoration of the *Shrishivadeveshwor Mahadev* temple, using the entire income from the donated land. Here are key facets of the *guthi* system that made it highly effective for conservation during the *Lichchhavi* era [5,64]:

Community ownership and responsibility: The *guthi* system is based on community ownership and accountability. This means that every member of the *guthi* has a stake in its prosperity and shares responsibility for maintaining the assets under the *guthi's* care.

Financial stability: Supported by membership fees, user fees, and investment income, the *guthi* system ensures a steady cash flow. This secure funding enables the *guthi* to reliably cover maintenance and repair costs.

Adaptability: The *guthi* system demonstrates flexibility by adapting to circumstances. For example, when guarding a temple, it can modify its activities to meet the needs of the community, such as organizing festivals or providing religious instruction.

The *guthi* system stands out as a unique and effective approach to heritage conservation. Its continued use in preserving Nepal's cultural riches today is a testament to the innovation and forward thinking of the *Lichchhavi* era.

3.2.2. Malla Period

Nepal reached its cultural and architectural zenith during the *Malla* period (1200–1768). This period witnessed the preservation of various cultural sites such as temples, monasteries, stupas, water facilities, and irrigation systems through the *guthi* approach. Evidence of the presence of this system during the *Malla* or medieval period is evident in numerous inscriptions from that era. In addition, records from the late *Malla* period refer to several *guthis*, highlighting their importance in the medieval social landscape, including the *Guthilok, Gosthisayeba, Gosthi Samuhana, Chintayak Gosthi, Desh Samuchchayena, Ngakuri Dharma Samuha, Panch Samuha, Chaturdashi Guthi Samuha, Dharma Gosthi, Sankranti Guthi Samuha*, and *Sanath Guthi Samuha* [66,67]. In addition, the *Panchamahapatak* oath included the *guthi* land grant among its topics, along with five heinous crimes, including the murder of *Brahmins* or children, adultery, and theft. Most inscriptions emphasize a deep commitment to preserving monuments and historical sites for posterity. In addition, the community was warned that anyone caught stealing land donated by the *guthi*, whether by themselves or others, would face eternal damnation in hell [66,67].

According to the 1172 Valtol Lalitpur inscription, *Lichchhavi* customs persisted through the medieval era, especially the practice of safeguarding and maintaining cultural artifacts. The inscription credits *Jayachandra*, a wise man, with the construction of a resting place, a water spring called *Tutedhara* or *Jaladroni*, and a guest house (*Pati*). Jayachandra contributed funds for the roof of the guesthouse and the maintenance of the road. The locals then requested *Agnishala* to use the remaining *guthi* funds for the restoration of the *Dakshinvihara Thambu Shribramhapuristhan* monastery, according to a 1403 inscription from Thambutol Lalitpur [68]

During the *Malla* period, the *guthi* system exhibited significantly higher effectiveness compared to the *Lichchhavi* period. This was influenced by several factors, including [12,69]:

The expansion of the Newar community: The indigenous *Newar* community of the Kathmandu Valley traditionally managed the *guthi* system, and their growth in numbers and influence during the *Malla* era directly affected the size and quantity of *guthis.*

Rise of urbanism: During the *Malla* era, the Kathmandu Valley experienced a surge in urbanization. As individuals sought to display their growing wealth and status by constructing temples and monasteries, the demand for cultural objects increased. The *guthi* system, known for financing and overseeing the maintenance of these buildings, became the perfect solution to meet this demand.

Innovations in technology: During the *Malla* era, new technologies such as improved stone-cutting and brickmaking emerged. These advances made it easier to build more elaborate and durable heritage structures. The *guthi* system's ability to employ these innovative methods played a key role in ensuring the longevity of the structures it administered.

In essence, the *guthi* system contributed significantly to the preservation of cultural heritage during the *Malla* era. Numerous temples, monasteries, and stupas in the Kathmandu Valley exist today because of this system, which facilitated their preservation and construction during this period.

3.2.3. Shah (Modern) Period

The *guthi* system of safeguarding cultural treasures continued throughout the Shah's era (1768–present) but underwent specific changes in its implementation. While it originated in the *Lichchhavi* period and continued through the *Malla* era, no official *guthi* offices were established at that time. The *Shah* era marked the introduction of formalized *guthi* and government institutions dedicated to heritage management. The establishment of the *Guthi Janch Kachahari* occurred during King Prithvi Narayan Shah's unification of Nepal in 1769 and was responsible for overseeing the *guthi* within the *Newar* communities. Throughout the Shah era, the *guthi* land system established by the *Malla* rulers remained intact [2,4,9,32,70].

