

VEDIC EDUCATION TOWARDS FEMINIZATION: A *TRISŪL* ETHNOGRAPHY

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A Thesis

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Development Studies)

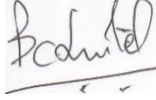
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AN ABSTRACT

of the thesis *Rajendra Raj Timilsina* for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy in Education* presented on November 24, 2023, entitled *Vedic Education Towards Feminization: A Trisūl Ethnography*.

ABSTRACT APPROVED BY



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The feminization of Vedic education has several aspects and issues of social change. To this recognition, this thesis analyzes social change and the re-emergence of Vedic education in Nepal concerning girls. There is a new trend of inclusion with modern subjects in the Gurukul education system. This thesis is prepared within this broad aspect of changing practices in the Gurukul education system, its modernization, and feminization. This work is an outcome of a multi-year study that observes the enrollment of girls in a Gurukul and waits till their professional life of priesthood. Some of the girls started priestly jobs before completing school education. The girls who have not started priesthood have joined to study Vedic/Sanskrit education further.

Paradigmatically, I have adopted the *Trisūl* paradigm, which suits my field data. *Trisūl* is a trident or trinary set of wisdom. In Eastern philosophy, the trident is a symbol to express many meanings. I see it as a trinary set of wisdom such as a trident of sufferings called *Ādhyātmika*, *Ādhidaivika*, and *Ādhibhautika*. Also, it includes episteme of *Jñāna Śakti*, *Kriyā Śakti*, and *Ichhā Śakti*. I have tried blending the paradigm's cosmological sense in the write-up.

This thesis is based on an ethnographic study of Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul (KGG). I observed the Gurukul for years and regularly conducted participant observation for nine months. When I completed the prolonged observation, KGG was merged with Chitwan Orphanage Gurukul. Again, I followed them through their merging process. I compared the similarities and differences between the two school cultures. I wanted to find out why the girls from various districts joined KGG. What

was their pedagogy, and what were the challenges in the teaching-learning processes? What are the reasons for choosing these types of education? Do they see professional/occupational scope for girls in this patriarchal society? Asking such questions, I observed their ways of life, teaching-learning, ritual performances, etc. I observed KGG in 2016 and 2017 and did continuous participant observation for nine months in 2017. The field study proved to be valuable in examining the evolving dynamics of society and the challenges faced by girls in Gurukul within the context of a gendered society. During this investigation, I explored various interconnected aspects, individuals, and locations, and they revealed five distinct themes to me.

Firstly, the girls practiced the same curriculum, instruction, and assessment system adopted by the Nepal government. As a result, they can chant *Svastivācan* in public ceremonies and perform *Rudrābhiśek* ritual services. So, I developed a chapter on recitals. Secondly, I observed the daily ritual since there are differentiations in the daily practices of the girls and boys. In the boys' Gurukuls, the boys perform the *Sandhyopāsan* ritual as prescribed in the textbook. However, in KGG, the girls are taught the course book more theoretically. They are made to complete the course but with some diversion in the daily practice. They are given yoga and prayer courses in place of *Sandhyopāsan*. Thirdly, the fieldwork found menstruation as an interrupting element in learning. The absence of the girls and *Guru Āma* during this period interested me to find out the causes. Upon analyzing the field data, the fourth identified theme was the existence of numerous gaps in the feminization of Vedic education. The individuals involved express optimism and a vision for cultivating female Vedic scholars and priests.

Nevertheless, many individuals find themselves in a state of dilemma, grappling with the challenges posed by the disparity between theory and practice in their dual roles. I perceive this paradox as indicative of several gaps in practical implementation. There are different forms of gender perspectives: the singles, the couples and the combination of both that is *Ardhanārīśvara*. *Ardhanārīśvara* concept in Vedic tradition made me think about the ritual role of males and females. This theory or concept emphasizes the equal roles of both males and females, integrating them as symbolized by the union of Śiva and Parvati. This symbolism is also portrayed in the Paśupatināth temple in Kathmandu, Nepal. In front of the idol is a third person, the worshiper. The person is not a worshiper but also an interpreter of the notion of male and female. So, this analysis goes beyond duality or singularity but

a trinary position. As a result, the *Trisūl* paradigm analyzes the positions of the realities.

Therefore, the thesis serves as a concise document detailing the feminization and genderization of Vedic education, encapsulating the ontological challenges I encountered over the course of a decade. Epistemologically, I have illustrated the issues and challenges arising from the evolving social context in recent times. Theoretically, it is an application of my own 2013 proposition of Neo-Sanskritization. The study shows the status of caste-based society shifting from Sanskritization to Neo-Sanskritization. Paradigmatically, the *Trisūl* paradigm has been applied as an indigenous research domain of its context. In conclusion, this thesis envisions a future where female priests will offer their priestly services to clients through online connections and mobile app contacts.



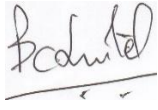
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November 24, 2023

शोध-सार

काठमाडौं विश्वविद्यालय शिक्षा सङ्कायको विद्यावारिधि उपाधिका लागि श्री राजेन्द्रराज तिमिल्सिनाले वैदिक शिक्षा नारीकरणतर्फ: त्रिशूलात्मक पराणुसन्धान शीर्षकको शोधग्रन्थ विक्रम संवत् २०८० साल मङ्सिर ८ गते प्रस्तुत गर्नुभएकोले शोधग्रन्थको निम्नोल्लेखित शोध-सार अनुमोदन गरिएको छ ।

शोध-सार अनुमोदनकर्ता



प्राध्यापक बालचन्द्र लुइटेल, विद्यावारिधि
शोधग्रन्थ निर्देशक

प्राध्यापक सिमन गौतम, विद्यावारिधि
शोधग्रन्थ निर्देशक

वैदिक शिक्षाको नारीकरणमा सामाजिक परिवर्तनका कैयौं पक्ष र मुद्दा रहेका हुन्छन् । सोही मान्यता अनुसार प्रस्तुत शोधग्रन्थले नेपालमा वैदिक शिक्षाको पुनः उद्भव र कन्या गुरुकुल सञ्चालनबाट भैरहेको सामाजिक परिवर्तनको विश्लेषण गर्दछ । गुरुकुल शिक्षा प्रणालीमा आधुनिक विषयहरू पनि समावेश गर्दै जातीय र लैंगिक समावेशीकरणसहित वैदिक शिक्षा प्रदान गरिनु नयाँ चलन हो । गुरुकुल शिक्षा प्रणालीमा भित्रिएको बदलिँदो अभ्यास, आधुनिकीकरण र नारीकरणको विवेचना अन्तर्गत यो शोधप्रबन्ध तयार गरिएको छ । वैदिक शिक्षाको पुनर्जागरणका विषयमा करीब एक दशक लामो अध्ययनको क्रममा काठमाडौंको एउटा कन्या गुरुकुलमा एक समूह भर्ना भएदेखि सो समूहको सिकाइ र कर्मकाण्ड कार्यको थालनीसम्मको धैर्यपूर्वक निरन्तर अवलोकन गरिएको थियो । ती छात्रामध्ये केहीले विद्यालय शिक्षा पूरा गरेर यजमानका लागि पुरोहित्याइँ सेवा समेत प्रदान गर्न शुरु गरिसकेका छन् भने कर्मकाण्ड नगराएका छात्राहरू वैदिक वा संस्कृत शिक्षाको उच्च तहमा अध्ययनरत छन् ।

प्राज्ञिक अनुसन्धान गर्दा अध्ययन गर्न लागिएको विषय र तथ्य-तथ्याङ्क सुहाउँदो दार्शनिक ढाँचा वा प्रतिमान (प्याराडाइम) प्रयोग गरिन्छ । मैले आफ्नो अनुसन्धानको विषयवस्तु र तथ्याङ्कअनुसार त्रिशूल प्रतिमान अवलम्बन गरेको छु । ज्ञानको एक समूहको समष्टि हो त्रिशूल । पूर्वीय दर्शनमा त्रिशूल अनेकौं अर्थ व्यक्त गर्ने प्रतीक हो । ज्ञानमीमांसाका क्रममा मैले यो त्रिशूल समूहलाई एकातिर शूल (दुख)हरूको समूह-- आध्यात्मिक, आधिदैविक र आधिभौतिक तापबाट

दुख पाइने तथा अर्कोतिर ज्ञानको समूह-- ज्ञान शक्ति, क्रिया शक्ति र इच्छा शक्तिबाट मोक्ष प्राप्त हुने तथ्यलाई स्थापित गरेको छु । मैले स्थलगत अध्ययनमा प्राप्त विषयवस्तुलाई यस लेखनमा त्रिशूल प्रतिमानको विचारपद्धति (कस्मोलोजी)सँग सम्मिश्रण गर्ने प्रयास गरेको छु ।

यो ग्रन्थ काठमाडौँ कन्या गुरुकुलमा गरिएको पराणसन्धान (इथनोग्राफिक स्टडी) मा आधारित छ । त्यहाँ मैले वर्षौंसम्म गरेको पटकपटकको भ्रमण तथा लगातार ९ महिनासम्म गरेको सहभागी अवलोकन (पार्टिसिपेण्ट अब्जर्भेशन) बाट प्राप्त स्थलगत सूचनालाई दार्शनिक चिन्तनहरूमा आत्मिक मन्थन गरेर निचोडको रूपमा यो कृति तयार पारेको हुँ । यसको सूचना सङ्कलन प्रक्रियालाई स्मरण गर्ने हो भने दीर्घकालीन स्थलगत अध्ययन समाप्त भैसकेपछि उक्त कन्या गुरुकुल चितवनमा बालिकाहरूका लागि स्थापित अनाथालयमा गाभिन पुग्यो । त्यसपछि मैले चितवनमै पटकपटक पुगेर उक्त कन्या गुरुकुलको पछिल्लो अवस्थासम्मको अध्ययन गरें । साथै ती दुई संस्थाको विद्यालय संस्कृति (स्कूल कल्चर) का समानता र भिन्नताको तुलना पनि गरें ।

काठमाडौँ कन्या गुरुकुलमा विभिन्न जिल्लाका छात्राहरु किन भर्ना भए भन्नेबारे मैले पत्ता लगाउन चाहन्थें । उनीहरूको पाठ्यक्रम, पाठ्यपुस्तक र सिकाइ कस्तो छ र उनीहरूको शिक्षणसिकाइ प्रक्रियाका चुनौतीहरू कस्ताकस्ता छन्? यस्ता गुरुकुल छनौट हुनुका कारण के हुन्? पुरुषप्रधान समाजमा उनीहरूले व्यावसायिक र पेसागत भविष्य कस्तो देख्छन्? यस्ता प्रश्नहरू सोध्दै मैले उनीहरूको पृष्ठभूमि, जीवनशैली, पठनपाठन, नित्यकर्म आदि अवलोकन गरें । धेरैजसो सन् २०१६ मा र सन् २०१७ मा नौ महिनासम्म लगातार स्थलगत कार्य गरें । यो स्थलगत अध्ययन पुरुषप्रधान समाजभित्रको फेरिंदो आयाम तथा चुनौतीहरू परीक्षण गर्न महत्त्वपूर्ण सावित भयो । यस परीक्षणका क्रममा मैले यससँग अन्तर्सम्बन्धित पक्षहरू, व्यक्तिहरू र स्थानहरू फेला पारें जसबाट पाँच वटा विषय (थिम) उद्बोधन भए ।

पहिलो, नेपाल सरकारले अवलम्बन गरेको पाठ्यक्रम, शिक्षण र मूल्याङ्कन प्रणाली नै कन्या गुरुकुलमा पनि लागु गरेको पाइयो । फलस्वरूप कन्याहरूले रुद्राभिषेक गर्न र सार्वजनिक समारोहहरूमा स्वस्तिवाचन गर्न सक्ने रहेछन् । तसर्थ मैले यस ग्रन्थको आफ्नो एउटा अध्याय नै वाचन सम्बन्धी बनाएको छु । दोस्रो, दैनिक नित्यकर्ममा छात्रको गुरुकुल र कन्या गुरुकुलबीचमा भिन्नता पाइयो । छात्र गुरुकुलमा सन्ध्योपासन विधिलाई पाठ्यपुस्तकअनुसार नै प्रयोगमा ल्याएको पाइयो भने उक्त कन्या गुरुकुलमा पाठ्यपुस्तकमा राखिएको सन्ध्योपासनलाई सैद्धान्तिक रूपमा मात्रै पठनपाठन गरेको पाइयो । कन्याहरूले सन्ध्योपासन विधिको सट्टा योग र प्रार्थना गरेको पाइयो । नित्य कर्मको विवेचना गर्ने क्रममा अर्को अध्यायको शीर्षक “कर्मकाण्ड बारेमा” राखिएको छ ।

तेस्रो, रजस्वलाको चार दिन छात्रा र गुरुआमा कक्षामा अनुपस्थित पाइए । तसर्थ अर्को अध्यायमा स्त्रीत्व र नारीवादलाई परिशीलन गरी रजस्वलाका विभिन्न पक्षहरू समेटिएका छन् । यस्तै विश्लेषणका क्रममा पहिचान भएको चौथो विषय हो- शिक्षाको नारीकरणमा देखिएका विरोधाभास र रिक्तताहरू । विभिन्न तथ्यहरूका आधारमा सैद्धान्तिक अध्याय र सैद्धान्तीकरण (थेअराइजेशन) अध्यायमा वस्तुस्थितिको पर्यालोचन गरिएको छ । यस्ता अनेकौं पक्षहरू रहुँदारहुँदै पनि यस अध्ययनमा सहभागीहरूले वैदिक विदुषी र पुरोहित तयार हुने आशासहितको दृष्टिकोण प्रकट गरेका छन् । तर तिनैमध्येका कैयौं व्यक्तिमा नारीलाई वेद पढाएर कर्मकाण्ड गर्न सक्ने बनाउने विषयमा दुविधाको अवस्था पनि पाइन्छ भने कतिपय आफैं नै सिद्धान्त र व्यवहारबीच सामञ्जस्य गर्न नसकेर उत्पन्न भएको चुनौतीपूर्ण दोहोरो अन्यमनस्क भूमिकामा उभिएको देखिन्छ ।

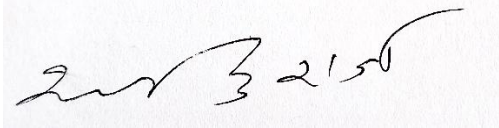
लैंगिक दृष्टिकोणका हिसाबले मानवका विभिन्न अवस्था छन्- एकल, युगल र अर्धनारीश्वर । वैदिक परम्परामा निहित अर्धनारीश्वरको अवधारणाले मलाई महिला र पुरुषको कर्मकाण्डीय भूमिकाबारे सोचन बाध्य बनाइदियो । शिव र पार्वतीको एकीकृत स्वरूप रहेको अर्धनारीश्वरको सिद्धान्त वा अवधारणाले महिला र पुरुषको समान स्थान र भूमिकामा जोड दिएको प्रतीकात्मकता झल्काउँछ । काठमाडौंको पशुपतिनाथ मन्दिरभित्र रहेको प्रतिमाको उत्तराभिमुख भाग (वामदेव) ले अर्धनारीश्वर अवस्था प्रतिविम्बन गरिरहेको छ । सोही प्रतिमाको सामुने एउटा तेस्रो व्यक्ति उभिएको हुन्छ जो भक्त हो । त्यो तेस्रो व्यक्ति भक्त वा दर्शनार्थी मात्रै होइन बरु नारी र पुरुषको एकात्मक स्वरूपको व्याख्याता पनि हो । अर्थात् त्यहाँ ३ जना रहेका छन् । तर आत्मिक अवस्था भने ती पुरुष, महिला र भक्त तीनैको एउटै रहेको हुन्छ । तसर्थ प्रस्तुत विश्लेषण एकल र द्वैतभन्दा पनि टाढा त्रिक स्वरूपमा पुगिरहेको एकात्मकता हो । फलस्वरूप त्रिशूल प्रतिमान उपस्थित हुन आइपुग्छ र त्रिशूलको एउटै बिँडबाट बहुरूपीय तत्त्वमीमांसात्मक (अण्टोलोजिकल) यथार्थताहरू (मल्टिपल रियालिटीज) प्रकट हुन आउँछन् ।

प्रस्तुत शोधग्रन्थ बितेको एक दशकको शोधअवधिमा वैदिक शिक्षाको नारीकरण तथा समावेशीकरणका लागि गरिएका प्रयास तथा तिनका तत्त्वमीमांसात्मक चुनौतीहरूको समीक्षात्मक सारसङ्ग्रह हो । सैद्धान्तिक वा ज्ञानमीमांसात्मक (इपिस्टेमोलोजिकल) हिसाबले मैले यस ग्रन्थमा पछिल्लो सामाजिक सन्दर्भका उदीयमान विषय र मुद्दाहरू तथा तिनका चुनौतीहरू चित्रण गरेको छु । तत्त्वमीमांसात्मक दृष्टिले हेर्दा यस शोधकर्ताले सन् २०१३ मा समाजशास्त्र/मानवशास्त्र संघ नेपाल (सासोन)ले आयोजना गरेको अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय सम्मेलनमा प्रस्तुत गरेको नवसंस्कृतीकरण (निओ-संस्कृताइजेशन) सम्बन्धी पत्र नै सैद्धान्तिक आधारशीला थियो । उक्त पत्रमा सन् १९५० को दशकमा एम.एन. श्रीनिवासद्वारा प्रतिपादित संस्कृतीकरण (संस्कृताइजेशन) को सिद्धान्तको

