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Cosmology of Mythical Realities: A Case Study of Danuwar¹

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*Sat saya ranga satsaya boka pari hai tari deuo
Sate ko raicha Matsyendra deuta pani hai pari deau*

“Seven Hundred buffalos and seven goats help them cross the river
Oh! Truly God *Matsyendra* please make it rain”.

This article makes a contribution to the mythical aspects related to subaltern culture of Danuwar² which is rather unique and was handed down up to the 21st century. It aims at throwing a spotlight upon the transcendental value of mythical principle. The above-mentioned epigraph is tied to both myth and sacrificial culture. The subject is pleading with *Matsyendra* through the song for the rain-making like song of *deurali puja*. They neither dramatize as *deurali puja* nor do any ritual experts perform the religious activities to a rain-making. *Matsyendranath* is a god of rain for both Danuwar and Newar of Kathmandu valley. The myth regarding *Matsyendra* is similar to the tale of 'Thor and his hammer' from Nordic mythology. There are some myths related to *nagas* (serpents); they are sources of water therefore they are offering hen, *tika*, and *akcheta* in the period of grain collection. Some legends of the *nagas* found in Kathmandu are related to water. They are nurtured by mysticism. The

¹ This research project was carried out in 2006 (July- October) at Dukuchhp village of Lalitpur districts under the projects of Danuwar folk life and folkways.

² They are en-slavable alcohol-drinker belong to Indo-Aryan family they denizen few miles from the Kathmandu valley, they are also called Denvar (Hodson 1903) expected to migrate from the Kamaru Kamache in India. Their language root is *magadha* and they have similar cultural features like *Darai*, *Majhi* and *Tharu*(Bista 1972).

primitive life of Danuwar is scientific and systematic due to the influence of myths. Any deviation from the rules may bring disasters such as a like tornado, drought, flood, horror and hunger in their life. Danuwar civilization thrives on the supernatural power of ghosts, spirits, fairies and demons. They explained their natural history of god, goddess and heroes that pertains the story of joys and evils. The contagious magic of god gives the pain like sterility or blight of crops, and he became a scapegoat figure. Danuwar people relay the miracle of myths through the oral history that encompasses the supernatural power. They rehearse the several myths allied to religions i.e. myths regarding *Matsyendranath* influenced by Buddhism, whereas the myths regarding Dashain and Tihar are influenced by Hinduism. Usually clan, sib and lineage groups of Danuwar worship their mythical ancestry through the religious rites and cult activities for the well-being of living members. They are popular as *bayo*³.

The *vansavalis* (chronicles) have some account of the legends that trace out their origin of life like their genealogical affiliation with Tharu, ethno-history and habitat. These are in imaginative form, that reworking for the theme of life. The advanced dominating meanings of the myths are projecting in subaltern culture which makes life more rigorous and as logical as science. Myths are dependent on the oral history that presents the nature and cultural nexus that would be compared with Claude Levi-Strauss' book *The Raw and the Cooked*, where he elucidates basic structures of culture through the binary pairs or relationships between opposites. He shows that raw is a nature and cooked is a culture.

Myths help to bind god, men, animals and nature together with the philosophy of magic, witchcraft and form of religious expression that enabled their lives to become meaningful. The social system and its clan relationship however, depends upon the social taboo that has to be alive with different relation i.e. clan and kinship. Beside, it aims is to view the religious symbols and ritual meanings which have shaped the belief system. They connected these things with birth and death, welcome and farewell, purity and pollution, high caste and low caste. Their cognitive system related to birth and death, *sanskriti* (culture) and *prakriti* (nature), order and disorder, fortune and misfortune that enhance social structure in decent order. Myths and beliefs are intertwined so that these two aspects inevitably govern their society in systematized form. The Philosophy of Tylor and Frazer on belief has linked up with psychological development, which incorporates the subjects of magic, taboo and witchcraft. These phenomena should account for the feeling and emotion

³ Ancestral gods those, who met with an untimely death from fire, flood and natural disaster.

that they incorporate for greed, love, hate and amazements. The adaptation of belief goes uniquely under the certain assumption of diffusion from one generation to another. To some extent, it reveals the position of caste and creed.

This research was tested by my own observation in several occasions in their community. I, therefore, could narrow down the connection between myth and cosmology. Our forefathers are diligent readers whose knowledge inspires us through myths and legends. It is a faith of science. However; it survives in accordance with fetish, animism, totem, *dharma*, *pap* and *punya* that are important to make a social structure. The superstitious faith governs the world that determines the journeys, fate, love and sympathy. The diversity of their culture is cultivated in decent manner under the influence of beliefs. Myths are inseparable from the ritual. People affirm that the state of man whose life starts from fetus and end up with corpse, which have symbols, signs, meanings and metaphorical functions. The beliefs, however, look at Van Gannep theory of tripartite structure of rites- separate, transition and incorporation. Danuwar civilization also flourished under the horizon of witchcraft and sorcery related to taboo and totem within the certain cultural boundary. They define these invisible objects in their own way i.e. a witch is old, ugly, discreditable, uncombed and giant-like in physical appearance, and gives pain to a person, whereas, sorcery whose image is unlike witch with masculine appearance only. They make their own image of the bodies of god, witch and sorcery. Danuwar offer food to their ancestors in the especial occasions like *dashain*, *tihar* and *sora sradhe* to save their life from supernatural forces or evils. Similarly, they are offering to the deities usually goats, hens, and buffalos for the strengthening of the power in order to conquer the evil forces. In one way it is for the salvation from the evil and another it has been prevailing in the scheduled form to build the social solidarity.

Their myths basically include the legends that trace out their origin, ethno-name, migratory and occupational history, ancestral stories and nightmare. Both the creation and explanatory myths are found in their village. For example, the origin of Danuwar village, their ethnic name and birth of deities are the creation of myth, whereas formation and characteristics of the geographical territory, gods and goddess, demon, soul of ancestor and divinities life beneath the ground are explanatory. Myths are functionally interrelated, and there is a figurative meaning that provides insight and novelty to all. It is the fundamental element for the formation of social and cultural institutions. Their myths are similar to other ethnic groups of the world that constituent bundle of relation with natural and supernatural beings in different forms.

Myths are the medium of communication between past and present generations, based on a certain set of rules and regulations. Mythological explanation highlights the civilization of ethnic groups through balancing good and evil. Myths made causal connection between natural and supernatural beings; and make the people more rational and intelligent. It gives the religious insights; knowledge and messages make the worldview rather than false reasoning. In fact, myths of Danuwar intricate the beauty and evoke the image of their culture within their geographical landscape.

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