The *Chhenbhadel Adda*, responsible for the preservation of monuments, was officially established in 1798 during the reign of King Rana Bahadur Shah. However, its informal existence dates back to the *Malla* era in Nepalese culture and was formally recognized and established under the *Shah* dynasty [2,4,9,32,50,70].

Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana established the *Guthi Bandovasta Adda* (Management Office), replacing the *Guthi Janch Kachahari*, which was responsible for maintaining records of *guthi* land during their rule. In addition, the Guthi Corporation was established under the Guthi Corporation Act 1976, recognizing the continued existence of the *guthi* system since ancient times. Notably, the increased involvement of the state in the management of the *guthi* system marked a significant historical shift, influenced by various factors, including [2,4,32]:

Unification of Nepal: This led to a greater degree of central control over all aspects of society, including the *guthi* system.

Growth of the bureaucracy: The *Shahs* created a large bureaucracy to administer their kingdom. This bureaucracy included a department that was responsible for overseeing the *guthi* system.

Involvement of the Newar community: During the Shah period, the *Newar* community, historically responsible for managing the *guthi* system, declined in size and influence, creating a power gap that was filled by the state. As a result, the *guthi* system became increasingly centralized and bureaucratic, with both positive and negative consequences for heritage conservation.

3.3. Newar, Heritage, and Guthi

Historian Baburam Acharya suggests that the terms "*Nevar*", "*Neval*", and "*Nevah*" share a common origin, "*Nepal*", linking the etymology of "*Newar*" to the name of Nepal. Many believe that the Newar community were the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. They stand out as a distinct cultural group in Nepal, speaking a language formally referred to as Nepal *Bhasa* but commonly known as Newari [52]. Contrary to popular belief, the *Newars* are diverse, with most practicing Buddhism, Hinduism, or both. During the *Lichchhavi* and *Malla* reigns, *Nepal Mandala* operated under a system in which community involvement shaped the affairs of the state, facilitated by *guthi*—a form of self-government. The *guthi* system has played different roles within *Newar* society and has evolved into different types. They are generally classified into three groups based on the goals or purposes of each *guthi* [6,7,71–73]:

- Organizing ceremonial events, religious festivals, caste gatherings, workshops, music, maintenance of water systems, maintenance of rest houses, roads, and canals, and other initiatives;
- Activities related to the deceased, including managing funerals and related tasks;
- Focusing solely on religious activities.

In the *Newar* community; *guthis* often unite groups based on caste or family ties, although this is not universal. Sometimes they're formed solely based on geographic proximity [6,74,75]. As documented in the literature, these festivals and rituals continue in the very temples, shrines, public spaces, and traditional venues they've occupied for centuries. Temples, monuments, stairways, chaityas, courtyards, and stages remain central spaces where art and human interaction converge. In the *Newar* culture, the *guthi* system primarily facilitates religious and social engagements [76,77].

Cultural heritage encompasses both its products and its ongoing process, providing societies with a rich legacy inherited from the past, created in the present, and passed on for the benefit of the future. Crucially, it encompasses not only tangible aspects but also natural and intangible elements. However, our diverse creativity reminds us that these treasures are fragile and irreplaceable. Therefore, policies and development approaches that protect and celebrate their diversity and distinctiveness are crucial, because once lost, they cannot be recovered [72,78–81]. Today, cultural heritage is intertwined with the critical global issues facing humanity, including climate change, natural disasters (such as biodiversity loss or ensuring access to safe water and food), community conflicts, education, health, migration, urbanization, marginalization, and economic disparities. Therefore, cultural heritage is seen as critical to promoting peace and sustainable social, environmental, and economic progress [82].

In Kathmandu, festivals are held almost daily, and many buildings serve as sacred shrines. Festivals, known as *jatras*, are deeply woven into daily life here, attracting large local audiences and following the lunar calendar. Each festival has its own purpose and style of celebration. Traditional *Newari* music includes sacred, devotional, seasonal, and folk songs, accompanied by various classical instruments. Various dances, often depicting deities, form an important part of these rituals and festivals. Recognized for its rich cultural, historical, social, and economic facets, Kathmandu Valley is revered as a vibrant city. The local *guthi* communities play a pivotal role in managing these traditions, underscoring the crucial role of the *guthi* in preserving this living heritage.

Guthi activities often involve the utilization of caste and regional structures. Until recent decades, a significant portion of employment in Nepal was based on caste [6,83]. In the past, people had surnames that reflected their occupation, such as carpenter, farmer, priest, or goldsmith. While these names may still signify past occupations, modern times allow individuals to pursue any profession of their choosing. Although many live outside the historic city walls of the Kathmandu Valley, the *guthi* continue to maintain family customs. Amidst geographic and occupational shifts based on caste, the *guthi* system has remained largely consistent, with individuals maintaining their distinct castes and fulfilling their responsibilities accordingly. Numerous *guthis* required members to perform specific duties for social acceptance. For example, the *sana guthi* administered funeral rites, while the *twa guthi* taught music to young men and helped them integrate into the community. Due to the strict nature of these *guthis* and the modern, independent lifestyles of younger generations, many are distancing themselves from these traditions. Although some *guthis* continue to maintain substantial membership, several others are adapting their strict membership criteria to the changing times [11,12].