स्वरूप सामाजिक परिवर्तनसँगै फेरिंदै गएको र आधुनिक गुरुकुल, प्रविधि र कानून लगायत कारणबाट नवसंस्कृतीकरण (निओ-संस्कृताइजेशन) को चरणमा प्रवेश गर्न सक्ने प्रक्षेपण (प्रपोजिशन) गरिएको थियो । उक्त प्रक्षेपणलाई पुष्टि गर्दै सन् २०२३ मा प्रस्तुत यस शोधग्रन्थको तथ्याङ्कबाट संस्कृतीकरणको अवस्था अब नवसंस्कृतीकरण (निओ-संस्कृताइजेशन) मा प्रवेश गरेको पुष्ट्याइँ (प्रुभ) गर्न खोजिएको छ । यस ग्रन्थले जातीयतामा आधारित समाज संस्कृतीकरणको अवधारणाबाट विभिन्न चरण पार गर्दै हाल नवसंस्कृतीकरणको अवस्थामा प्रवेश गरेको दावी गर्दछ ।

सांस्कृतिक व्याख्याका लागि पूर्वीय र पाश्चात्य पद्धतिहरू समय र स्थानअनुसार मौलिक वा अनुकरणीय दुवै हुन सक्छन् । मैले पाश्चात्य सिद्धान्तकार लेभी-स्ट्रसद्वारा प्रतिपादित दुई विपरीतार्थी (बाइनरी अपोजिशन) ढाँचाको विवेचना गर्दै आफ्नो स्थलगत कार्य र तथ्यांकअनुसार त्रिक अवस्था (ट्राइनरी पोजिशन) मा आधारित त्रिशूलात्मक प्रतिमान प्रयोग गरेको हुँ । अर्थात् त्रिशूल प्रतिमानलाई मौलिक रैथाने विवेचनात्मक ढाँचामा प्रयोग गरेको हुँ ।

निष्कर्षमा, शोधग्रन्थको शीर्षकअनुसारको तत्त्वमीमांसा, ज्ञानमीमांसा र मूल्य मीमांसा (एक्सिओलोजी) मा आधारित त्रिशूलात्मक प्रतिमानको प्रयोगले विषयवस्तु र बदिलिँदो सामाजिक परिप्रेक्ष्यको प्रबोधन भएको छ । त्यस सिलसिलामा यस शोधग्रन्थले समाज कृषिनिर्भरताबाट पुँजीवादतर्फ अघि बढ्दै जाँदा वैदिक शिक्षा पनि एक नगदे पेसा बन्ने र भविष्यमा कर्मकाण्ड पेसा अनलाइन र मोबाइल यापूको सञ्जालमा जोडिएर यजमानले सोहीमार्फत् महिला पुरोहित लगायत आवश्यकता अनुसारका पुरोहितलाई निमन्त्रणा गरेर कर्मकाण्डीय संस्कारहरू सम्पन्न गर्ने दिन आउने छ भन्ने भविष्यपरक विश्लेषण गरेको छ । शिक्षाको नारीकरण र समानताको प्रयास सोही गन्तव्यतर्फको सामाजिक परिवर्तनको एक प्रारम्भ हो ।



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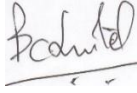
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उपाधि उम्मेदवार

मंसिर ८, २०८०

This thesis entitled *Vedic Education Towards Feminization: A Triśūl Ethnography* was presented by Rajendra Raj Timilsina on November 24, 2023.

APPROVED BY



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Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel, PhD
Thesis Supervisor/Dean/Chair of Research Committee

November 24, 2023



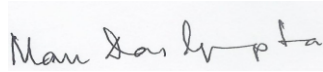
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I understand and agree that my thesis will become a part of the permanent collection of the Kathmandu University Library. My signature below approves the release of my thesis to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.



.....
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Degree Candidate

November 24, 2023

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to those who have been struggling within the trident of sufferings (*Tritāp- Āhidaivika, Ādhibhautika, and Ādhyātmika*) of destiny and moving forward for the Trident of knowledge (*Trisūl- Jñāna Śakti, Kriyā Śakti, and Ichhā Śakti*).

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted or published for any degree at any university.



.....

Rajendra Raj Timilsina
Degree Candidate

November 24, 2023

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सर्वेभ्यो गुरुभ्यो नमः । सर्वेभ्यो मित्रेभ्यो नमः ॥ सर्वेभ्यो स्वजनेभ्यो नमः ॥

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Rajendra Raj Timilsina
Degree Candidate

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|--|
| AD | Anno Domini |
| CBS | Central Bureau of Statistics |
| CCA | Co-Curricular Activities |
| CDC | Curriculum Development Center |
| CIAA | Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| ECA | Extra-Curricular Activities |
| FoE | Foundations of Education |
| GD | Group Discussion |
| KKG | Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul |
| GoN | Government of Nepal |
| GRE | Graduate Record Examinations |
| HT | Head Teacher |
| IA | Intermediate of Arts |
| KGG | Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul |
| KUSOED | Kathmandu University School of Education |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoEST | Ministry of Education, Science and Technology |
| NESP | National Education System Plan |
| PADT | Paśupati Area Development Trust |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| PSAs | Public Service Announcements |
| SASON | Sociological/Anthropological Society of Nepal |
| SLC | School Leaving Certificate (Examination) |
| SSDP | School Sector Development Plan |
| SSRP | School Sector Reform Plan |
| SESP | School Education Sector Plan |
| WHF | World Hindu Federation |
| UNIFEM | United Nations Development Fund for Women |
| VS | Vikram Samvat |

MEANING OF KEY TERMINOLOGIES

Ādhyātmika: Spiritual

Ādhidaivika: supernatural

Ādhibhautika: super physical

Ardhanārīśvara: Half-male half-female (a fusion of coexistence)

Jñānā Śakti: Knowledge power

Kriyā Śakti: Action power

Icchā Śakti: Will power

Sandhyopāsan: A daily ritual that is performed in the liminal state of time between
night and morning, noon and between day and evening

Trisūl: Trident

Trika: Triadic

Baivahiko Vidhistrīṇām: Wedding itself is the Upanayana for women

Upanayana: Initiation ceremony that is the starting point of Veda leaning



Ardhanārīśvara: Half Male Half Female (Śiva-Śakti), <https://tinyurl.com/57ju73cs>

CHAPTER I

SETTING THE SCENE: THE *TRISŪL*

ॐ श्री सरस्वत्यै नमः ॥

A Prayer to Mother Sarasvatī

I am in Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul at the moment. There is a framed photo of Goddess Sarasvatī. The image is hanging on the wall of the classroom. Girls in the school are praying for her. The first verse of the chanting denotes wisdom.

सरस्वती मया दृष्टा वीणापुस्तकधारिणी ।
हंसवाहनसंयुक्ता विद्यादानं करोतु मे ॥

Meaning of the Verse:

I see goddess Sarasvatī holding *Vṃā* (lute) and a book. The goddess on her vehicle swan is requested to provide knowledge. The swan can distinguish milk from water. The goddess is asked to make me as



Goddess Sarasvatī, <https://tinyurl.com/3t3s3s28>

able as her swan to differentiate good and bad for the good of humankind. The verse has a trident (*Trisūl*) of wisdom, goddess, and chanters. In the meantime, another trident comprises a lute, a book, and swan of the goddess of knowledge. The chanters aspire to attain enlightenment, deriving bliss from the goddess, and are prepared to engage in inner practice. In this text, *Trisūl* is a trinary set of ideas, knowledge, and wisdom.

Figure 1

Trisūl Aspects of Praying

Knowledge Goddess Chanter



The Trident

There are three types of suffering (*Trisūl*) in the Vedic knowledge system, and the people go to Guru's residence to get rid of the suffering through Vidyā (knowledge). These sufferings are also known as *Tāp. Śul* and *Tāp* have the same meaning: The three

sufferings are *Ādhyātmika* (Spiritual), *Ādhidaivika* (supernatural), and *Ādhibhautika* (supper physical). People study Veda to get rid of their sufferings (Adhikari, 2007) and join the Gurukul to emerge with the *Trisūl*. Girls from different districts have enrolled at the Gurukul to study the Vedas. They have found that through prayer to the goddess Sarasvatī, they can effectively alleviate their sufferings and ignorance. Ultimately, their goal is to attain liberation.

Figure 2

The Three Śuls

Ādhyātmika Ādhidaivika Ādhibhautika



The Trident

Śul denotes spear. The *Śul* may be a problem and may have a solution as well. *Trisūl* is a trident that has a combination of three-pronged spears. It indicates seen as well as unseen issues and ideas symbolically. *Trisūl* has symbolic as

well as physical and spiritual meanings. The

suffering and liberation issues have been manifested mainly in three places showing *Trisūl*- temples, homes, and scriptures.

Firstly, tridents are placed atop the roofs of traditional Nepali houses to mitigate the risk of lightning in the area. These tridents are typically made of bronze. Engineers who specialize in earthing and lightning protection have explained to me that the rooftop trident serves as the initiation point for their discipline. In their terminology, it functions as a "lightning arrestor."

Secondly, Śiva temples and Devī temples are decorated by *Trisūl*. Mainly, the metal symbol is put on the temple's roof and, in other cases, is set inside or outside the temples. Setting the symbol in or around the temple has philosophical meanings. In several temples of Śiva and Devī, the deities take *Trisūl* by their hands' tattoos, eliminating evil forces.

Thirdly, the philosophical implications are interpreted in different scriptures, including Nyāya Darśana and Sāṅkhya philosophy. These philosophical and symbolic interpretations have been materialized through teaching-learning processes in Vedic tradition.

I grew up in the same tradition and was accustomed to witnessing the *Trisūl* and hearing chants of the same verse during prayers to the goddess of wisdom. My

mother took me to the temple of the goddess to initiate my learning of alphabets and numerals. Additionally, I continued chanting the verse throughout my academic life. The worship of goddess Sarasvatī holds profound sentimental value among students.

Moreover, this can be seen in contemporary Gurukuls of Nepal. Chanting Sanskrit verses and following the culture is Sanskritization. Sanskritization was prevalent for centuries and will remain in different forms. Now, it has entered the state of Neo-Sanskritization. Neo-Sanskritization is a fusion of Sanskritization, modernity, and neoclassicism. The Gurukuls are also in the phase of Neo-Sanskritization though the style may vary. The notion of Neo-Sanskritization is elaborated in Scene 3 in a separate section below. Now I reconnect the link to the Sanskrit verse.

The verse has three parts and can also be taken as *Trisūl* or trident. *Trisūl* is a trinary set for suffering, knowledge, and power. Above mentioned stanza is the first part of the verse. The second part has 12 names of Sarasvatī, and the third part states the results of the verse chanting. The rest of the verse is as follows:

प्रथमं भारती नाम द्वितीयञ्च सरस्वती ।
 तृतीयं शारदा देवी चतुर्थं हंसवाहिनी ॥
 पञ्चमं तु जगन्माता षष्ठं वागीश्वरी तथा ।
 सप्तमं चैव कौमारी अष्टमं वरदायिनी ॥
 नवमं बुद्धिदात्री च दशमं ब्रह्मचारिणी ।
 एकादशं चन्द्रघण्टा तु द्वादशं भुवनेश्वरी ॥
 द्वादशैतानि नामानि त्रिसन्ध्यं य पठेन्नरः ।
 जिह्वाग्रे वसते तस्य ब्रह्मरूपा सरस्वती ॥

This is the meaning of the verse: Sarasvatī's first synonymous name is Bhāratī, and the second is Sarasvatī. Third is Śāradā Devī, fourth is Haṁsavāhinī (one who rides a swan), fifth is Jaganmātā (the mother of the world), and sixth is Vāgīśvarī (the goddess of speech). Similarly, the seventh name is Kaumārī (virgin goddess), and the eighth is Varadāyinī (the bestower of blessings). The Ninth is Buddhidātrī (intelligence provider), and the tenth name is Brahmachārīṇī (one who practices penance). The eleventh name is Chandraghantā (one who has a half-moon shaped like a bell), and the twelfth is Bhuvaneshawarī (goddess of the universe).

The meaning of the third or final part of the verse is: Whoever recites these twelve names at the three junctions of the day (morning, noon, and evening), the goddess Saraswati, who embodies the form of Brahma, resides on the tip of their tongue. In addition to this verse, Gurukuls teach their students other verse forms or mantras as prayers dedicated to the goddess Sarasvatī. However, the present verse is on the tip of everybody's tongue because of its simplicity of chanting and understanding. It is the most in use.

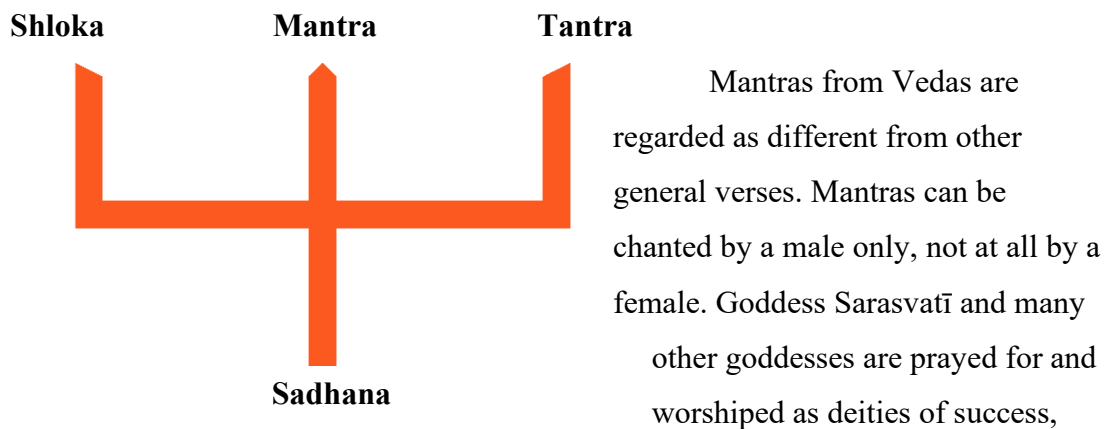
The students and practitioners chant this verse because Sarasvatī is the goddess of learning: knowledge, aptitudes, and attitude. Musicians, poets, and content creators also frequently worship and pray Sarasvatī. The ultimate aim of the praying and chanting of the verse is to gain knowledge, and the knowledge is for liberation from suffering. According to Vijñāna Bhairav Tantra, the practitioners can be liberated alive through their skillful practices.

I experienced three types of suffering and stages of times and conditions. When I blended the philosophical frame of *Trisūl*, it mentioned three sections of the meanings in the Sarasvatī prayers. If we think about daily life, there are many tridents like morning, day, and night; childhood, young, and old age, etc. In other words, the symbol of *Trisūl* is not only philosophical sufferings; they might be seen, unseen, or both spiritually. The *Trisūl* has a handle and meanings related to knowledge, protection and liberation.

Moreover, the trident, or *Trisūl*, is also an empirical and interpretive symbol of human life. *Trisūl* is a symbol of *Śul/Tāp* (sufferings), and at the same time, this is a symbol of liberation and protection. Thus, the emblem attracted me to use it as a research philosophy for my thesis.

The Tertiary Set of Sādhanā (practice)

My society has a *Trisūl* of Śloka (verse), Mantra, and Tantra. I perceive this as a tertiary set of ideas. I remember that my mother and six sisters, too, used to chant the prayer to Sarasvatī. The verse is chanted by everyone while praying for knowledge. The second is mantra chanting. No woman, including my mother and sisters, could listen to or chant the *Gāyatrī Mantra*. The third is Tantra which is shamanism. Both males and females of several communities practice Tantra. To me, that was a case of discrimination between my sisters and me.

Figure 3*Trisūl of Sadhana*

knowledge, and power. However, I did not know why my mother and sisters were prohibited from chanting mantras. I did not dare ask my father the reason behind this discriminatory practice in my family. I was taught that there is the issue of *Trisūl*, or the subject of suffering seen and unseen. I perceived the discriminatory practice as a tradition taken for granted for a long time.

In 2013, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that certain Gurukuls were actively teaching Vedas to girls. These particular Gurukuls not only allowed female students to listen to Vedic mantras but also encouraged them to actively participate in chanting. This innovative approach aimed at dispel the traditional notion of male proprietorship associated with Vedic knowledge. Through my observations, I noted that these new Gurukuls were taking significant steps to demystify the longstanding perception of exclusive male engagement with Vedic mantras. The initiation of girls into the chanting of Veda mantras served as a powerful means to challenge and transform preconceived notions surrounding masculinity and femininity. This progressive approach reflected a shift towards inclusivity and equality within the realm of Vedic education.

I was taught the problems of gender and development in my Master's in Anthropology and public administration. The domination of males is an issue of analysis. I used to believe that this masculine dominance in *mantra* chanting was a taken-for-granted idea. The recent trend in girls participating in Veda chanting intrigued me and became the focal point of my study. I pondered whether the historical practice was predominantly masculine, and if the contemporary shift represented a feminization of this tradition, or if it signaled a breaking down of the

barriers traditionally established by males. Has this tradition gone beyond Brahmanical patriarchy, as Chakravarti (1993) described?

I started looking at the issue of Vedic education from the trinary or *Triśūl* perspectives: (a) taken for-granted tradition in my society, (b) change process in Gurukuls, and (c) analysis of patriarchy and gender equality. I began to explore the associated issues from a gender perspective along post-structural worldviews and Advaita (Non-dual) Vedic philosophy with a focus on the indigenous non-colonial *Triśūl* paradigm.

Figure 4

Fluidity in Worldviews

Gender Perspective

Post-Structuralism

Advaita Philosophy



Fluidity in Worldviews

All three ideas have fluid meanings. The perspective on gender has evolved with various waves of change, and poststructuralism stands out as a paradigm shift in itself. Similarly, meanings within Advaita philosophy exhibit fluidity.

Consequently, this study seeks to explore the trinary aspects of fluidity in Vedic education for females.

My Interest in the Topic

I found the research problem echoed with Kara (2015), who mentioned that one could decide on any research topic, question/s, or methodology based on the researcher's background and understanding. I have experience in the Gurukul education system rooted in the Vedic tradition. As I mentioned earlier, I was a student of Gurukul and spent much time in it during my formal education.

Let me begin by sharing my lifelong experience in Vedic education. I was engaged, detached, and re-engaged in Vedic education throughout my academic journey. My path to formal Vedic education started at seven, after my *Vratibandha* (*Upanayana* – the beginning of learning Veda). Once I completed my education at a

Sanskrit secondary school in Pokhara, Western Nepal, I rote and learned Sanskrit literature and all Vedic rituals.

However, a situation halted my journey after completing my school because there needed to be an institution to teach Vedic/Sanskrit. My social environment favored me to continue learning in Pokhara, my hometown. As a result, I switched to the Intermediate of Arts (I. A.) and started a career in journalism. Over time, I completed my bachelor's degree in Sociology/Anthropology from Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara. As there was no Master's in Sociology/Anthropology, I moved to Kathmandu and joined the Master of Anthropology at Tribhuvan University Campus.

Despite joining a separate subject at the university, I continued working in journalism and became a news presenter at Nepal Television Corporation. Meanwhile, I joined Valmiki Campus under Nepal Sanskrit University for the intermediate level (*Uttar madhyamā*) to fulfill my desire to learn Sanskrit and acquire Vedic knowledge. I wanted to move into the Sanskrit stream because of its deep sense of spirituality and my passion for advanced levels of Sanskrit language skills.

I had to discontinue my pursuit of Sanskrit studies for two primary reasons. Firstly, the demands of my admission into an anthropology class and my responsibilities as a news presenter necessitated more time than I could allocate. Secondly, I experienced tension due to a significant age gap between myself and my fellow students. Consequently, I was unable to pursue a degree in Sanskrit. Nevertheless, I successfully obtained master's degrees in Public Administration and Journalism.

Reengagement in Vedic Education

While preparing the PhD assignments of course work, I visited the Department of Education (DoE) for data collection. Then, I re-engaged myself in Vedic education. The DoE data motivated me to work for Vedic education. Having realized the research problem in Vedic education, my interest shifted from the media studies that I had presented during the entrance examination. Later, I developed a separate proposal for this work.

As a Sanskrit student at school, I focused on the revival of Sanskrit and Vedic education. I have observed several changes now while comparing it with the past. One of the significant changes is that Dalits, *Janajāti*, and girls can now study at newly opened Gurukuls in different parts of Nepal. Another change is that global funding has been invested in the name of 'mainstreaming of conventional/religious education'

(MoE, 2009). I have spent a long time studying the re-emergence of Vedic education and its inclusive notion of modernization.

I visited different Gurukuls in Parbat, Kāski, Chitwan, Nawal Parāsī, Rupandehi, and Kathmandu districts. As a result, I, an anthropologist, discovered the new state of Neo-Sanskritization in Nepal. Previously, a notion of Sanskritization was developed by Indian anthropologist M. N. Srinivas in the 1950s and 60s, which identified upward social mobility in caste-based societies through lower castes imitating the behavior of upper castes (Srinivas, 1972; Gurung, 1986; Sharma, 2004). Sharma (2004) and Gurung (1986) also found Sanskritization in modern Nepal through their studies. Measuring the changing pulses of the society exhibited further development towards De-Sanskritization in similar societies (Sinha, 2006).

Having studied for a year and a half independently, I realized that my theoretical ground of the research would be "Neo-Sanskritization," and I picked up Vedic education and its re-emergence as the area of my PhD research. I prepared an article on the re-emergence of Vedic education, and the paper was accepted for the SASON (Sociological/Anthropological Society of Nepal) International Conference, 2013. I analyzed the sociological and anthropological changes in caste-based societies in the paper. This paper was the crux for me to link the social sciences theory with the emerging development theory.

The Problem of Gender Equality in Vedic Education

By 2014, I became an enthusiastic researcher who loved to see the sites of Gurukuls. I found names of girls' Gurukuls in different parts of Nepal and tried to contact them, and this was how in 2014, I visited a Kanyā (girls') Gurukul in Kathmandu. Girls of this Gurukul chanted in the same way as the boys did, which I captured for a television news story. The story was aired and was appreciated by the audience, although they also found the new practice strange.

‘Oh! Do the girls chant Veda?’

I presented my progress using visual data on both Gurukuls for boys and girls at KUSOED. Everyone was very interested in this new development in Nepali society. The audience suggested me to focus on studying the Gurukul for girls. I had seen various individual initiations by women to learn Veda and practice the rituals, but no woman had yet achieved success to the same degree as any man.

I recalled from my childhood that chanting Veda and listening to the *Gāyatrī mantra* by females was a curse, and the seven female members of my family

had no Right, although my brother and I were free to do so. While at Sanskrit Secondary School in Pokhara, I had a female friend who was taught the Sanskrit language, grammar, and rituals in co-education classes theoretically because the school was operating as a public school during the daytime only. She attended for three years, from Grade 8 to 10, but could not pass the school leaving certification examinations.

I came to this juncture because of non-restricted educational opportunities. I always tried to understand Sanskrit, Sanskritization, spiritualism, materialism, and development. However, my nostalgic moments brought me back to my sisters, who had no chance to practice the education which my brother and I had. We had the idea of priesthood so that we could do something if there were any problems of hand-to-mouth, but there was no such alternate opportunity for women. This question of masculinity or patriarchy pulled me to search for a broad scenario of the educational status of women.

The educational status of my female family members and the Sanskrit school experiences pulled me to national education data in response to gender parity and development. I focused on the data on technical/vocational, Buddhist (Gonpā), and Islamic (Madrasā) schools in search of gender equality. Analysis of the national data on education revealed a focus on female literacy rather than Vedic education. Demographically, the educational status of females is not balanced when analyzing the national report of the National Population and Housing Census, 2021. The difference in male and female literacy rates is also relatively low at 14.2 percentage points. The male literacy rate is 83.6%, whereas the female literacy rate is 69.4% (CBS, 2023). Additionally, the census indicates that 44.59% of the students with graduate or equivalent degrees are females.

Not only concerning gender but also in relation to out-of-school children with respect to conventional religious and educational traditions, the Government of Nepal initiated the mainstreaming of conventional/religious education through the School Sector Reform Plan (MoE, 2009). The main goal was to reduce the number of 'out of school children'. The government's mainstreaming policy documents identified three types of schools in different religious societies. They were Gurukul/Āśram from the Hindu/Vedic community, Gonpā/Bihar in the Buddhist community, and Madrasā in the Islamic community.

Religious/conventional education systems show the different status of gender equality according to their religious norms and traditions. In Buddhist education, hundreds of females could be seen chanting and worshipping in Gonpās and Bihars. I observed girls' Gonpās in Kathmandu and Mustang. I saw nuns in Mustang who chanted and played drums in daily worship and ritual work in the Gumbās (Gonpās). The government registered Gonpā was 2,227 out of approximately 5,000 Gonpās nationwide (Gurung, 2017).

According to the data, the Gonpās were teaching 15/20 to 8 hundred students. The male students were known as 'Lama Tawa' and the female students as 'Āni' (Gurung, 2017). The description reflects the fact that females can join Buddhist schools. However, the number of nuns and practicing Lamas in society who are moving towards a priesthood has recently witnessed a decline compared to the number of male Lamas.

Another conventional education system is the Madrasā School, and the number of girls in this system is higher than that of boys. Nepal has nearly 4,000 Madrasās that teach more than 200,000 students, which comprise 58% of girls (Hussain, 2014). The number of girls' Madrasās, called 'Banāt' is about 50 (Khan, 2018). The data show that most of the Madrasās are for males, but the participation of females is higher there.

In the Vedic period, the status of women was higher than now in respect of achieving a Vedic education. "Boys and girls habitually go to Āśram (Gurukul) to learn Vedic Samhitā (*Mantra*) and girls who could compose the largest number of *Mantra* (ṛchā) are called 'Bahuṛchi' (Pokhrel, 2011).

In addition to Veda, the girls were taught mathematics, music, dance, craft, and military science. Mantras 10.39 and 10.40 from the Ṛgveda, composed by Ghoshā (on page 140), assert that women actively participated in warfare. Notably, female scholars (ṛshikās), such as Ghosha herself, contributed to the composition of various Vedic mantras. The literature shows the higher status of females in the Vedic period. Pokhrel (2014, 2017) stated that women's education status was not discriminatory. The documents mention 27 female sages who composed various *mantras* of Ṛgveda and names of females like Gārgi, who debated with sage king Janak and royal sage of Yājñavalkya. However, the status of women was degraded from the Smṛti period in protecting women from evil people, as Pokhrel claimed.

The restriction set a trend that women should not chant Veda and become priests. It could be the reason that my mother and sisters and all females could not learn Veda or move into the priesthood. Such situations occur not only in Hindu society (KLINGOROVÁ and HAVLÍČEK, 2015) but also, at different levels, in all societies and religions.

The status explicitly reflects the condition of gender equality in education in Nepal because it is hard to find female priests in almost all religions. Buddhism indeed has nuns in various Gompās, and Islam females can lead only females while chanting Namaz in Mosques (Zakir Hussain, 11 April, 2018, Personal Communication). In Hinduism or Vedic societies, except for the reformist Ārya Samāj, females can chant Purāṇa and Sanskrit verses but cannot become priests and chant Vedic *mantras*.

I saw Paurāṇic storyteller females but not professional female priests though girls were learning in different Sanskrit schools and Gurukuls that I met during my school life. Analyzing the job market of Gurukul background products, they are unlikely to be jobless because they can perform as priests in a society where the Hindu population is 81.2 percent (CBS, 2021).

Aside from being a priest, women can also become a teacher in subjects like Nepali, Sanskrit, and social studies. They can pursue archaeological, cultural, historical, and comparative religious studies and practice yoga and spirituality. Sanskrit scholars produced in Nepal are popular abroad and universities have signed a memorandum of understanding with different universities (Rauniyar, 2018). For example, Nepal Sanskrit University has agreed to launch exchange programs for sharing knowledge and conducting research with Oxford University's Centre for Hindu Studies. The collaboration aims to analyze and translate archaeological texts or evidence at the National Archives of Nepal. This shows that Sanskrit/Vedic scholars can understand and interpret ancient texts.

Media provide platforms for Sanskrit experts. They are influential in Nepal's media houses, and they are appointed Nepali language editors, proofreaders, copy editors, and ghostwriters. People with a Sanskrit background can more easily secure a career as a journalist or news presenter at radio and television studios due to their correct pronunciation.

Since Sanskrit is the mother of many languages, in the field of teaching, the Sanskritist can teach Nepali, Hindi, and Pali languages too. Sanskrit teachers are

scarce in private schools that have included Sanskrit as an additional subject. Thus, Gurukul education, which teaches Sanskrit, Veda, and rituals, is interestingly contributory to career seekers.

Theoretically, religious/Vedic literature and symbols can replicate gender equality. However, there is no gender equality in Vedic activities though very few women have been involved in teaching and Paurānik storytelling. People generalize that Veda, Sanskrit, and ritual education are only for males. So, equality must start from Gurukul.

Recalling Myself as a “Chhātra”

I was admitted to Sanskrit Mādhyamik Vidyālaya (Sanskrit secondary school), Bhimkāli Pātan, Pokhara, by my mother, Divyeshwari Upadhyaya. I was enrolled there for three main reasons: the Sanskrit school was free whereas general schools charged fees; the head teacher at the school was our relative who could care for me; my elder brother was taught in general school and was deprived of the traditional knowledge system that many parents had.

Guru Rajaram Regmi, who had taught Sanskrit grammar to my father, was still teaching there at the school. However, in my school, he taught only in middle secondary (grades 6-7) under the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971 (MoE, 1971). His educational certificate set the limitation, not his capacity. He had taught Sanskrit grammar before NESP, but his certificate of intermediate level (Madhyamā) restricted him from teaching above the middle secondary level.

He taught Sanskrit prose and poetry to grades six and seven, whereas he taught me grammar at his residence at no cost. This was because his grandson was my classmate and was to be taught at home. After dinner, I used to go to Rajaram guru's residence to learn grammar (*Laghukaumudī*) and sleep in his grandson's room. The rote memorization taught me grammar, a base for my Sanskrit studies. The school headmaster Janardan Sharan Tripathi started a hostel for us when we reached 9th grade. That was the first concept of a hostel (*chhātrāvāsa*) in modern Sanskrit schools. We had to bring groceries to cook and were compelled to finish our chores. The head guru's quarter was upstairs, and he used to check our daily cooking, washing, and studying routine.

Told by our parents and gurus, we listened to stories about chhātrāvāsa (hostel) run in Kathmandu and India for Gurukul students. There was some information about Sanskrit *chhātrāvāsa* and residential Nepal Veda Vidyāśram,

Kathmandu. The Government ran both. Otherwise, there were no such systematic *chhātrāvāsa* because the NESP had excluded Sanskrit education from general schools, and the influence of modernization had created a non-Sanskrit environment.

However, the Sanskrit school taught us three major subjects - Grammar (*LaghuKaumudī*), Sanskrit literature, and *Karmakāṇḍa* (Rituals) apart from compulsory subjects of English, Mathematics, Nepali, and History. Thus, I passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examination from the school in 1989. The degree was called *pūrvamadhyamā* in the traditional education system and was conducted in India. We would hear the stories of Gurukul education, the relationship between *chātrā* (student) and *śikṣak* (teacher), and the real hardships through the school's gurus. There were some Gurukuls-like temples where gurus would teach their disciples and take them to India, especially Vārāṇasī, for certification through examination. I could not continue my education since no Sanskrit college was available in my hometown Pokhara. So, I became an anthropologist and a media person and am now trying to be an educationist.

My early formal education was divided. Partly, I was taught Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha in Nepali on a slate board with dust or ashes (*dhulauṭo*) by my father from the age of five, and then was taken to a local Ratna Primary School by my elder sister. I joined grade one at the age of six.

The other part of my education, my Upanayana Saṁskāra (*Vratibandha* ritual) was performed at the age of seven. I had a trinary load of daily practice of *Rudrī* chanting, the personal daily ritual of *Sandhyopāsan*, and worshiping the five gods and goddesses. I used to blow the conch and ring the bell and chant the prayer/hymns (*bhajan-kīrtan*). The focus of the education and worship was to respect one's mother as the goddess (*mātr̥devo bhava*), respect one's father as God (*pit̥r̥devo bhava*), respect guru as God (*ācāryadevobhava*), welcome guest as God (*Atithidevobhava*) and not misuse one's study of self (*swādhyān mā pramada*).

I frequently reminisce about the days when I ventured out to acquire my new textbooks for the 9th and 10th grades, as well as to the Curriculum Development Center (CDC) to scrutinize the resurgence of the Gurukul system for this study. I tried to reflect on my life of *chhātra*, my gurus' stories of *chhātra*, and the present *chhātra* or *chhātrā* during the present exploration. In so doing, I found several

differences between what I heard from my gurus, as I experienced during my *chhātrā* life, and the current re-emerging Gurukul life.