Donations served a variety of purposes, from minor rituals such as offering betel nuts to temples to organizing major celebrations. Believed to bestow blessings on families for seven generations, these donations reflected a deep religious commitment. In times of political turmoil, endowments acted as a deterrent against land encroachment, a serious violation of the *guthi*. Despite the absence of explicit participant obligations or compensation, the *guthi* system persisted for generations. Each *guthi* recognized his or her responsibility for organizing events or maintaining temples. While some *guthi* have disappeared, the dynamics within these groups continue to evolve. Notable changes occurred around 1769 when the Malla kingdoms allied with the Shah dynasty, reshaping *guthi* practices. Studies underscore a deep interrelationship between *Newar* communities, heritage, and the

guthi system, with each caste maintaining its *guthi* to preserve traditions, culture, art, and architecture [4].

3.4. Heritage Conservation Responsibilities Pre- and Post-Establishment of the Guthi Corporation

Before the establishment of Guthi Corporation, the overall management and operation of the entire Kathmandu Valley's monuments/heritage were managed by 15 different offices under the different Valley Regional Commissioner and District Offices in the Kathmandu Valley. Each *guthi* oversees one or more monuments, such as temples, *Sattals*, *Patis*, and *Dharmashala*. Each of these monuments has its own *guthi*, which uses donated land to generate financial resources. All tangible and intangible activities are supported by the income generated from the respective *guthi* lands. In cases where a *guthi* lacks donated land, its members are responsible for managing financial resources to support its activities [9,41]. These activities illustrate how roles and responsibilities serve as keys to unlocking doors. Thus, all *guthis* have served as the backbone of Nepal's cultural heritage.

Currently, there are about 2300 state-run monuments registered in the Guthi Corporation among the "12,000" *guthi* monuments. Among them are *Amanat guthi*, which is run by the Guthi Corporation, and *Chhut guthi*, which is run by the respective *Matha* [9]. Based on the records of Guthi Corporation, there are 69 districts with different types of *guthi* lands, monasteries, temples, *pati*, *pauwas*, and ponds of different types. Similarly, there are 159 ponds, 647 pati *pauwas*, and 717 temples. *Rajguthi* is present in 650, 301, and 161 *Rajguthi* in the districts of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur, respectively. There are 1282 *Jatras* in Kathmandu, 309 in Bhaktapur, and 422 in Lalitpur, all under the supervision of the Guthi Corporation. *Guthi Raitan's* designated land is slated for transfer to Guthi Corporation solely as the landowner, comprising "315,472" ropani in the hills and "62,256" bighas in the Terai. Land categorized as *guthi Adhinastha*, designated for payment to the *guthi* as *Mohi*, encompasses "243,607" ropani in the hills and 2196 bighas in the Terai. *Guthi Tainathi* land, entirely owned by the corporation, comprises 2911 ropani in the hills and 1878 bighas in the *Terai* region [9,41,84].

Whenever possible, Guthi Corporation aligns its activities with the principles of the guthi system to preserve and manage *Jatras* and festivals (Figure 1). The records of the corporation [9] present the main intangible heritage list in Appendix A and explore the function with the help of *guthis* as a case study. In the Kathmandu Valley, the *guthi* system is crucial to the planning and execution of festivals like *Mela* and *Jatra*. The goals and importance of the festivals in the Kathmandu Valley for the preservation and administration of cultural assets are as follows [2,9,85]:

Cultural value: The rich legacy, customs, and traditions of the Kathmandu Valley are celebrated throughout its festivals, which have great cultural value. They preserve and promote cultural identity by offering a venue for the display of traditional dance, music, art, and crafts.

Religious importance: Many festivals in the Kathmandu Valley have religious roots and are celebrated to honor deities, gods, and goddesses. Devotees participate in complex rituals, prayers, and gifts throughout these festivals in the hopes of receiving blessings, protection, and spiritual fulfillment.

Community bonding: Celebrations serve as occasions to bring families, friends, and communities together. They provide opportunities for social gatherings, reunions, and interactions that foster a sense of unity, solidarity, and camaraderie among people of diverse backgrounds.

Tourism and economy: The Kathmandu Valley's festivals draw visitors from all over the world, which boosts the local economy considerably. Festival-related visitor inflows strengthen tourism-related industries, including lodging, dining, travel agencies, and gift stores, promoting job creation and economic expansion.
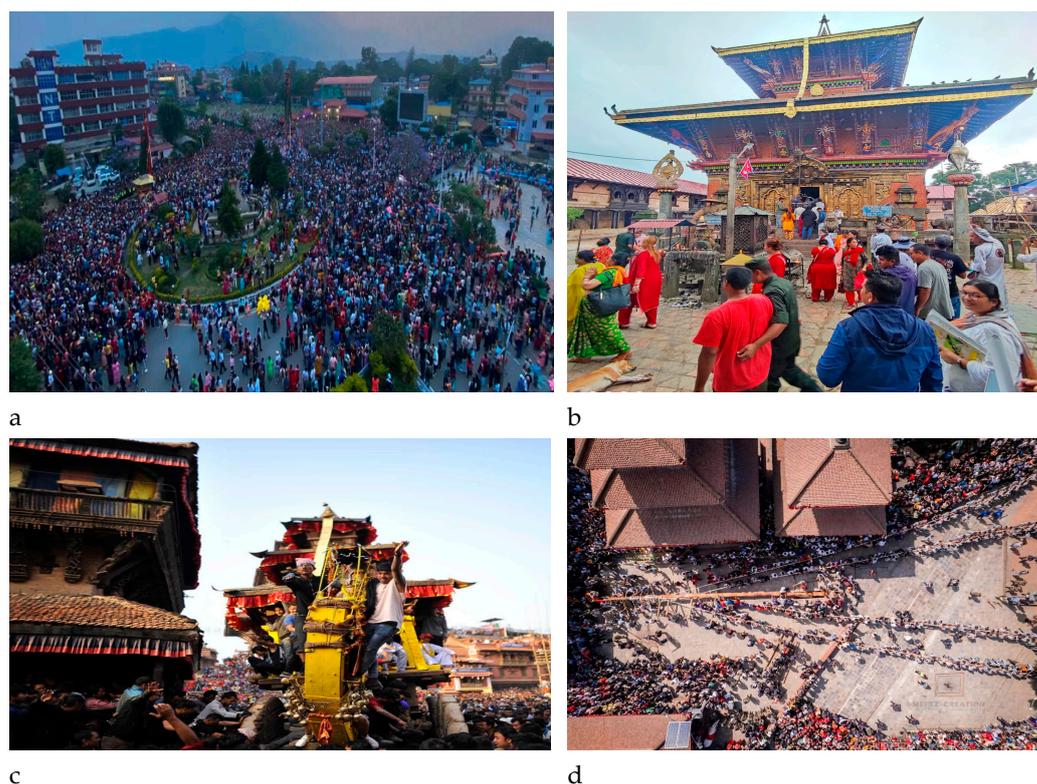
Figure 1. Major festivals in Kathmandu Valley (Source: Researcher field study January 2022–October 2023).

Entertainment and recreation: Both residents and tourists may enjoy entertainment and recreational opportunities during festivals. Both participants and onlookers may enjoy and be entertained by the colorful parades, lively processions, traditional performances, cultural exhibits, and folk games that are included.

Spiritual fulfillment: Attending festivals is a common way for devotees to feel connected to their faith and their spiritual side. It reinforces their religious practices and beliefs by providing a means of expressing thanks, reverence, and devotion to celestial creatures.

Heritage conservation: In the Kathmandu Valley, festivals play a role in the preservation and conservation of intangible cultural heritage. They provide channels for transferring customs, values, and knowledge from one generation to the next, preserving and advancing cultural traditions.

In the Kathmandu Valley, festivals (such as *Jatra*, which are religious processions or chariot festivals, and *mela*, which are fairs or gatherings) serve a variety of purposes and have many cultural, religious, social, economic, and recreational aspects. They not only draw tourists and promote cross-cultural interaction, but they also play a critical role in defining the character, unity, and vibrancy of communities. Some of the festivals are presented below with their activities:

Figure 1a explains the people gathering during the final *Rato Machhindranath Bhoto Jatra* at Jawalakhel Lalitpur. All the activities during the period of this chariot, including all the *guthi* members. It is the longest street festival (six months) in Kathmandu Valley as well as in Nepal.

Figure 1b represents that different *guthi* communities along with pilgrims are busy with the rituals at Changunarayan temple, Bhaktapur. Which is an important celebration of that area as well as Kathmandu Valley.

Figure 1c shows the different *guthiyar*, local communities, and pilgrims involved in the operation of *Bisket Jatra* Bhaktapur.