The description reflects that the effects of modernization and technological invention have affected the physical facilities of not only Gurukuls but also of the teaching patterns. The concept of inclusion was introduced in a Gurukul conference that “the Guru can teach any student if s/he wants to”. On the ground of my own experience and reflection, my conscience led me to believe that there is a continuous change in society in Gurukul education, and I explored the new practices along the following trinary scenes:

Scene 1: Spontaneous Renaissance of Gurukul System

The re-emergence of Gurukul education is the ‘Spontaneous Renaissance of Vedic Education’ (Timilsina, 2074 V.S.) which demonstrates the idea of inclusion, for example, the opening of Gurukuls for girls. Monetary donations have aided the re-emergence as little as ‘a rupee per day’ or periodically collecting a handful of rice (*mutthi uṭhāune*) given to the Gurukuls. Thus, Nepal has been observing the re-emergence of Vedic education through Gurukuls with initiatives in different parts of Nepal. In 2013, the number of these initiatives was 100 (DoE, 2012, pp. 184-187), but now it has reached 225 as discussed in the national Gurukul conference organized in Kathmandu on 16-17 March 2018.

According to the information gathered from the conference and the Department of Education (DoE), people's donation is the most vital in establishing Gurukuls. The Government recognition by tokenism in the name of lump sum grants is another funding source. The number of Vedic schools is rising year by year and has reached nearly three hundred as research participants inform.

Disconnection of traditional education and its reemergence has a decades long history of educational reform plan. Oregon University Professor Hugh B. Wood led the commission as an interceptor in marginalizing the Gurukul education system from the mainstream of Nepal. The Wood Commission (1956) and the New Education Development Plan (1972) deliberately eradicated the *pāṭhasālā* system which was Gurukul education decades ago. Similarly, the Nepal government, influenced by the anti-Sanskrit movement led by Maoists (1996-2006), decided to eliminate the subject of Sanskrit from the school curriculum. Data from the Department of Education (DoE) indicates that Gurukuls began to resurface organically around the year 2000. Subsequently, inclusive Gurukuls were also established. However, it is worth noting

that the existence of Gurukuls specifically designed for girls poses a challenge for the focus of this study.

Curiosity about *Dharma* and *Karma* has always had a high place in society. People were found asking several questions on these issues: what is *Dharma*? What is *Karma*? Can women really learn and chant Veda? Is *Dharma* like a religion? Is one's work, *Karma*? The general populace expresses a curiosity about an individual's Rights and duties. Such inquiries and interest underscore the necessity to delve into additional perspectives and interpretations. This highlights the requirement for scholarly analysis that connects Western concepts with Eastern ideas to provide cohesive interpretations of *Dharma* and *Karma*. This is particularly relevant in the context of Vedic education, where people willingly contribute to the dissemination of knowledge.

Scene 2: Mainstreaming Conventional Education

The spontaneous renaissance of Gurukul education again became the turning point of recognition by national and international stakeholders. The School Sector Reform Plan- SSRP (2009-2015) was approved by the GoN, recognized traditional/Vedic education as school education and aimed to mainstream education, including the Gurukul/Āśram system. SSRP links Nepali education to the development partners of Nepal. Gurukul/Āśram also started receiving the donors' funds to promote themselves in their societies.

SSRP opened the door of Gurukul education to an inclusive path as Hinduism has the notion of humanity (*Manuṣyatā*) according to the idea of 'the whole world is a family' or *Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam*. SSRP's global connection (seeing the whole world as a family) is seen as *Manuṣyatwa* (humanity), a code of conduct for every human to make life a success. Hatcher (1994) interpreted *Manuṣya dharma* as humanness in describing a part of the verse on *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* from *Hitopadeśa* (Beneficial Instruction). Thus, global education seems to be a perspective of humanity.

Global awareness of gender parity and disparity in teaching and learning ritualistic knowledge and skills received attention through the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). World Hindu Federation (WHF) conducted the study on "norms, codes, and scriptures of Sanatana Dharma concerning gender equity and violence against women" with funding of UNIFEM. (World Hindu

Federation & UNIFEM, 2006). The report concludes that power within the society remained in the priesthood.

The report indicated that introducing more women into the priesthood could result in gender parity, and the establishment of Gurukul education played a crucial role in this direction. The global spotlight on this issue served as a motivating force for the establishment of Gurukuls for girls, mirroring those for boys in different districts of Nepal. The implementation of the report opened discussions on gender equality within the education system and the priestly profession. This has contributed to the evolving trend of Neo-Sanskritization in the caste-based society.

Scene 3: Neo-Sanskritization

Neo-Sanskritization is an advancement of the theory of Sanskritization which M. N. Srinivas developed from 1950s (Srinivas, 1956). Sanskritization recommended studying each field instance concerning the locally dominant caste and other factors. The Gurukul school system is for the Hindu/Vedic community, Gonpā is for Buddhists, and Madrasā is for the Islamic community. The Gurukul and Āśram were only for Brahman boys until recently, although there were stories of *Kṣetrī* and Vaishya boys studying in Gurukul. Now, Gurukul education has an open policy. They are learning Pāpaa, Puṇya, Mokṣa, and stories of Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, and Purāṇa and making the lifestyle Sanskritic by the castes other than the Brahman caste in a caste-based Hindu society (Srinivas, 1972).

Srinivas initiated Sanskritization as a means of instigating social change in South India during the 1950s based on his empirical observations. While conducting fieldwork within the Coorg community in Mysore, India, he noted a shift among the people towards adopting the lifestyle of a higher-caste community. Individuals in the community chose to abstain from consuming alcohol, altered their habits, and embraced a vegetarian diet. Gurukul teaches Sanskritic knowledge and vegetarian habits, and as a result, people achieved recognition as a higher caste among other castes. Srinivas interprets social change as upward social mobility. Nepali sociologist/anthropologists have applied the theory in researching the upward mobility.

In response to the Sanskritization movement, five concepts—Westernization, Industrialization, Urbanization, Modernization, and Christianization—were introduced as strategies for achieving upward social mobility. Srinivas (1956) describes three alternatives in an article titled “A Note on Sanskritization and

Westernization”. Firstly, he posits that Sanskritization serves as a fundamental prerequisite for Westernization, a phenomenon he observed within the non-Brahman castes of Mysore. Secondly, he suggests that Westernization may manifest independently of an intermediate Sanskritization process for groups and individuals, particularly in the context of rapid industrialization outlined in Five-Year Plans. Although he articulated this perspective in the 1950s, contemporary India and Nepal, characterized by caste-based majorities, have since implemented numerous periodic plans. However, industrialization remains elusive for the groups or individuals identified by Srinivas. He defines Westernization as the emulation of English people in aspects such as dress, food, habits, and lifestyles.

Third, the government’s movement towards a “classless and casteless” society might mean the disappearance of Hinduism, and the answer is that Christianity and Islam are probably better equipped to withstand Westernization because they have a strong organization. In contrast, Hinduism lacks other organizations, excluding the caste system, as Srinivas analyzed. He claims that if the caste system disappears, Hinduism also will disappear. Thus, the notion exists in caste-based societies.

Politics of identity has diverted Sanskritization towards De-Sanskritization (Sinha, 2006) in India. Nepal also has some symptoms of De-Sanskritization after the popular movement of 2006 and the Interim Constitution 2007. Simultaneously, the politics of identity also guided the renaissance of the Gurukul education system, but the re-emerging trend might not be guided because it is beyond Sanskritization. It may be possible to shift from Sanskritization to Neo-Sanskritization by incorporating modern pedagogical tools in the Gurukul education system (Timilsina, 2013a). The Gurukuls teach Pāpa, Puṇya, Puruṣārtha, vegetarianism, spirituality, meditation, yoga, and other compulsory subjects such as English, computer, and social studies.

Sanskritization was an intricate process wherein non-Brahmanical caste groups endeavored to emulate the lifestyle of higher castes. In the context of Neo-Sanskritization, a departure from this traditional approach is evident as all castes engage in shared learning experiences within the Gurukul. Here, individuals from various castes learn collaboratively, drawing knowledge from Brahman boys who, in turn, acquire insights from Gurus specializing in Vedic and modern streams within a diverse school education system. Neo-Sanskritization plays a pivotal role in dismantling the taboo associated with touchability and untouchability, particularly after the completion of one's school life. The inclusivity of Female Gurukuls further

underscores this progressive approach, facilitating joint learning experiences for students from diverse caste groups.

Since all "...izations" shift towards Neo-Sanskritization through the Vedic education system with Modern/Western subjects through modified pedagogies (Timilsina, 2013a), Neo-Sanskritization rises as an inclusive new gateway to upward mobility for all caste and class students in caste-based societies. This trend is a new form of classicism re-emerging through a turn to the education system practiced in the prehistoric Vedic society and its tempering with the present-day needs and thinking. This new development is helping all castes and genders to explore new horizons for sharing knowledge and expanding professions.

Literature on the status of women in the Vedic period (Pokhrel, 2014, 2017) have been centralized and are mainly based on secondary sources. Jayal (1966) also explored the status of women in epics. They use stories of Upaniṣads, Purāṇas, Mahābhārata, and Rāmāyaṇa. However, very limited academic papers discuss the situation of women in the general Gurukul education system, particularly in Nepal. There are several reasons for limited debate on gender parity in Vedic education.

Oracy was the primary medium of Vedic education in preserving knowledge. In other words, knowledge was transferred to generations through the oral way of memorization. They mainly focused on oral/textual analysis of Sanskrit texts and did not examine how modern society practices Gurukul education, particularly girls' education. There was the division of labor, but monetization was not prioritized as it is today. The tradition of division of knowledge was based on empirical knowledge, morality, and the strict order of society.

My research is about linking past practices with the current practices of the Gurukul education system. My current research is the first educational ethnographic study to fill the research gap. In so doing, I have linked my past experiences to current practices observed in the field.

Next, we study gender, spiritually and religiously in Vedic literature. In that case, male and female gods are prayed to or worshiped simultaneously—for example, Umā- Maheśvara for Parvatī and Śiva, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa for Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu, and Sītā-Rāma. In Paśupatiṅg temple, there is a famous and essential icon of half-man-half-woman named Ardhanārīśvara. Nityānanda (2011) interprets the symbolic representation of Lord Śiva as Ardhanārīśvara, the human embodiment of both male and female energy but not divided. This intimates that males and females are a

synergized form of creation and procreation. However, the figure of gender importance has not been interpreted theoretically yet. I have brought out the meaning of Ardhanārīśvara theory of gender equality.

The Statement of the Problem

I could not join a formal Vedic school during my school life like today's Gurukuls or Veda Vidyāśram. There were no such Gurukuls. As a result, I was accepted to Sanskrit secondary school, where the environment was similar to other general schools except for the major Sanskrit subjects. Now, the scenes show that Vedic schools have reemerged.

On the other hand, my sisters could not study Veda at that time because there was no Gurukul for girls. They were not allowed to study Veda. In the current context, separate Gurukuls for girls have also been opened, indicating Vedic education's reemergence.

I have consolidated the research problem mainly through the questions I faced from schooling, rituals, visiting Paśupatināth temple, Gurukuls, and religious literature. Here are some questions: why was the *Upanayana* ceremony of my sisters not performed as my brother and mine? Why weren't they taught Veda? Why did not the data of Gurukuls show the number of girls? Why do very few girls struggle for Veda's education? Why are the girls compelled to abandon their aspirations of becoming a Veda-reciting expert? Why have the girls' Gurukuls not followed the gender-neutral pedagogy as do the boys' Gurukul? Why could females not chant the *mantra* if there were female composers in the Vedic period? Why can't females be priests in a gender-sensitive society today? How is Nepali society adopting the Neo-Sanskritization process?

I could not answer the questions properly because I could not find academic documents on Gurukul practice and its gender perspectives in contemporary Nepal. Thus, I adopted a paradigm that could bring the answers from the field and literature.

My disciplinary training in anthropology guided me to analyze society and culture from theoretical perspectives with a *Trisūl* of theories. Firstly, I went through structural functionalism to explore the structure and function of society. The society is caste-hierarchized from higher to lower structure: Brahman, *Kṣetrī*, Vaisya, and Śūdra. Similarly, the other structure is gender discrimination that obstructed the path to equality in education among males, females, and the third gender.

Secondly, gender theory is another frame searching for an answer to the problem. Specifically, unlike boys, patriarchy is a hurdle for girls to obtain Vedic education. Gender theorist Judith Butler argued that gender is socially constructed through commonplace speech, acts, and performative nonverbal communication (Butler, 1990). Butler's "performativity" could not address the problem of my study. Thirdly, Uma Chakravarti's notion of Brahmanical patriarchy (Chakravarti, 1993) is a form of discrimination based on sex. This theory has proximity in problematization and contextualization of the Vedic or Hindu society issue. However, "Brahmanical patriarchy" also cannot address my research issue.

Fourthly, I explored *Ardhanārīśvara* Theory of gender perspective. This theory is based on the combined power of Śiva and Śakti that is depicted in Paśupatināth Temple. This is a manifestation of Advaita Vedānta philosophy. Thus, the thesis found its gender theory in addressing the problem. The analysis of the respective research area and the connected theoretical meanings suggest that "*Ardhanārīśvara* theory of gender equality" is closer to the need of my study, where males and females are to be treated on equal terms. Similarly, my study foresees the need to update several theoretical ideas, including structural-functionalism, gender theory, patriarchy, and critical theories.

Functionalism played a significant role in shaping the concept of Sanskritization within the framework of its contemporary time, context, and issues. However, with changing dynamics, a different theoretical perspective on upward mobility, change, and development became imperative. In my research agenda, I found it necessary to substantiate the applicability of the Neo-Sanskritization theory (Timilsina, 2013a). Ultimately, this approach proved instrumental in addressing unresolved problems and questions. Field experiences unveiled practical challenges that impede the realization of equal educational Rights. While advocacy groups for equal Rights and educational experts passionately promote the creation of an inclusive environment for knowledge acquisition and sharing among both girls and boys, there exists a contrary stance within a rigid faction, which includes some scholars. This group opposes efforts towards non-discriminatory schooling for both genders. The study aimed to delve into the depths of this issue and explore viable solutions.

Research Gap

There is global support for creating equal opportunity for education in Nepal. Gender equality laws prevail in the country. Theoretically, gender theories provoke

similar ideas. However, the struggle for Veda chanting by girls is still being visible. The structural functionalism of Nepali society shows there is discrimination at the roots. Human beings make their society and its socialization processes. There needs to be an awareness of equal schooling in the very socialization process. The socialization process limits the girls' interest in chanting the verses of Veda together with the boys. The existing literature, as well as field practices, show some constraints. Theories, principles, and historical truths have been set aside when the question of equal education comes. "Daughter should not study", society says. But why? There were different female scholars, as Vedic history shows. The Vedic scholars themselves admit it. Most scholars admit there is no restriction for girls to Veda chanting or ritual work performance. The Constitution of Nepal and its Acts have provisions for equality, which readily promote Neo-Sanskritization.

However, a discriminative mindset is a major obstacle in the Neo-Sanskritization process. Most of the scholars themselves oppose the idea of Veda teaching girls. It is surprising that those who emphasize equal Vedic education do not send their daughters to Veda teaching-learning processes. The situation at the ground level is very challenging, and the girls' Gurukuls have been wading through anti-current thoughts, behaviors, and practices, unlike the case of boys' Gurukuls. This is how discrimination exists between girls' Gurukuls and boys' Gurukuls. Reemergence of Vedic education has many obstacles and discriminations yet to be documented. In summing up, theories, literature, and field problems reflect that there is a knowledge gap. To fill the gap, I carried this research with the following proposal.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to explore the emergence of girls' Vedic education in modern Nepal.

Research Questions

In accomplishing the purpose of the research, I set different research questions based on my background of engagement, disengagement, and reengagement with Vedic education. The field engagement, literature analysis, and theoretical orientations helped me set the research questions. My whole research work for this thesis was based on one overarching and four subsidiary research questions.

Overarching Research Question

How has the development of Vedic education for girls unfolded in the context of Nepal?

Subsidiary Research Questions

1. What is the Vedic educational condition of Vedic mantra recitation for girls in Nepal?
2. How have the Nepali girl's Gurukul students experienced ritual performance in response to the re-emergence of Vedic education?
3. In what way is menstruation a factor affecting teaching and learning processes as well as gender equality and paradoxes or gaps and challenges under the Gurukul education in Nepal?
4. How has the status of the revival of Sanskrit education for girls occurred in the ethnographic sites?

The Rationale of the Study

The research focuses on the gender perspective of Vedic education in contemporary Nepal. Vedic school for girls is a new effort in contemporary society where the Vedic Gurukul system is reemerging. This study is for three reasons.

First, it is significant for me. It contributes to my understanding of both the views of the founders of girls' Gurukul and the girl students. As a researcher, this is an opportunity for me to understand ways of thinking about teaching Veda and giving Vedic education to girls, knowing its roots in Vedic scriptures and contradictions in the worldviews religiously, spiritually, traditionally, legally, and practically.

Second, the process has a significant aspect of a profession in the public sector in terms of an inclusive democracy. Seats for the position of professor, teacher, storyteller, and priest are reserved in different organizations, including the national army. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) has provisions for female inclusion. Female representation in public posts is a must in Nepal. The study might help make an inventory for professional career progression. This research will help analyze human resources and the production of human resources from girls' Gurukul.

Third, this knowledge contributes to policy formation on gender dimensions of ancient practices in current society for educational development, management, and utilization of human resources. As a student of development education, the researcher expects that this study will help him to make the reader aware of the ground reality of the practice of girls' education in Vedic studies in Gurukuls. It also differentiates the varieties of Veda, Vedic, and Sanskrit studies.

The epistemological exploration of research within the gender perspective of Vedic education reveals contradictions present in various aspects, as elucidated

through an ethnographic study. This qualitative research incorporates personal, professional, and policy insights. This knowledge is particularly relevant to me, as I aim to become an expert on the resurgence of Vedic education in Nepal, encompassing both general aspects and inclusive approaches, with a specific focus on the feminization of Veda chanting. Professionally, the contribution is concerned with the community of practice. Educationists, orientalist, Hindu study professionals, and researchers may benefit from this study. Regarding policy concerns, the study has been a document that can be used as a reference to educational policy analysis while formulating policies on the issues of mainstreaming the traditional education system and its gender aspects.

This study is a theoretical contribution to *Ardhanārīśvara* theory of gender equality, the notion of Neo-Sanskritization, and a paradigmatic contribution to research methodology through the *Trīśūl* paradigm. According to Vedic philosophy, *Trīśūl* has three types of suffering or pain (*Śul*). There are deep meanings for liberation from the three *Śuls*: *Ādhyātmika* (Spiritual), *Ādhidaivika* (supernatural), and, *Ādhibhautika* (supper physical). The study interprets how my participants suffer from *Trīśūl* and their efforts toward salvation. This thesis has analyzed a trident of knowledge and bundle its research philosophy as a paradigm.

Philosophically asserting my positionality, *Trīśūl* is a multifaceted form crafted from metal. Being an anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss had influenced me while analyzing culture. His "binary opposition" is famous for the dualist perspective. Human performance and conceptions are changed according to time, geography, and technological advancement. Lévi-Strauss used the concept of "binary opposition" in his time and field of study. Yes, there was binary opposition then as he saw the opposite sex of male vs. female. The structuralist saw day vs. night. He analyzed good vs. evil. In my time, the concept has changed. My country's constitution acknowledges the third gender/transgender. In my field, "Sandhyopāsan" is performed at the adjunct time of neither night nor day. There is the liminal state of the time, which is "*Sandhyā*."

Lévi-Strauss's structuralism hardly represents pluralism in Gurukul, which is my field. So, I jumped to the trinary position of the cultural analysis based on Vedic philosophy/es in analyzing the multiple realities. In so doing, the *Trīśūl* paradigm has a bundle of facts that represent the numerous truths. No single meaning is inherently absolute but is instead relational, acknowledged universally by both Vedic and

Western scholars. When examining the Western perspective, I perceive the information within my field as linked to concepts such as "multiple relationships" and "multi-being" (Gergen, 2009), mirroring the aspirations of the participants in my research.

Trisūl manifests bundles of three things. They symbolize suffering, knowing the cause and effect and the solutions. It can easily discuss and analyze the nonpositivistic, subjective, multiple realities. Gergen (2009) brought a recent concept of existence for "multi-being." However, there was a theory made by Vedantic scholars named- "*Ekoham Bahusyām*"¹. The non-dualistic idea of Advaita expresses the almighty's form of multiplicities. "*Ekoham Bahusyām*" was developed on the ground of "*Sokāmayata, bahu syām prajayeya*"². From *Taittiriyaopaniṣad* (2.6.1) and "*Tadaikṣata, bahu syām prajāyeya*"³. from *Chhāndogyopaniṣad* (6.2.3). The essence of the mantras of the Upaniṣads is: There are multiple forms of divinity, but that is only one ultimately. Thus, this thesis is an anthology of wholistic nondual approaches with multiple aspirations of the research participants.

Limitation and Delimitation of the Study

Numerous issues and events were beyond my control, leading to several limitations in this study. The expansive history and philosophy surrounding Vedic education and its gender perspective present a significant challenge. I must acknowledge the limitation of the exploration capacity in delving into this extensive subject. Similarly, my research topic spans a wide range of study domains. However, I managed to confine the study within the scope of its intended purpose. As a researcher, I retained control over essential elements of the research despite the overarching challenges. So, I delimited my ethnographic research project to Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul (KGG) in Kathmandu to explore the gender perspective of Veda chanting and preparation for the priesthood. The context was fine in seeking answers to the research questions. My ethnography concentrated on activities on Veda chanting and daily teaching-learning by the girls, their teachers, and the founders of

¹ एकोऽहं बहु स्याम् ।

² सोऽकामयत । बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति । (तैत्तिरीयोपनिषद्, २।६।१)

³ तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति तत्तेजोऽसृजत तत्तेज ऐक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति तदपोऽसृजत । (छान्दोग्य उपनिषद्, ६।२।३)

the Gurukul. I observed their practices, and the pedagogy was attempted to align with that utilized in the Gurukuls for boys operating in various districts of Nepal.

The study has unintended delimitation as well. I, a male researcher, conducted the research mainly among the Gurukul girl students and their activities. However, my media presenter and Vedic schooling background helped me accomplish the work.

Organization of the Thesis

I have organized the thesis into nine chapters. The first chapter sets the scenes as the background of the study. It has indicated specific problems of the research topic. Identification of the problem through fieldwork has resulted in three main research questions. Moreover, the first chapter has the research purpose, questions, and rationale. In other words, this chapter is an introduction to the thesis.

In chapter two, I have portrayed the theoretical and conceptual roadmap of the thesis. The chapter explores and reviews the literature on education for girls in the Vedic tradition. The chapter overviews concepts, themes, and policy issues related to the topic. In framing the concept, I reviewed the theoretical shifting from structural functionalism to criticalism and time shifting from *Satya Yuga* to *Kali Yuga* as described in *Dharmaśāstra*.

Chapter three presents the research paradigm together with methodological aspects. My position on ontology, epistemology, and axiology comes under methodology. Keeping my research position in view, I have set my research design, its quality standards, research site, ethnographic fieldwork, tools for the research, meaning-making processes, and ethical consideration of the work.

Chapters four, five, six, and seven attempts to address the three different research questions of the thesis. Among the three, chapter four starts with analyzing the information gathered from the ethnographic fieldwork. The chapter attempts to respond to the first research question. The chapter focuses on the recital of the mantra/hymn at the girls' Gurukul. Similarly, it discusses the collected data tallying with provisions in Vedic literature and practices at boys' Gurukuls.

Chapter five concentrates on the research question associated with ritual work in the field, differences between the girls' and boys' Gurukuls, and their analyses from a global gender perspective.

The sixth chapter explores the contesting ideas of purity, pollution, and *Dharmaśāstra*. It considers the effect of menstruation on girls' education. This chapter is associated with other aspects of the research question on ritual work.

The seventh chapter deals with the challenges of feminization concerning Veda's education through the power of deities embracing goddesses. It analyzes the answer to the final research question, where paradoxes, contradictions, and gaps have been discussed. The prospects of the female priesthood, ultra-anti-current initiations, issues of authority and natural capability for work, and diversion to Sanskrit education from the Veda chanting have been considered as gaps in the teaching-learning process.

Chapter eight is a theoretical exploration of Neo-Sanskritization and *Ardhanārīśvara* theories from a gender perspective. Finally, the ninth or last chapter captures the entire research work's reflection, implication, and conclusion.

The Essence of the Chapter

This chapter introduced the thesis, which articulated the whole thesis's philosophical orientation, research paradigm, and respective theories. There is an idea of a three-dimensional way of cultural analysis where *Sarasvatī vandanā* also has trinary perspectives. It has three types of suffering; they are *Triśūl- Ādyatmika*, *Ādhidaiivika*, *ĀdhiBhautika*. It has problematized the reemerging Gurukul education in Nepal regarding girls' participation. In so doing, the chapter has indicated mainly trinary ways of questions: 1. If there were female sages who composed mantras of Veda, why girls, and women cannot chant the mantra? 2. What is the status of Vedic education for girls in Nepal? 3. What are the obstacles for girls in educating Vedic knowledge? *Triśūl* paradigm explores Neo-Sanskritization under ethnographic methodology.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUALIZING GIRLS' EDUCATION IN VEDIC TRADITION

The chapter shows that the practice of the traditional school system has ushered in fundamental conceptual revisits. It revisits theories and practices as well. There are different worldviews following the changing times. The traditional way of thinking generally applies structural-functional theory, which is focused on the functional perspective. When changes occurred according to time, context, and technology, the concept and practice of Vedic education also witnessed changes. Moreover, given the changing global context, I move from a functionalist approach to critical and postmodern notions. Thus, the chapter reviews the concepts according to time changes and theories.

Mapping the Concepts

Introducing the thesis, in Chapter I, I tried to problematize the topic of the study. Here I contextualized three emerging scenes on contemporary Nepali society as pronged spears or *Trisūl* research issues: 1) the Spontaneous Renaissance of the Gurukul System, 2) Global Concern to Mainstreaming Conventional Education, and 3) Neo-Sanskritization. These scenes helped me to explore the issues of Vedic education in Nepal and the concept of girls' education in Vedic tradition. Putting the major themes of research in Chapter I, I concentrated on the changing times that demanded modification in the cultural activities of Neo-Sanskritization. The societal sense is changing, and it is demanding gender parity in comparison to the past. To this recognition, in the introduction chapter, I indicated the theoretical and methodological contributions of the research.

Here, I concentrate on the significant concepts of the re-emergence of the Vedic school system and the theoretical perspective on my inquiry that enabled me analyze and interpret struggles for equal Vedic education for girls. An overview of these theoretical and philosophical perspectives is essential to build my perspective. For that, the review proceeds chronologically, shedding light on changes in female education. This is because the Vedic tradition has different literature, including Vedas, Vedānta (philosophical interpretation of the Vedas), *Purāṇa*, and other *Dharmaśāstric* documents.

The chronology brings proof that female sages composed several mantras of Veda. Besides, the chapter presents other proofs which restrict equal education as well as equal jobs for girls/women. In explaining the chronology, I analyze theoretical perspectives, including the power theory of goddesses and the contradictory time theory of the changes in *Dharmaśāstric* scriptures. Also, I present a review of the Vedic calendar debate, the status of women in pre-Vedic, Vedic, and post-Vedic periods. Also, it includes provisions in the apex legal philosophy of society.

In addition, I present a trident of three modern gender theories: Uma Chakravarti's Brahminical Patriarchy (1993), Judith Butler's Performativity (1993), and Sinu Joseph's Femininity (2020). Such theories and philosophies are insufficient for my current exploration. I intend to go further for another trident of theories. For this, I analyze the structural-functional idea of social development and upward mobility i. e. Sanskritization. I have claimed that M. N. Srinivas's Sanskritization has departed Neo-Sanskritization (Timilsina, 2013). Likewise, I have analyzed the societies as spheres of Hindu revivalism with modern concepts, science, and technology that is Neo-Hinduism (Timilsina, 2019). I have captured such new changes occurring in society through an anthropological lens.

***Trisūl* in School of Thoughts**

The basis of the history of girls' education and their social status in Vedic tradition can be seen according to *Trisūl*. Tridentic sufferings and removal of the sufferings are the aims of the Rights and duties of the people. There is fear and favor for equal education in the name of *Trisūl*. The history of girls' education from the traditional perspective has mainly trident or trinary schools of thought. The first school of thought is associated with the conventional school, which always tries to justify the structural-functional perspective of the division of labor in light of system theory. The second school of thought focuses on a radical analysis examining discrimination, suppression, and violence against women regarding equal educational opportunities. The third school of thought claims that there was no total discriminatory status of women, but the role was of 'deputy' status in familial and social terms.

Having examined various perspectives that initially seemed contradictory, I have formulated a conceptual framework that establishes connections between the contexts discussed in Chapter One and the field data analyzed in subsequent chapters. I present the review of literature in chronological and thematic order. "This

organizational approach is uniquely suitable for subjects that have changed over time (Efron & Ravid, 2019, p. 150). My research into the gender perspective of Veda education is fit for a chronological organization that shows “changing trends over time”. My chronology has proximity to “chronological development of literature” (Harris, 2020), and I have tried to search for “real value” (p. 85) of chronology with changing contexts of girls’ education in Vedic tradition according to time (*Samaya*).

The history in chronological order shows changes in the status of women. Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata are taken as history in Vedic tradition. So, I started my conceptualization process as the storyteller of the Mahābhārata serial. I have coined the chronology as “time theory.” Mahābhārata illustrates not only Vedic history, but it is a bundle of philosophies. Thus, I prefer to start conceptualizing from the storyteller’s dialogue.

I was inspired by the storyteller of the Mahābhārata serial, and I also observed the changing times (*Samaya*) in conceptualizing ups and downs in girls’ education in Vedic tradition. I took it as “Time Theory” through reflection on bringing changing traditions of girls’ education and the time of the Vedic civilization as well as the main geography of the Vedic society (*Āryāvarta*).

Trisūl of Time, Calendar, and Territory

The epic ‘Mahābhārata’ visualized into a Hindi tele serial has a "Time" character playing a narrator's role. The storyteller says- “I am the time” (*mein samaya hun*). Storytelling is a powerful family education system in Hindu society. ‘Samaya’ tells the story of the Mahābhārata epic throughout the episodes. The narrator of “Mahābhārata” says that the story Mahābhārata is not an ordinary tale of battle, but it is a story of the rise and fall of Indian culture of the battle between good and evil, light and darkness (Balsla, 2013). “The Time” claims: “No one else can narrate the story since I alone saw it happen; I know all its characters and incidents (Balsla, 2013)”. The voice-over-artist speaks in Hindi, which means that the epic is not the story of general war but that of conflict between *Dharma* and *Adharma*; and truth and false (*Satya* and *Asatya*).⁴

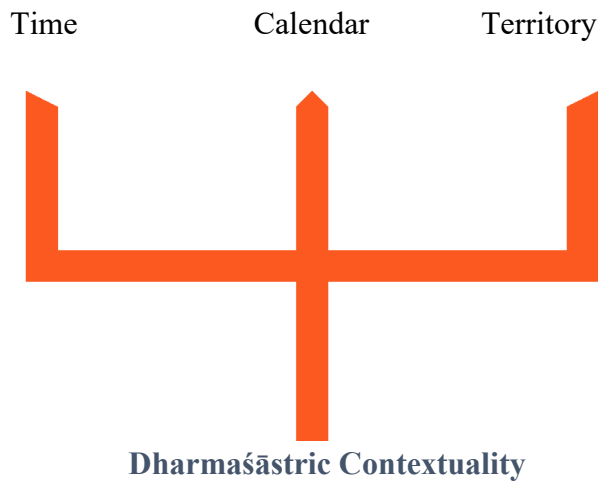
⁴में समय हूँ। और आज आपको महाभारत की कथा सुनाने जा रहा हूँ। ये महाभारत कोई आम युद्धकथा नहीं है। ये कथा है- धर्म और अधर्म के संघर्ष की। सत्य और असत्य के संघर्ष की। (Balsla, 2013). (*Mein samaya hun. Aur ājāp ko Mahabharat ki katha sunane ja rahahun. Ye Mahabharat koi āmyuddha katha nahihai. Ye katha hai- Dharma aur adharma kesangharsha ki. Satya aur asatyakesangharsha ki.*)

The time shows the conflicting idea of gender equality in learning Veda in the tradition. I have taken help from the sequential series that 'The Time' has calculated battlefield and conflicts of human civilization. The narrator of Mahābhārata, 'Time,' states that every era has to go through conflict. According to it, "It's a continuous battle between good and evil till I exist, it'll continue to be fought and I'm perpetual and endless; the story must be heard and assessed all the time so that each 'present' can prepare itself for its future."

That was the 'time' of Mahābhārata'. Now, this 'time' is the 'Time' of this thesis. It is my time here, and 'The Time' tells the story like this: "I am the time. Moreover, I am going to tell a story about a changing phenomenon. This is not a general story." Nevertheless, this is a story of Hinduism and Neo-Hinduism, Sanskritization, and Neo-Sanskritization, and a story of pain, suffering, and struggle for equal access to education and occupation in society and culture. The time speaks historically about *Dharmaśāstras*' point of view in conceptualizing the rise and fall and its modern analysis. In Sanskrit, storytelling is known as *Kathā Kālakshepam*⁵ which means "the experience of time through the story" (Bandlamudi, 2010). The history of Dharmaśāstra has a series of stories.