Figure 1d presents the involvement of guthiyar, guthi communities, and pilgrims in the running of Indrajatra (*Lingo dhalne*) at *Basantapur* Kathmandu. The primary goals of these festivals are in social, religious, and cultural dimensions. The following are the main

goals of Indrajatra [86]. In the early days of the *guthi* system, the focus was on conserving and managing monuments with the income from *guthi* lands, which serve as a perpetual source of income for Nepal's cultural heritage. Unfortunately, approximately 65% of the *guthi* lands have been taken over by various government and non-government agencies without the consent of the Guthi Corporation. Based on the records maintained by the Guthi Corporation under the Guthi Corporation Act of 1976, the unauthorized use of these lands by the Nepalese government has resulted in outstanding compensation of over thirty-five billion rupees. However, the compensation remains unresolved. This outstanding sum, combined with limited revenues and escalating maintenance costs, has created a difficult situation. As a result, the Guthi Corporation faces significant obstacles in its ability to effectively preserve and manage state-owned monuments [9,49].

The Kathmandu Valley is the most densely populated urban region and one of the fastest-growing urban clusters in South Asia [87]. The diversity of guthi types throughout history, the impact of government policies, and the evolving interpretations of the term *guthi* present challenges to their classification. However, for this article, *guthi* communities will be categorized into three groups based on ownership and management: (a) family-level *guthi*, (b) private/community *guthi*, and (c) public *guthi* (state-run or *Rajguthi*). Family-level *guthis* are managed by specific families, while decisions within private *guthis* involve discussions among senior *guthi* members [5,6,83].

In each scenario, the administration of the *guthi* falls under the purview of a select group known as the *guthiyar*. Designated by specific castes or communities, *guthiyars* are responsible for overseeing *guthi* grants, which often involve mystical or confidential rituals in addition to the religious and charitable duties mentioned in the *guthi* land grants. The main difference between *guthiyars* and temple officials lies in their roles: while the latter handle and execute the assigned *guthi* tasks, *guthiyars* focus solely on administrative and managerial aspects [52,88–90]. *Guthiyars* are responsible for collecting rent, selling goods, and procuring supplies needed for religious rituals. They also oversee ongoing *guthi* events, maintain financial records, handle surplus funds, and facilitate the maintenance of structures such as temples and monuments. Public-level *guthis* involve a wider range of caste groups in management [11]. Often, the Guthi Corporation has nationalized public *guthis* under the Guthi Corporation Act of 1976. Thus, *guthis* can be described as corporations formed for the establishment and maintenance of charitable and religious institutions, including temples, monasteries, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and homes, along with the observance of religious rites and social traditions [91].

The link between land ownership and *guthis* is still strong for proper conservation. Historically, royalty and villagers have donated money, land, and various possessions to *guthis* seeking spiritual liberation for seven generations [6,92]. Donating land to the *guthi* was highly valued and considered a social status symbol. In addition, due to the seriousness of confiscating *guthi* land, such donations have been used throughout Nepal's history, especially in times of political turmoil, to prevent unilateral state seizure of property. *Guthi* trusts were established to provide financial stability for successors. They earmarked a portion of the land's income for charitable and religious purposes, while the rest supported the donor's family and discouraged future generations from selling the property. In cases where the endowment was financial, the accrued interest was used for religious and charitable obligations. In particular, this included the use of the unpaid labor of cultivators and the collection of rents on goods essential to the prescribed *guthi* duties [93,94].

In addition, the *guthi* system promoted economic stability by involving the local community in the cultivation of the land and by providing skilled laborers, such as masons and carpenters, for restoration and conservation tasks, thus maintaining and preserving valuable skills essential to the conservation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. As described in the previous definition, the continuity of the *guthi* depended on their access to land. The expansion of religious and charitable groups in the Kathmandu Valley continues to be significantly influenced by these same endowments. By guaranteeing perpetual ownership, prohibiting alienation, ensuring irrevocability, and granting tax

exemptions, *guthi* land ownership became a method for the state to protect religion and ensure a steady, non-transferable flow of funds for various endeavors. These activities included the construction and maintenance of Hindu temples, Buddhist monasteries, rest houses, bridges, roads, libraries, schools, wells, drinking water facilities, and religious institutions [6,54,75,83,95].

4. Results and Discussion

According to this study, the *guthi* system in Nepal has played a pivotal role in the conservation and management of the cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley. The various results were presented first, followed by a discussion segment:

Preservation of cultural heritage: The *guthi* system has been instrumental in protecting and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley. Through its traditional management practices, it has helped maintain temples, monuments, water spouts, rest houses, and other cultural assets.

Community engagement: *Guthis* has promoted community engagement and participation in heritage conservation efforts. Local communities often play an active role in the management and maintenance of heritage sites under the auspices of *guthis*, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in their cultural heritage.