Dharmaśāstra guides philosophy/theosophy/theology and jurisprudence in Vedic/Hindu society. Indian author P. V. Kane is a widely cited author among Sanskrit scholars. Notes based on Kane are taught at Nepal Sanskrit University at the master's level on *Dharmaśāstra*. *Dharmaśāstra* is all about philosophy, theories, rules, and regulations, and their treaties are guiding principles in the society-culturally and religiously. Kane published nearly eight-thousand-page volumes making a Western style of interpretation. He has established arguments about theosophical periods of four eras- *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dwāpar*, and *Kali* substantiating astronomical calculations mentioned in the scriptures. Kane's works on the History of *Dharmaśāstra* are in eight parts and five volumes. They were published from 1930 to 1973. They reflect the widely accepted chronological table (See Appendix).

⁵ कथा कालक्षेपम् ।

Figure 5*Context of Dharmaśāstra*

Kane and other Vedic scholars claim that *Dharmaśāstra* is a whole set of literature from Veda to Manusmṛiti and their treaties written by medieval Pandits. This storytelling of the ‘Time’ about analyzing women's education requires a

timeframe for evolution, devolution, and revolution. So, the conceptualization of girls’ education in Vedic society is incomplete without reviewing *Dharmaśāstra*. This jurisprudence mainly prevails in particular territories where Vedic geography exists.

The Territory of Vedic/Ārya/Hindu

Geography and specific periods value the contexts of society. A search of the crux not only goes to geography but also to actor/s of the geography. The social and cultural contexts change the concept of gender perspective. Whether we use the terminology Hindu or Vedic, both mean the same. The word ‘Hinduism’ came into use only in the 19th century. It would be much correct historically to speak of the *Āryāvarta* religion or the group of *Āryāvarta* religions (Hacker, 2006). *Āryāvarta* has been used in Vedic laws and rituals as a habitus of *Āryāvarta*, and a faithful follower would use the terminology *Āryāvarta* in following every Hindu ritual in Nepal.

According to Hacker’s understanding, the indigenous religion, Hinduism, orients itself to the Veda, the sacred texts from the oldest Indo-*Āryāvartan* period. Without actually being Vedic in either myth or ritual, the religion intends to cultivate and pass down the religious customs of the *Āryavan*, but that nevertheless absorbed and created many new things that did not belong to the original *Āryāvarta* religion, as he claimed. Veda and associated literature have guided both Hindu, Vedic, and *Ārya*. This introduction links multiple realities of the norms, values, ethics, teachings, rituals, customs, and myths, and the geography locates Nepal and several parts of

ancient India. The concept of educational gender was systematized according to time, space, and contextual consciousness.

Āryāvarta is a territory surrounded by Āryan⁶. Bhattacharya (1967, p.18) has cited Manu's demarcation of the territory. I translate Bhattacharya's excerpts into Sanskrit⁷: "West of East Ocean and east of West Ocean; north of Vindhya Mountain and south of Himalaya; the center of the surrounding territory is Manu's demarcation of *Āryāvarta*." The Ganges is located in the Basin of Vindhya Mountain. The range of *Āryāvarta* in current geography is located in India's different places, including Gujrat in the west, Chhattisgarh in the east, and Himalayas in the north, Vindhya Mountain in the south that is in Madhya Pradesh. There were several countries in the times of *Āryāvarta*, and Nepal was one of the countries in the range. The range was a territory of *Āryāvartas*, and the law of Manu (Manusmṛiti) was in practice. Later, *Āryāvartans* spread beyond the range.

The 21st-century Hindus have crossed the territory of *Āryāvarta*. This is a time of global village connected by faster transportation and the internet. Thus, the citizen is known as a 'netizen' and 'webizen.' People of *Āryāvarta* migrated beyond their ancestral territory. The diaspora communities have taken their ancestral culture, religion, and rituals shifted as the people shift.

They brought their ancestral practices to the new places too. The rituals are tied up with the context, technology, ecology, and subsistence. Temples are made in Europe and the Americas. The Veda comprises mainly three aspects- rituals, worship, and transcendence. People follow such ancient ideas for physical and mental health as well as ancestral linkage and lineage. Yoga, *Yajña*, and meditation have been practiced. The 'Time' has witnessed a long history of debate on *Dharmaśāstra*. Eras have changed the concepts of gender roles.

Pre-Vedic Gender: A Calendar Debate

Vedic scholars rely only on literature related to their traditions. The tradition believes in mythical or theosophical eras: *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dwāpar*, and *Kali*. The scriptures argue that human evolution started as per Vedic provisions. Veda was

⁶ आर्याणामावर्त्तोदेशः।

⁷ आ समुद्रात्तुवै पूर्वादासमुद्रात्तु पश्चिमात् ।
हिमवद्विन्ध्योर्मध्यमार्यावर्त्तप्रचक्षते इति मनूक्ते देशभेदे ।

already out there, but Sages revealed it. All creations were accomplished according to Veda, they assume. Analysis of the status of women also is made according to the (eras) *Yugas*. However, European archaeologists coined the term “pre-Vedic” era. So, some modern analysts claim that there was a pre-Vedic civilization. Women's status was good in Vedic times. Sanskrit scholar Kumari (2001) argues in her book ‘Vedic Literature and Culture’ (p. 294) that the status of women became low in the post-Vedic period, like that in the pre-Vedic period. However, she does not mention the exact time of the pre-Vedic period. Her comparison of the post-vedic period with the pre-vedic indicates women's societal situation. In the background section of the book, she only mentions the Vedic era.

Figure 6

Vedic Phases

Pre-Vedic

Vedic

Post-Vedic



The Stages

Vedic tradition has its astronomy and data analysis methods. Manusmṛiti describes the eras as *Yugas*: *Satya* (Kretā), *Tretā*, *Dwāpar*, and *Kali*. There is a Vedic calendar too. The year of 2023 A.

D. is 5088, according to the Vedic calendar. There is

difference of 3065 years between A. D. And Vedic calendar. Current Kali Yuga (era) was set based on finishing the Great War of Mahābhārata, and some have argued that the era started after the departure of Lord Krishna to heaven. The *Dwāpar* era was Krishna's era, and the current is the *Kali Yuga*. However, scientific analyses are different from theosophical or mythical analyses. Counting the times through *Yugas* has been ignored, and historical timing has been accepted in modern scholarly debates. Western-trained scholars argue that the Vedic time is as newer as possible, unlike the South Asians. According to Max Muller, the Vedic period was 1200 B.C.E. (Before Christ Era). Other Western scholars say it is 2400 B.C.E. However, Bal Gangadhar Tilak claims it to be 4000 B.C.E. (Trivedi, 1950, p. 20). He observes that finding the date of Veda's composition is not easy; Muller himself has stated the date of Ṛgveda to be ‘presumptive’.

Indian scholar Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1893) published his works on ‘The Orion or researches into the antiquity of the Vedas’ in 1893 and ‘The Arctic Home in the Vedas’ (Tilak, 1903). He claimed much antique time of the Veda. Tilak used astronomical methods to calculate prehistoric times and proved the time before 4000 B.C.E. He spent years analyzing the date-related verses in *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Ṛgveda*, and *Taittirīya Samhitā* and concluded it to be 4650 B.C.E. Still, Western scholars hesitate to determine the date of the Veda later than 2400 B.C. Hong Kong University scholar Domenic Marbaniang mentioned the pre-Vedic date to be between 3000 B.C. to 1700 B.C. He stated this on the ground of the Indus civilization discovered by excavators (Marbaniang, 2015). The variation has been based only on the calculation method and its mathematical results from Vedic literature and philosophy. For example, the scholar/s have used ‘*Margaśīrṣ*’⁸ that is a month, and different *nakṣatra*⁹ mentioned in scripture have been calculated according to astronomy. There is a contradiction in the astronomical interpretation, but the analyses have found no oldest literature or culture other than the Veda.

The culture, its social system, and gender issues have been provisioned based on different literature and chronological time frames to analyze the concept of the gender perspective in Vedic tradition and the history of *Dharmaśāstra*. Through the chronological table of P. V. Kane (1962, pp. XI- XVII), we see the evolution of different *Dharmaśāstra*. Literature shows the changes according to changing times. From the time of the first Veda- ‘*Ṛg*’ to the current Vedic practices, there have been several turning points in the issue of girls’ education. In current practices, there are diversified arguments (Timilsina, 2016). Turns can be found as social phenomenon. One of the jurists of Vedic jurisprudence, sage Manu mentioned in his *Manusmṛiti* (2.6) that the root of all laws related to the world is connected to the Veda (*Vedo Akhilo Dharma Mūlam*)¹⁰. In other words, Veda is the root of all moral duties of human beings. So, the evidence of girls’ education from the Veda to the latest scriptures in the Vedic tradition has different turning points.

Gurus of *Dharmaśāstra*, Interpret the jurisprudence as is done in Kane’s ‘chronological table’. The concepts of gender equality in Vedic education, ritual

⁸मार्गशीर्ष (*Margaśīrṣ*)

⁹ नक्षत्र (*Nakṣatra*)

¹⁰ वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम् । (मनुस्मृति २.६) (*Vedokhilo dharmamūlam. Manusmṛiti 2.6*)

practice, and priesthood have only been based on the saying of the Gurus. The matter was seldom subjected to critical discussion, typically only approached from an activist standpoint. The subsequent sections delve into the concept of gender equality in girls' education within the framework of Vedic tradition.

Roots of Gender Education: An Unspoken History of the Veda Period

Undoubtedly, the Veda is the world's first document covering many things, including philosophy, spirituality, Logos (Dharma), prayer, and healing. Vedas are called *Apauruṣeya*¹¹, meaning they were not creations of human origin. Sāṅkhya Philosophy debated about the origin of Veda and that the creation was made by supernatural power. Nevertheless, the contents of the Vedas were revealed by humans. Mantras of Veda were perceived and expressed by humans (male and female sages). Likewise, another proverb in the classical texts says that the sages saw the mantras through their deep meditation. So, the sages are called *Mantra drashtarāḥ*¹².

According to the Vedic knowledge system, the universe was created with the breathing of the Veda/s. This shows that there were Vedas even before the creation of the universe. Veda means epistemology in Sanskrit. Thus, the universe, gods/goddesses, and people originated as per Vedic knowledge. Several male and female sages perceived the Veda (knowledge) through one's deep meditational practice. Ṛgveda is the central root of the Vedic knowledge system.

Exploring Women as Mantra Composers Ṛṣikās

There is variation about exact number of mantras of Ṛgveda and female sages who perceived the mantras. However, according to most of Vedic analysts, more than 423 *mantras* out of 10552¹³ *mantras* of ṚgVeda were perceived by female sages—*Ṛṣikas*. *Bṛihad-devata* (Macdonnel, 1904) is indices of Ṛgveda written by seer *Śaunaka*. It is strong evidence which declares 27 female mantra composers. However, it is important that there is unanimity about the number of mantra perceivers female seers, which is 27 as mentioned in *Bṛihad-devata*. A former professor of Sanskrit at

¹¹ वेदः अपौरुषेय ॥ {न पौरुषेयत्वं तत्कर्तुः पुरुषस्याभावात् (सांख्य ५. ४६) ॥} (Veda apauruṣeya. Na pauruṣeyatwamatkartupurushasyabhavat. Sāṅkhya 5.46)

¹² ऋषयोः मन्त्रद्रष्टारः। (Rishayohmantradrastārāḥ)

¹³ *There are different claims on the number of mantras of ṚgVeda. Some scholars claim the number is 10589, while others claim it is 10472. Others say 10580, and others say they found only 10476 mantras (Shah, 2018). This variation came to light because some mantras have been missing while compiling from oratory tradition. The mantras have been compiled in 10 Mandala (chapters) and 1028 Sūkta (group of mantras)*

Delhi University, Tiwari (2004) shows a distinct specialty about these female seers in their appearance either in the first maṇḍala or the tenth one (of Ṛgveda). Mantras composed or visualized by them appear only in these two maṇḍalas. Based on their forms and traits, these 27 Ṛṣikās have been categorized in two ways: In the *Ārṣānukramaṇī* and *Bṛhaddevatā* we find the names of twenty-seven Ṛṣikās of the ṚgVeda enumerated and they are referred to as *Brahmavādinī*. *Brahmavādinī* were those ladies who never married and lived an ascetic life throughout. Śaunaka has classified them into three divisions in the *Bṛhaddevatā* as she makes three groups of the female seers:

- (1) Those who offered prayers to the different deities. They are *Ghoṣā*, *Godhā*, *Viśvavārā*, *Apālā*, *Upaniṣad*, *Niṣad*, *Juhū Brahmajāyā*, *Agastyasvasā* and *Aditi*.
- (2) Under this category come those who have either talked to the deities or had discussions with seers and they are *Indrāṇī*, *Indramātā*, *Saramā*, *Romaśā*, *Urvaśī*, *Lopāmudrā*, *Nadyaḥ*, *Yamī*, and *Śaśvatī Narī*.
- (3) Under this group come those seers whose prayers are centered on self. In other words, they themselves are the Ṛṣis as well as *Devatās*. They are *Śrī*, *Lākṣā*, *Sārparājñī*, *Vāk*, *Śraddhā*, *Medhā*, *Dakṣiṇā*, *Rātrī*, and *Sūryā Sāvitrī*.

In this category, every group contains nine names. Again, in the second category, all the thirty female seers can be divided into seven groups:

- (A) Related to the gods and gods themselves- *Indramātarah*, *Indrasnuṣā*, *Indrāṇī*, *Aditi*, *Sūryā Savitrī*, *Yamī Vaivasvatī*, *Śacī Paulomī*
 - (B) Related to Ṛṣis and the kings- *Agastyasvasā*, *Apālā Ātreyī*, *Śaśvatī Āṅgirasī*, *Ghoṣā Kākṣivati*, *Juhū Brahmajāyā*, *Romaśā*, *Lopāmudrā*, *Viśvavārā Ātreyī*
 - (C) *Apsaras*- *Urvaśī*, *Śikhaṇḍinyau Kāśyapī*
 - (D) Creatures other than human beings- *Devasunī Saramā*, *Godhā*, *Śārparājñī*
 - (E) Inanimate objects- *Nadyaḥ*, *Rātrī*, *Dakṣiṇā*
 - (F) Abstract things- *Vāk*, *Śraddhā*
 - (G) Ṛṣikās of KhilaSūkta—*Śrī*, *Lākṣā*, *Medhā*, *Upaniṣad*, *Niṣad*.
- (Tiwari, 2004, pp. 283-284)

Tiwari's categorization is based on the general interpretation, which ignores other *Riṣikās* as outliers. Because the names of 27 plus *Rishikās* have not been limited

only to the first mandala and the tenth, some other *Riśikās* have perceived the mantras compiled in mandalas 3, 8, and 9 as well.

The mantras are not merely mantras; they have stories, and the style of chanting is found in different folk tales. Calcutta University professor Mau Das Gupta has been exploring female seers. She collects the mantras and connects them to folk tales. Among them, the story of the "Apālā, of the family of Atri, is a woman seer of the Ṛg-Veda" in the Bengali folktales 'Buddhu-Bhutum' (Das Gupta, 2017)

Substantiating *Bṛihad-devatā* (2.82-84) and the *Ārṣānukramaṇī*, Das Gupta connects that "Apālā's tale was a boon from Indra that cured her cutaneous disease". No doubt that there were female sages who perceived mantras and are compiled as are the male sages in Ṛgveda. Every literature of Vedic analysis agrees that the divine role of women is almost like that of men.

A Nepali learner Jang Bahadue Shah has collected the 27 names from *Bṛihad-devata* and goes through mantra by mantra in exploring the female seers mentioned there. The book *Bṛihad-devata* explains about the deities and sages mentioned in ṚgVeda. Verse number 82, 83 and 84 of chapter of *Bṛhaddevatā* declares the list of the female sages¹⁴:

Table 1

List of Mantra Composer Female Seers According to Bṛhaddevatā

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. Ghoshā | 10. Indranī | 19. Shrī |
| 2. Godhā | 11. Indramātā | 20. Lākshmī |
| 3. Viswavārā | 12. Saramā | 21. Sārparagyī |
| 4. Apālā | 13. Romashā | 22. Vak |
| 5. Upanīśad | 14. Urvashī | 23. Śraddhā |
| 6. Nīśad | 15. Lopāmudrā | 24. Medhā |
| 7. Brahmajāyā (Juhū) | 16. Nadya | 25. Dakṣinā |
| 8. Sister of Agastya | 17. Yamī | 26. Rātri |
| 9. Aditi | 18. Shashwati | 27. Sūryasāvitṛī |

Source: *Bṛihad-devata* (2.82, 83, 84)

¹⁴घोषा गोधा विश्ववारा अपालोपनिषन्निषत् ।
 ब्रह्मजाया जुहूर्नाम अगस्त्यस्य स्वसादितिः ॥८२॥
 इन्द्राणी चेन्द्रमाता च सरमा रोमशोर्वशी ।
 लोपामुद्रा च नद्यश्च यमी नारी च शश्वती ॥८३॥
 श्रीर्लाक्षा सारंपराज्ञी वाक् श्रद्धा मेधा च दक्षिणा ।
 रात्री सूर्या च सावित्री ब्रह्मवादिन्य ईरिताः ॥८४॥ (बृहद्देवता)

The name of respective mantra perceiver sage/s, the mantras' *Devata* (God) and meter (Chhanda) of the mantra is written before starting the mantra. Among the above, some sages have perceived only one mantra to 47 mantras. In other words, we can find 47 mantras perceived by satya sabitri in tenth mandala's 85 *Sookta*.