Intergenerational knowledge transfer: The *guthi* system facilitates the transmission of traditional knowledge and skills related to heritage conservation from one generation to the next. This ensures the continuity of traditional crafts and techniques that are essential to the maintenance of cultural assets.

Balancing tangible and intangible heritage: While *guthis* have traditionally focused on the conservation of tangible heritage such as buildings and monuments, they also contribute to the preservation of intangible heritage associated with rituals, festivals, and community traditions. This holistic approach ensures the comprehensive protection of the Kathmandu Valley's cultural heritage.

Resilience to external pressures: Despite facing challenges such as nationalization reforms and financial constraints, the *guthis* have demonstrated resilience and adaptability. They have continued to operate informally in many areas, sustaining heritage conservation efforts through community-driven initiatives and resource mobilization.

Contributing to sustainable development: The *guthis* conservation and management activities contribute to the sustainable development of the Kathmandu Valley. By preserving cultural heritage, they support tourism, cultural identity, and economic opportunities for local communities.

In essence, the *guthi* system is a critical foundation for the conservation and management of the Kathmandu Valley's cultural heritage. It represents a distinctive fusion of traditional guardianship, community involvement, and sustainable approaches, even amidst socio-economic hurdles in heritage conservation, characteristic of the Nepali model exemplified by the *guthi* system.

From the point of discussion; the *guthis* power has decreased as a result of the nationalization process. However, *guthis* continue to exist and function informally across many domains, producing noteworthy benefits for the preservation of cultural heritage. Smaller artifacts and intangible heritage were mainly disregarded, even though the nationalization efforts were primarily focused on protecting physical and principally large-scale historic artifacts. The upkeep of physical cultural assets like structures, landmarks, and locations is far more expensive than that of intangible cultural assets like customs and celebrations. Consequently, *guthis* have found it difficult to retain significant amounts of tangible heritage due to the fall in earnings. Nonetheless, they continue to carry out little restoration and preservation work on behalf of temples, water spouts, and *Pati* (rest houses) that fall within their purview. These traditions are now deeply intertwined with the contemporary lifestyles and rituals of the population [10–12,51]. The establishment of local "*guthi*" groups proved to be a wise strategy for protecting monuments. Despite the persistence of traditional festivals in the Kathmandu Valley and the unwavering commitment of *guthi*

members to the upkeep of temples, Nepal's official heritage preservation efforts do not fully recognize these age-old practices. With its long tradition of community engagement in historic preservation, the *guthi* system underscores the importance of refining existing methods rather than implementing entirely new approaches to conservation. [52,88,89].

A key observation highlights the separation between traditional community-driven conservation and formal heritage conservation, signaling a lack of full integration. The key issue revolves around the timely recognition of the intrinsic value of the *guthi* system, especially in the face of the evolving Nepali culture. Urgent measures are needed to recognize and protect the *guthi* system to prevent its erosion amidst the waves of modernization [7,10,12,96].

The *guthis* of the Kathmandu Valley have long been essential to the preservation of the region's cultural heritage. The *guthi* is undoubtedly rooted in the *Newar* culture. It has made it possible to preserve and restore tangible relics while giving new meaning to socio-cultural and economic heritage. The temples and monasteries in the Kathmandu Valley are essential because they are only meaningful if they remain connected to the spiritual and religious beliefs of the *Newari* people. The institutional structures and roles of the *guthi* have changed over time in response to rapid changes in political, social, and economic conditions. This has given rise to several *guthi* responsibilities, such as temple maintenance, ceremonial observance, and playing an important role in funeral rites and cremation ceremonies. Moreover, the importance of the *guthi* is evident from the surviving inscriptions of the *Lichchhavi* period, as well as from the surviving art and architecture, and the festivals, traditions, rites and rituals, dances, music, language, and folklore associated with them. As a result, the functions of the *guthi* have depended heavily on cultural sensitivity and necessity, which have been constantly adapted to the changing goals and ideals of the Newars.

Discussions with *guthiyars*, residents, and stakeholders highlight the indispensable role of various *guthi* communities in preserving all facets of the intangible heritage. Field research reveals that more than a dozen different *guthi* groups perform various roles and duties as prescribed by the *guthi* archives, particularly in initiating rituals and customs in a number of festivals such as *Indrajatra*, *Biska Jatra*, *Rato/Seto Machhindranath Chariot*, *Hadigaun Jatra*, *Shivaratri,* and others. The financial support for these chariots, festivals, rituals, and customs comes from the related *guthi* revenue, which underlines the pivotal role of *guthi* in the effective conservation and management of cultural heritage.

The results of the research indicate that in order to effectively preserve and maintain cultural heritage through traditional management systems such as *guthi,* it is essential to evaluate existing regulations and synchronize collaborative efforts. The study of systems across continents, including Europe, the Americas, and Africa, highlights the importance of ancestral contributions, such as donated land, to the maintenance and preservation of cultural landmarks [24–27]. In the end, the study confirms that *guthi* plays a significant role in guaranteeing the sustainability of cultural property management and protection.