Moreover, there are number of other females' names in Ṛgvedic mantras which are not incorporated in *Śaunaka* verses. Some Indian writers have also added the names and Shah (2018) has collected the additional names of Risikās (female sages) and claims that they are also mantra perceivers. I gone through Ṛgveda and found the names as claimed by shah (Jang Bahadur Shah, personal Communication, 2023).

Table 2

Additional Female Sages Who Perceived Mantras

| S. N. | Female sages | Number of <i>Mantras</i> Perceived* | Maṇḍala, Sūkta and <i>Mantra</i> * |
|-------|------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | Jarita | 2 | 10.142.1-2 |
| 2. | Sikatā Niwāwari | 10 | 9.86.11-20 |
| 3. | Śikhāndini Kāshyapi | 6 | 9.104 (whole Sūkta) |
| 4. | Vasrukapatni | 5 | 10.28.2,6,8,10,12 |

(Source: Sātavlekar, 1957)

Such additional female names are found as *Ṛṣis* in the Ṛgveda and the mantra composer female seers' number goes up more than 33. The list of female authors/composers of Ṛgvedic hymns (Witzel, 2009) has been indexed in Ṛgvedic Anukramaṇī (index) as Ṛgvedic *Ṛṣis*. Witzel doubts whether all females were *Ṛṣis*. He argues that some of them were mythological figures and goddesses.

Agrawal et al. (1996) asserted that endeavors were undertaken to educate girls, emphasizing the explicit message in Vedic mantras that mothers should provide appropriate education to their children to broaden the scope of their ideas (Ṛgveda, 5.47.6). A mantra of YajurVeda (10.6) focuses on education: "O king, other nobles: make adequate arrangements to train lady teachers for imparting training to girl students who, on obtaining maturity, select for themselves their partners for marriage."

Similarly, Ṛgveda says that “an unmarried learned daughter should be married to a bridegroom who likes her is learned. Never think of giving in marriage a daughter very young age (Ṛgveda, 3.55.16).” Likewise, a young daughter who has observed *Brahmcharya vrata* or completed studies should marry a bridegroom who is learned like her (YajurVeda, 8.1). AtharvaVeda also states that *Brahmacharyena Kanyā Yuvanam vindate patim*¹⁵ which means a maiden wins a young husband through *Brahmacarya vrata* or Vedic studentship (Witzel, 2009, p. 279).

Several learned female sages are found to have spoken mantras in the Vedas. Ghoshā is a renowned Ṛṣikā for composing mantra numbers 39 and 40 in Ṛgveda. These two long mantras are in the tenth Maṇḍala to her credit. This daughter of a king (Ṛgveda 10.40.15) is equally essential in her concept of divinity. Lopamudrā (Ṛgveda 1.179.1-6), another lady is credited to have composed a hymn jointly with her husband, Agastya. Apala (Ṛgveda 1.91. 1-7) to Romasa (Ṛgveda 1.126.6-7) and SamaVeda (550-51; 1016.18; 1631.33) has a beautiful verse of fine imagery and tender feeling. The seer and speaker of the first verse of hymn 18 of the tenth book of the Ṛgveda is Vasukara’s wife, while the mother of the Gaupayanas and her sons, Bandhu, Subandhu, Srutabandhu, and Siprabandhu, is that of 10.60.

The list continues with Indrāni—the powerful consort of Indra—the speaker of verses 2.4-7; 10; 15; 18; 22; and 23 of the hymns 86 of the tenth book of Ṛgveda. She is also the independent Ṛṣi of a powerful hymn (Ṛgveda 10.45). Yami is the author of hymn 10.10, jointly with her brother, as Witzel states (p. 280). All persons who perceive mantras are philosophers (Bhat & Bhat, 2016). Ṛgveda is the primary source of philosophy and the mantra perceivers are the philosophers; the authors say so.

Being philosophers and Rishis, the women have their background stories and narratives. Among them, Ghoshā has her own exciting story. Rai (1964) narrates Ghoshā citing Ṛgveda 1.117.7 and 10.39, 40 as well as Bṛhaddevatā of Shaunak that Ghoshā was the daughter of sage *KakŚivat*. She suffered from chronic diseases; as a result, she could not marry. At last, she got treatment from *Ashwini Kumaras*¹⁶, the gods of medicine, at the age of 60. This became possible through the discovery and recitation of a prayer mantra dedicated to God. Eventually, Ghoshā entered into matrimony and also became a mother, welcoming the birth of a son.

¹⁵ब्रह्मचर्येण कन्या युवानंविन्दते पतिम् । (अथर्ववेद ११/५/१८) (*Brahmacharyena kanya yuvanamvindatepatim*)

¹⁶अश्विनीकुमारः (*Awinikumārāh*)

Thus, the mantra perceived by Ghoshā became a mantra of Ṛgveda. So, such female characters perceived mantras through intensive practice. Such narratives express that the girls grew up on the lap of their fathers, who practiced deep meditation as sages. Ṛgveda was divided into different Vedas: SamaVeda, YajurVeda, and AtharvaVeda, and the mantras perceived by males and females were also chanted in different contexts and occasions in Vedic traditions. Thus, there is a history of women's education during the time of Veda.

After the composition of the Veda, *Brāhmanṇas* (document) came as the second row of literature, which interpret the four Vedas: Ṛg, Yaju, Sama, and Atharva Veda, following the respective Vedic mantras, theosophy, and implications. *Shatapatha Brāhmanṇa* is an interpretation of *Śukla YajurVeda*, followed in Nepal. It also has a sense of gender and education: *Mātāman pitā manach Āryāvartavan puruso Veda*, which means that a child does not receive so much good from any other person as s/he does from one's loving mother and father. This shows the educational role of a mother.

Chronologically, the period of *Mimāmsā* and *Upaniṣads* started after Veda and *Brāhmanṇas*. *Pūrva Mimāmsā* is interpreted as worship, rituals, and their results for heaven. Similarly, *Uttar* (post) *Mimāmsā* was brought as Vedānta, which means the ending part of the Veda. Vedānta is an entirely philosophical interpretation of the Veda. Several Upaniṣadic stories show that the academic position of women was higher and female scholars were named '*Brahmavādinī*'.

Brahmavādinī: Ideal of Scholarly Intellects

Learned women were called Ṛṣikas (female sages) in Vedic times. After that, the Upaniṣadic period evolved and *Brahma vādinīnis* (Scholarly intellects) became active in society. Importance was given to boys' and girls' education (Joshi, 2016) in Vedic and Upaniṣadic periods. Their beginning of the educational phase (studentship) used to be with Upanayana Saṁskāra (Thread Ceremony), i.e., near the preceptor. They were given Holy *Gāyatrī Mantra deekshā*. After the thread ceremony, girls also used to stay at the preceptor's house and used to discourse, as Joshi found.

Ranade (1926) classifies the women of the Upaniṣadic period into three different types: "*Kātyāyani*, the woman of the world, mentioned in *Bṛihadāranyaka*; *Maitreyi*, the type of a spiritual woman, a fit consort to the philosopher Yājñavalkya; and *Gārgi*, fully equipped in the art of intellectual warfare who dares to wrangle with Yājñavalkya even at the court of King Janak where several great philosophers are

assembled.” *Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (II.4.5.5) presents the debate between sage Yājñavalkya and Gārgi on the metaphysics of Brahman, Ātma, ether, and universe (Satya Sai Baba, 2014, pp. 30-31).

The Post-Vedic Period

The post-Vedic period, as examined in this thesis, denotes the era following the Upaniṣadic period and extending up to *Vikram Samvat* (V.S.). According to Vedic culture and chronological calculations, this timeframe includes the *Tretā* era, which dates back millions of years. In the context of Vedic tradition, the *Rāmāyaṇa* era, representing the lineage of Ram, serves as a reference point. Additionally, the *Purāṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, and *Rāmāyaṇa* have been imparted as a condensed historical curriculum (Itihas) within the Vedic tradition. The post-Vedic era also encompasses the assimilation of *Smṛtis* and various other literary works.

Epics *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* explain the social and cultural reflections through poetry where the status of women can be seen. Jayal (1966, pp. 21-34) is seen as a highly educated epic heroine. Draupadi was a Pandit and Brahmavādinī with practical wisdom. *Mahābhārata* (IV.1.3, XIII.2.83) shows the capacity of Brahmavadinī in Arundhati and Oghavati. Draupadi learned Brāhmaṇas from her father, sitting on his lap in this tradition.

Intellectual and religious education was given to maidens (p. 22). Such education gave authority to women to perform daily Sandhyopāsan (Sandhyā), recite Vedic mantras daily (*Rāmāyaṇa* V.14.49), and sacrifice to Havana as well. Kaushalya, mother of Ram herself, offered oblation to fire and recited mantras on the eve of the installation of Ram (*Rāmāyaṇa* II.20.15). Tara knew the Vedas (*Rāmāyaṇa* IV.24.37). Similarly, Sulabha discussed Yoga, *Samādhi*, *Mokṣa*, and qualities of speech with philosopher Janak (*Mahābhārata* XII.320 Section). Learned Brahmani can be seen in *Mahābhārata* as eager to explore enlightenment, that is, to know the mysteries of religion, life, and death. *Mahābhārata* (XIII.130.2) depicts that even Ṛṣis, deities, and the manes went to Arundhati to learn the secrets of religion and duty and were duly instructed by her.

There are several *Grihya Sūtra* and *Dharma Sūtra* in Vedic culture for maintaining the family system. The Sūtras' time has been taken as 1000 B.C.E. Aswalayana *Grihya Sūtra* (III.8.4.14) has the provision of *Samavartana* ceremony for girls as well. This ceremony is performed when the student comes back after graduation. This provision shows that girls' education is similar to that of boys

(Manusmṛiti 3.56; in Mahābhārata 13.45.5). Pāṇini refers to female students as *Chhātri*, and their hostels are *chhātri-shālā* (Aṣṭādhyāyī 6.2.86). The wife of an *Acharya* is referred to as *Acharyani* (Aṣṭādhyāyī 4.1.49), but *Acharya* was the title of female teacher corresponding to the status of an *Acharya*.

Thus, there were female mantra composers and sages in Vedic and Upaniṣadic periods; and Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata threw light on the education of women (Jayal, 1966, p. 280). *Dharma Sūtra* and *Grihya Sūtra* depict women chanting the Vedic mantras and attending the *Samāvartan* ceremony. Pāṇini's Chhātrishālā depicts the provision of girls' hostels in the Vedic culture.

However, the concept of limitation in learning Veda by girls emerged gradually in later periods. Sages like Atishayana denied the eligibility of women to Vedic study and perform sacrifices, while Badarayana and Jaimini asserted the contrary (Murty, 1993, p. 17). My quest for the history of women's status in education in the Vedic tradition was shaped by the influential factors of time, space, and contemporary consciousness. These determinants, in turn, were guided by *Dharmashasta*.

Śāstra as Guiding Principle: Śruti, Smṛti, and Tradition

The term '*Dharmaśāstra*' has been used frequently in Vedic communities while making a decision. *Dharmaśāstra* refers to '*Śāstra*' in brief. *Dharmaśāstra* is a set of Vedas and allied scriptures. It covers the Upaniṣads, Sūtras, Smṛtis, and Purāṇa and their treaties, interpretations, and digests written by Vedic scholars till the 19th century. The status of girls' education can be seen to change according to the times and the interpretations. The '*Śāstra*' determines the Rights and duties or '*Dharma*' of the members of the community.

Kane (1941) has stated various divisions of *Dharma- Dharmas* common to all (*Sadharana-Dharma*), truth, love, charity, self-restraint, the standard of moral values, four *Puruśarthas* (goals of human existence) and their gradations, limits of *Āryāvarta* and *Bharatvarsa* are the major topics.

The early *Dharmaśāstra* texts suggest that they originated from three sources (Davis, 2010). They are 1. historically existing customary norms; 2. reformations of earlier texts on *dharma* and sometimes other genres; and 3. innovative rules and frameworks of individual authors (p.14). *Dharmaśāstra* and Vedic/Hindu law are evolutionary. Freeman (1959) says that Manu (from Manusmṛiti) is the primary source of the law in the scriptures, the Vedas. In keeping with the religious view of

the law, the second source of law is the teaching of the religious leaders and one's conscience. There was no clear distinction between legal duties and moral duties as Freeman observes: "Law embraced all of life and was synonymous with virtue". The law (*Śāstra*) sets the provision of girls' education in the tradition. The jurisprudential provisions will be discussed in the coming sections below after introducing the four mythical eras named as *Satya* (Kṛeta), *Tretā*, *Dwāpar*, and *Kali*.

Mythical age is not a concept of Hinduism. According to Frawley (1992), all the cultures of the ancient world look back to the mythical Golden age, an era of profound inner awareness and simple outer living in which men lived in the presence of Gods. In Hindu spiritual tradition, like in others of the ancient world, there is a mention of the four great ages of civilization: The Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Iron ages (*Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dwāpar*, and *Kali Yug*). They claim a continuity of their culture through all four ages and to have preserved the spiritual teachings of the respective ages, as Frawley interprets it. The Ṛgved is stated to have been derived from these earlier ages. Their exact time or duration, however, is a matter of dispute (p. 30). There are wider differences between Western and Vedic scholars in their statement of age.

In the contesting condition, P. V. Kane has adopted the Western idea of interpreting the tentative dates of the ages. Kane's works on "History of Dharmaśāstra" in eight parts and five volumes were published from 1930 to 1973 and they reflect the widely accepted chronological table (See Appendix for table).

Women's Education in the History of *Dharmaśāstra*.

P. V. Kane started presenting the chronological table in his first volume published in 1930 and he continued updating it till 1962 (Vol. 5 part II) and 1973 (second edition of Vol. 3). He updated very few chronological orders of the literature in later parts but almost found the same result. According to the table, 4000 B.C.E. to 1000 B.C.E. was the period of the Vedic *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, and *Upaniṣads*; some hymns in *Ṛgved*, *Atharva Veda* and some verses in the *Taittirīya Samhitā* and *Brāhmaṇas* may go back to a period even earlier than 4000 B.C.E. Some *Upaniṣads* (even from among those that are regarded by most scholars as the earliest ones) may trace even later than 1000 B.C.E. (p. XI). Varṇa system (now the caste system) and division of labor and role of women started from *Brāhmaṇa Granthas*. The provisions were further interpreted through well-developed etymology that was

modified by Yaska. His work was *Nirukta* (Etymology) brought out from 800 B.C.E. to 500 B.C.E.

Women's education and their role were further interpreted in different principal *Srauta Sūtras* (such as those of *Asvalayana*, *Baudhayana*, *Katyayana*, *Satyashābha*) and some of the *grihya Sūtras* (such as those of *Asvalayana*) and *Vedanga Jyotisha* during 800 B.C.E.- 400 B.C.E. In this link, *Pūrva Mimāmsā-sūtra* of Jaimini came out between 400 B.C.E. - 200 B.C.E. which clearly mentioned the Rights and duties of women and their role in Veda learning. Later, *Manusmṛiti* was promulgated as principal *smṛti* between the period 200 B.C.E. - 100 A. D. and other *Smṛtis* were issued as legal development in the society.

The Table has been interpreted in Kane's work (in 8 parts) reflecting the social, religious, moral, and psychological phenomena of the time and the reasons behind the division of work. It goes as latest as the commentaries of *Dharmaśāstra* till 1820 A. D. There is no substantial work after 1820 in the custom of Vedic society except for the reformist *Ārya Samāj*.

Paradoxical Evidence on Educational Status

The education system in ancient times was not like today's school system, but there was also a tradition of formal, informal, and non-formal learning processes. The literature shows that home was the first school, and the mother was the children's first teacher. As described in *Chhāndogyopanishad*, pupils had to learn 14 *Vidyā* and 64 *Kalā*¹⁷, known as fourteen disciplines of knowledge and sixty-four art forms. Lord Krishna received education through this system of schooling (Adivasi Lok Kala Evam Boli Vikas Academy, 2018). People were taught life skills either in the family or Gurukul. Mothers would teach girls at home, and thereafter would send to Gurukul. As a result, scholarly women (*Brahmavādini*) like Gārgi participated in scholarly debates with male scholars but not the general women (Bhagavatdutt, 2008, p. 160). On the other hand, the author cites Shatapatha Brāhmana, which illustrates the

¹⁷ (१) चत्वारोवेदाः (२) षडङ्गानि (३) पुराणसाहित्यम् (४) न्यायोमीमांसा धर्मशास्त्रश्चेति चत्वारश्चेते सर्वे सम्भूय चतुर्दश जाता । चतुषष्टि कलानां नामानि वात्स्यायन विरचितेषु कामसूत्रादिग्रन्थेषु प्राप्यन्ते- अत्रन्तत्यं, गीतं, वाद्यं, चित्रं, वास्तु (गृहनिर्माणं च) इत्यादि प्रमुखेवास्ति । (Dwivedi, 1993, p. 40).