5. Conclusions

Based on this study, the *guthi* system in Nepal is the cornerstone of cultural heritage conservation and management. Its traditional stewardship, community engagement, and sustainable practices have been instrumental in preserving Nepal's rich cultural heritage. Despite facing socio-economic challenges, the enduring role of the *guthi* system underscores the importance of strengthening and preserving this invaluable institution for the continued protection of Nepal's cultural heritage.

The vitality of each monument is rooted in the *guthi* system, which requires support and empowerment from the appropriate authority. The government must support the *guthi* system because of its deep connection to the land, which is central to preserving cultural heritage and safeguarding resources for the long term. The involvement of local *guthi* communities is essential for effective heritage conservation and management. Policies should be developed that link land revenue security with indigenous practices and

ancient technologies. Awareness-raising campaigns among stakeholders and structured coordination are necessary for the effective protection of cultural heritage. Prioritizing a bottom-up participatory approach over a top-down bureaucratic system is key to empowerment. Establishing a research center dedicated to the study of the traditional *guthi* system is crucial for the effective conservation, management, and promotion of Nepali identity. Implementing this study of the *guthi* system at all levels of education will further support Nepalese traditions, culture, rituals, art, architecture, festivals, and traditional knowledge. Developing standardized guidelines to curb encroachment and unregulated construction around heritage sites is essential to maintaining their status as viable heritage sites and protected monuments. To ensure that the local community will continue to play a role in heritage conservation, the *guthi* cultural tradition should be recognized and supported through proactive policy making. This is only possible through a thorough understanding of the historical origins of the *guthi.* This historical investigation into the *guthi* system in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley underscores the necessity for further research to ascertain the means of striking a balance between locally ingrained cultural traditions and centralized administrative governmental systems.

The extension of the *guthi* is recommended as a cornerstone of Nepal's cultural heritage. It would be beneficial to include the contextual management of cultural heritage policy and the role of *guthi* conservation.

Appendix A

Table A1. Major list of festivals in Kathmandu Valley.

Name of the Jatra (Festival)	Meaning and Function
Bhimsen Jatra	A revered festival in Nepal dedicated to the deity Bhimsen, known as the god of trade and commerce. With processions, mask dances, and cultural performances, it pays tribute to *Bhimsen* and attracts both locals and visitors to join in the vibrant celebrations.
Pilgrimage of Harisiddhi	The pilgrimage to *Harisiddhi* in Nepal involves devotees visiting the revered site of the goddess Harisiddhi in Nepalese Hinduism. They seek blessings, perform rituals, and pay homage to the deity, believing in her power to grant blessings and fulfill wishes, giving this pilgrimage significant cultural and spiritual value for participants.
Indrajatra	Indrajatra worships Indra, the Hindu god-king. It is a festival that pays tribute to Indra through rituals, dances, and a ceremonial pole, commemorating the end of the monsoon and seeking blessings for prosperity.

Table A1. *Cont.*

Name of the Jatra (Festival)	Meaning and Function
Harisiddhi Indrayani Jatra's 12-year journey	A major festival in Nepal, held every twelve years, is dedicated to the goddesses Harisiddhi and Indrayani, celebrating their divine presence and cultural heritage.
Khadga Jatra	A festival commemorating the deity's sword, a symbol of power and protection, to honor the divine and ensure blessings of strength and safety for the community.
Thecho Navadurga Jatra	A festival that worships the nine forms of the goddess *Durga*, promotes cultural unity, and seeks blessings for prosperity, strength, and well-being for the community.
12-year-old Thecho Navadurga Jatra	Every twelve years, a major festival celebrates the nine forms of the goddess Durga, promoting cultural unity and seeking blessings for community prosperity.
Khokna Rupayani Jatra	A local festival celebrating the goddess *Rupayani*, aimed at honoring her divine presence, promoting cultural heritage, and seeking blessings for the prosperity and well-being of the community.
Bhola Ganesh Jatra	A festival dedicated to Lord *Ganesh* that focuses on celebrating his presence, fostering cultural traditions, and seeking blessings for prosperity and auspicious beginnings within the community.
Bungamati Hygriv Bhairava and Manakamana Jatra	A festive celebration honoring the deities *Hygriv Bhairava* and *Manakamana*, aimed at preserving cultural heritage, invoking blessings for prosperity, and uniting the community in reverence and celebration.
Sunakothi Balakumari Jatra	A local festival worshipping Balakumari, focusing on cultural preservation, community unity, and seeking blessings for prosperity and well-being in the area.
Pilgrimage of Thecho Vramhayani	A sacred journey to pay homage to Vramhayani, emphasizing spiritual reverence and cultural significance, and seeking blessings for the prosperity and harmony of the community.
Lubhu Mahalakshmi Jatra	A festival that worships Mahalakshmi, emphasizes cultural heritage and communal celebration, and seeks blessings for abundance and prosperity within the community.
Vajravarahi Jatra	A festival dedicated to Vajravarahi to honor this deity, preserve cultural traditions, and seek blessings for spiritual strength, protection, and prosperity within the community.
Gaijatra	A festival that commemorates the dead, promotes joy and humor to ease grief, and celebrates cultural traditions while honoring the deceased.
Mupatra Indrajatra	A festival dedicated to Indra to celebrate the deity, promote cultural heritage, and seek blessings for prosperity and harmony within the community.
Changunarayan Jatra	A festival dedicated to the deity Changunarayan, aimed at honoring cultural heritage, promoting community unity, and seeking blessings for prosperity and harmony within the locality.
Bibaha Panchami	A festival celebrating the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, emphasizing cultural traditions and unity, and seeking blessings for marital harmony and prosperity in the community.
Shaileshwori Mela (festival)	A fair celebrating the goddess Shaileshwori, promoting cultural richness and community involvement, and seeking blessings for prosperity and spiritual well-being in the region.
Bhairavi Jatra	A festival honoring the deity Bhairavi, aimed at celebrating cultural heritage, fostering community bonds, and seeking blessings for strength and protection within the community.

Table A1. *Cont.*

Name of the Jatra (Festival)	Meaning and Function
Chaitra Dashain Mela (Mid-march to mid-April)	A fair celebrating the festival of Dashain during the month of *Chaitra*, emphasizing cultural festivities, community gatherings, and seeking blessings for prosperity and happiness among the participants.
Planchowk Bhagawati Jatra	A festival worshipping *Bhagawati*, focusing on cultural reverence, community unity, and seeking blessings for prosperity and well-being in the area.
Baraha Chhetra (area) Mela	A festival held at *Baraha Chhetra* in honor of Lord Baraha to celebrate cultural traditions, foster community unity, and seek blessings for prosperity and spiritual well-being in the region.
Galeshwor Mela	A festival honoring the deity Galeshwor, focusing on cultural heritage, community involvement, and seeking blessings for prosperity and spiritual harmony in the area.
Hadigaun Jatra	A festival celebrating cultural heritage, community unity, and seeking blessings for prosperity and well-being in the Hadigaun area.
Seto Machhindranath Jatra	A festival dedicated to *Seto Machhindranath*, emphasizing cultural heritage, community unity, and seeking blessings for prosperity and harmony in the region.
Pharping Harishankar Jatra	A festival in honor of *Harishankar*, aimed at celebrating cultural heritage, community cohesion, and seeking blessings for prosperity and well-being in the area.
Tokha 'Chandeswari Jatra	A festival dedicated to *Chandeswari*, emphasizing cultural traditions, community bonding, and seeking blessings for prosperity and harmony within the *Tokha* region.
Journey to Gangamai	A pilgrimage to *Gangamai*, signifying reverence, spiritual connection, and seeking blessings for spiritual fulfillment and prosperity at *Pashupatinath.*
Guheshwori Jatra	A festival worshipping *Guheshwori*, emphasizing cultural heritage, community involvement, and seeking blessings for prosperity and spiritual well-being in the vicinity of Pashupatinath.
Rato Machhindranath Jatra	The *Rato Machhindranath Jatra* is believed to bring prosperity and rainfall to the Kathmandu Valley in times of drought, while also uniting people in remembrance of their diverse cultures and traditions.
Atal Jatra of Balakumari	A festival dedicated to Balakumari, emphasizing cultural heritage, communal harmony, and seeking blessings for prosperity and well-being in Lalitpur.
Khat Jatra of Balakumari	A festival honoring *Balakumari*, focusing on cultural heritage, community unity, and seeking blessings for prosperity and harmony within the locality.
Chaitra Mahasnan	In the month of *Chaitra*, a ceremonial bathing ritual signifies purification, spiritual renewal, and the seeking of blessings for auspicious beginnings and community well-being.
Sri Taleju Bhavani's Khat Jatra	A festival honoring *Taleju* Bhavani, focusing on cultural reverence, community cohesion, and seeking blessings for prosperity and harmony.
Indrayani Jatra	A festival that honors Indrayani, emphasizes cultural heritage, celebrates community, and seeks blessings for prosperity and unity.
Bisket Jatra	A festival celebrating cultural heritage, community unity, and seeking blessings for prosperity and joy.

Source: [2,9,76].

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