(1. Chatwaroveda 2. Shadanganani 3. Puranasahityam 4. NyayomeemāmsāDharmaśāstra.schetichatwaraschetesarvesambhuyachaturdashajāta. Chatushastikalānāmnāmanivatsyāyanavirachiteshukāmasutrādigranthesuprāpyante-atrantatyam, Gītām, vādyam, chitram, Vāstu (grihanirmāna cha) ityādipramukhevasti)

husband as the woman's prestige.¹⁸ Similarly, staying at home has the wife's dignity.¹⁹ Such Vedic interpretations seem contradictory. Because other evidence clearly shows that there were women who composed mantras of Veda as men Rishis did.

Transition from Ancient to Modern

Going through the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Sūtras, grammar, and epics shows that there were hurdles in the tradition in recent millennia. Dayananda Sarasvatī's Ārya Samāj campaign reiterates the Vedic practices of girls' education based on the Vedic evidence. Ārya Samāj presents the proof from 1875 A. D. Such evidence has been presented in highlighting traditions where girls' education was emphasized. Satyārtha Prakash, or the light of truth (1875), has cited the evidence from the major three Vedas on the issue:

1. Mother should impart proper education to her children so as to broaden the horizon of their ideas (ṚgVeda, 5.47.6).
2. O king, the other nobles: make adequate arrangements to train lady teachers for imparting training to girl students who, on obtaining maturity, select for themselves their partners for marriage (YajurVeda, 10.6).
3. The ṚgVeda (3.55.16) mentions "an unmarried learned daughter should be married to a bridegroom who likes her is learned. Never think of giving in marriage to a daughter at a very young age."
4. The YajurVeda (8.1) repeats the same thing, and it says, "A young daughter who has observed *Brahmacarya* (i. e. finished her studies) should be married to a bridegroom who likes her is learned".
5. The AtharvaVeda clearly says that; '*Brahmacharyeṇa Kanyā Yuvanamvindetapatim*' which means a maiden wins a young husband through *Brahmacarya* or Vedic studentship. (Swāmi Dayananda Sarasvatī, 1875).

In addition to this evidence, the famous line of Shatapatha Brahman says *Mātamanpitāmanach Āryāvarta vanpuruso* Veda, which means that a child does not receive so many good things from any other person as she/he does from their loving mother and father. Thus, the mother and father should be educated to educate their children properly; this is an accepted fact in Vedic literature. If we see the marriage

¹⁸पतयो ह्येव स्त्रियै प्रतिष्ठा (शतपथ ब्राह्मण २।६।२।१४)

(*patayohyebastriyaipratishtha. ShatapathaBrāhmana 2.6.2.14*)

¹⁹गृहा वै पत्न्यै प्रतिष्ठा (शतपथ ब्राह्मण ३।३।१।१०)

Grihāvaipatnyaipratishthā. (Shatapatha Brahmana 3.3.1.10)

procedure text (*Bibah Paddhati*), the bride and bridegroom both chant Vedic mantras while performing oblation to the fire (*Agni*). This also reflects girls' need for and right to chant mantras on equal terms.

Smṛtis, including *Manusmṛiti*, have illustrated the point in jurisprudence and educational theories. *Manusmṛiti* provisioned respect to the ladies, but it is unclear about compulsory/universal education. *Hārta-smṛiti* and *Yamasmṛiti* have provisioned the *Upanayana* ritual for the twice-born caste girls similar to the boys (Kaundinyāyan, 2007, pp. 110-118). *Upanayana* is an education commencement ceremony and girls can study and chant Veda after the ceremony (Kaundinyāyanī, 2051 V.S.). Interpretation of “Purakalpa” of *Yamasmṛiti* is seen as confusing in its scriptures which Kaundinyayini has challenged through arguments. Whatever we find there, girls' tradition of *Upanayana* (Sacred thread ceremony) as well as Vedic chanting in Purakalpa. As the interpreters claim, the current era is a separate “Kalpa” (era). However, she argues that the Vedas and universe are creations of this “Kalpa” and the provisions of girls' education must be the same. Her study has provided evidence of following life rituals equally for both girls and boys.

Pārāsara Smṛiti's classification calls women *Brahmavādini* and *Sadyobadhu*. *Brahmavādini* used to study Veda after the *Upanayana* ritual and could get married later or go without marriage and spend the whole life in pursuit of knowledge, whereas, *Sandhyobadhu* entered the family life through marriage after *Upanayana*. *Brihadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (4.5.1) informs that sage *Yājñavalkya* had two wives; *Maitreyee* and *Kātyayanī*. *Maitreyī* was studious for liberation, and *Kātyayanī* was a housewife engaged in the material world.

This has been mentioned in the texts like *Madhava Samhitā* on *Parāshara Smṛiti* and *Hārta Dharma Sūtra*. Some claim that *Brahmavādini* was just a wife. She was a daughter of a male *Ṛṣi*. But that is not what the texts define them as, nor does the very word *Brahmavādini* imply anything of that sort. Instead, the word implies knowledge of the Vedas. Furthermore, in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, *Pāṇini* refers to *Kathi* (singular or plural?) as female students of the *Kaṭha Śākhā* of the Vedic school. He also refers to *Bahvrichi* as a female student well-versed in many hymns of the *Ṛgveda* (Gurudev, 2013). *Pāṇini* also mentions female students admitted to the study of *Mimāmsā* and about *chhātri* (girl students) and *Upādhyāyī* (women teachers), and male teachers as ‘*Upādhyāya*’. In other words, the evidence shows that even during

the period of Pāṇini, Vedic education was imparted to both males and females without discrimination.

Manusmṛitic Jurisprudence

The Manusmṛiti operationalizes the concept of sin. Nepali universities incorporate the teachings of Hindu legal systems alongside major legal systems worldwide. I pursued the study of Hindu legal system, specifically Hindu jurisprudence, at the Nepal Law Campus of Tribhuvan University, earning a Bachelor of Law degree. Additionally, the legal system is a part of the curriculum in master's in law courses. *Dharmaśāstra* is the legal system's central aspect, and it mainly focuses on Manusmṛiti. It describes *Dharma* and *Dharmaśāstra*.

Dharmaśāstra is a code for Rights and duties in Vedic tradition derived from Veda. Veda refers to *Samhitā*, *Brahman Granthas*, *Aranyakas*, and *Upaniṣads*, according to several sources cited in Chapter V, including Apastamba Srauta. *Sūtra*²⁰. *Pūrva* (Dharma) *Mimāṃsā* (Jaiminisūtra), *Sūtras*, and *Smṛtis* have been taken mainly as *Dharmaśāstra*. The *Dharmaśāstra* is divine jurisprudence for ideal householders. Cubelic (2018) defines '*Dharmaśāstra*' as classical Hindu jurisprudence.

The critics of these two contradictory approaches argue their standpoints for Veda education to girls and against it. The roots of Vedic provision for girls' education are in *Satya*, *Tretā*, and *Dwāpara Yugas*. They follow the Vedas and associated scriptures as their primary literature and find no restriction to studying the Veda for females. Pāṇini era (before 600 B.C.E.) also reflects the female education in Vedic tradition; his Aṣṭādhyāyī mentions "chhātrī" and "chhātrishāla," meaning "girls" and "girls' hostel," respectively. The only distinction was that co-education was not allowed²¹.

There was provision for separate schools for boys and girls. Otherwise, there was the practice of *Upanayana* and Veda chanting for twice-born castes (Brāhman,

²⁰मन्त्रब्राह्मणयोर्वेदनामधेयम् (आपस्तम्भ श्रौत सूत्र २४.१.३१) (*mantrabrāhmanayorvedanāmadheyam. Apastambashrautasūtra 24.1.31*)

²¹“मात्रास्वस्त्रा द्वहित्रावानविविक्तासनो भवेत्” इत्युद्रष्टारो मन्वादिस्मृतिकाराः गुरुकूले बालक-बालिकानां युवयुवतीनां च सहाध्ययन ज्ञानं न प्रदतिस्म ।

तारुण्ये युवयुवत्वे कन्यानां समक्षं मार्गद्वयमासीत् । तत्र १. विवाह २. वीतरागणाम् तपस्विनां चरणेषु यागचर्यावलम्बनं, रुचिभेदात् ज्ञान-निष्ठाश्रयणम् इति ।” (Dwivedi, 1993, p. 45)

(“*Mātrāswastra dwahitrāvānaviviktāsano bhavet*” itydrashtāro manwādismr̥tikārah Gurukule bālak-bālikānām yuvayuvatinām cha sahadhyayana gyānam na pradatisma. Tārūnye yuvayuvatwe kanyanam samaksham mārgadwayamāsīt. Tatra 1. Vivā ha 2. Vitarāgānam tapaswinam charaneshu yāgachāryavalamvanam, ruchibhedat Jñānā nishthashryanam iti”)

Kṣetrī, and *Vaishya*) girls. Jaimini's *Dharma Mimāmsā* and *Manusmṛiti* mention that marriage is the *Upanayana* of women, after which they could perform everything as men did. However, Kaundinnyāyanī (2051, p. 53) argues it is illogical to say that while they have the Right to *Yajña*, they have no Right to education.

Manusmṛiti (2.66 & 2.67) says that a girl has the Right to *Upanayana* without mantra and learn Veda for rituals similar to the boys in Gurukuls. Kaundinnyāyanī has countered all restrictive interpretations of the *Smṛtis* and advocates for Vedic education for girls. Given that it is agreed on gradual changes in the issue. These are Yuga-wise changes according to the chronology. It goes back to Satya Yuga after finding the mantras of Vedas by men and women seers.

Sage Bashishtha was eminent for Gurukul running in *Satya* and *Tretā Yugas*. Similarly, *Gāyatrī* and *Sarasvatī* (Brahma's wife) were renowned for teaching girls in Gurukuls in *Satya Yuga*, as Professor Rishi Ram Pokhrel (personal communication, January 18, 2017) says. In the description, Sita had been running Gurukul for girls in *Tretā Yuga*. Ram and Sita both were educated in respective Gurukuls in *Tretā Yuga*. Both males and females had equal chances at Vedic education. Regarding the era of *Dwāpar*, there are stories of *Maitreyī*, *Kātyāyanī*, and *Gārgī*.

Ritual is the central pillar of *Dharma*. *Kalpa* (Ritual) is an ancillary among six *VeDānagas*. *Pūrva Mimāmsā* has been taken as the foundation of *Kalpa*. Pandit Mohan Lal Sandal, a translator of *Pūrva Mimāmsā Sūtra* of Jaimini, has translated *Dharma* into English as 'Duty' while others conceived *Dharma* as 'Righteous action.' The Vedic rituals, which were once the be-all and end-all of the *Āryāvartans* have fallen into desuetude, and the study of the *Pūrva Mimāmsā* is wholly neglected. Jaimini defined *Dharma* as "a desirable goal or result that is indicated by injunctive (Vedic) passages (Sandal, 1923)).²²

Pāṇini's grammar provided the art of interpreting Veda while interpreting *Pūrva Mimāmsā* (Buhler, 1886, p. XLVII). The *Mimāmsā* describes *Dharma* and *Adharma* and all *Smṛtis* have drawn on the idea of the *Mimāmsā*. Historian of *Dharmaśāstra*, Kane (1930) defines *Dharma* as 'rules of conduct' (p. 1). The Veda is the source of *Dharma* and the tradition and practice of those that know it (the Veda)

²²चोदनालक्षणोर्थोऽधर्मः (पूर्वमीमांसा १।१।२) [*Chodanāḷaxanorthodharmah 1.1.2*]

as the Gautam dharmasūtra I.1.2 says²³. Kane (1941, p. 4) concludes that all scriptures say the Veda is the source of *Dharma*.

Upanayana determines the educational ways and ritual Rights, including *Homa* (fire sacrifice). There is fear of the consequence of sin on the notion of *Karma* and *Punarjanma* (rebirth) as Kane (1953) writes. As the Veda could be studied in and after the Sūtra period (800 BCE-400 BCE) only by male members of the first classes, the *Japa* of Vedic texts for the removal of sins was not possible for *Śūdras*; therefore, the Mitaksharā says that although the *Śūdras* (and women and those born of *pratiloma* marriages also) have no *adhikāra* (power or capacity or authority) for the recitation of *Gāyatrī* and other Vedic mantras, still the *Śūdra* and women after revolving in mind the name of the deity put in the dative case can engage in *japa* with the word *namah* (i. e. he can only utter namo Namah and not om (pp. 49-50). *Japa* of Hari, Krishna, and Narayana removes their sin in the concept.

Dharmaśāstric historian Kane (1941, pp 135-158) explains that Manu is the father of humanity in the R̥gveda and other Vedas: Manu in the deluge in Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Manu in the Nirukta, Manu quoted as law-giver in Gautam, Apastamba, and Mahābhārata. There are separate generational Manus according to the manvantara (Era). In other words, Manu is an institution rather than a person. Modern/Western-educated people criticize the works of Manu, Manusmṛiti blaming the rules as biased against women.

A verse is highly criticized and condemned against women (Jois, 2002, p. 33). The verse reads: The father protects the girl child in her childhood, the husband protects her after marriage, and her sons protect her in her old age. At no stage should women be left free.²⁴ (Manusmṛiti, IX-3). Manusmṛiti has several other verses that propagate women's safety and Right to property and respect in various verses. However, such critics have challenged Manusmṛiti as a document of unequal rules.

Kaundinyāyana's Dvija Women Education and Sinu Joseph's Femininity

On the one hand, Kaundinyāyanī (2047, 2051 V.S.), and Kaundinyāyan (2007) have claimed that there is a provision for female education in Vedic tradition,

²³वेदो धर्ममूलम् । तद्विदां च स्मृतिशीले (गौतमधर्मसूत्रम् १।१।२)

Vedikhilodharmamūlam Tadvidwamchasmṛtisheelē (gautama Dharmasāstra. 1.1.2)

²⁴पिता रक्षति कौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने । रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्रा न स्त्रीः स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति ॥

Pitā rakshyatikaumare bhartā rakshyatiyauvane.

Rakshyantisthavireputranstriswātantryamarhati.

but only for Dvija. Dvija means twice-born caste female i. e. Brāhman, *Kṣetrī*, and Vaishya. The girls can chant Veda after *Upanaya* for marriage. The ideas of Kaundinnyāyan are not compatible with gender equality.

Girls' Formal Education in the West

The idea of women's education grew up in the second half of the nineteenth century, but that does not mean that before there was no education of women or that there were no educated women (Tricket, 1986). There were educated ladies like Queen Elizabeth I, as Tricket connects with Britain's female education history. In the United States of America, there were no schools for boys and girls both in the colonial era and early years of the new nation, but there was religious training (Eisenmann, 1988). Women were taught within the family to become better mothers with skills and knowledge in both countries. Religion was the primary source of education for both males and females. The same was in Hindu society; the only difference was space and religion.

Education was imparted through the narratives of the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Gītā, and Purāṇa. Recitation of *Devī* prayers by women was a commonplace practice in scholarly households. Notably, in Vedic literature, Gurukuls existed since time immemorial, catering to both girls and boys. Among the scholars, both male and female, their proficiency in philosophical debates was evaluated. In the Vedic society, there were female priests, and the status of female education may have evolved over time (Pokhrel, 2011).

Table 3

Conceptualizing Evidence of Girls' Education in Vedic Tradition

| R̥g, Sama, Yajur, Atharva Veda | Upaniṣads | Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| Mahābhārata | Rāmāyaṇa | Dharma sūtras and Grihya Sūtras |
| Ritual (<i>Mantras</i> in Marriage) | Smritis: Manu, Hāreeta, Parashara | Interpretation by Dayananda Sarasvatī (Ārya Samāji) |
| Interpretation by Yogi Narahari Nāth | Interpretation by Kaundinnyāyana | WHF & UNIFEM Study Report 2006 |

Coming to *Kali Yuga*, *Smṛtis* are interpreted with multiple eyes as there are nearly 50 *Smṛtis*, including *Manusmṛiti*. Some *Smṛtis* are unclear about *Upanayana* and education for girls, some put restrictions on it, and others like *Harṭa* and *Yamasmṛti* indicate yes for the *Upanayana* ritual for girls. *Kalpa* (larger era) Devīates from equal education in Vedic societies. In the meantime, *Parasarsmṛti* came in the sixth century, and its interpretation made by Madhavācharya came in the fifteenth century, based on *Parāsara Smṛti's* virtue (Kaundinnyāyan, 2007, p. 27). *Parāsara Smṛti* has been interpreted as fine-tuned jurisprudence of *Kali Yuga*, and it covers the current *Kalpa* (*Swetabāraha Kalpa*) era. This *Smṛti* is a milestone for limiting girls' equal schooling in Gurukuls.

Somdeva Suri made other work public in 922 A. D. which reinterpreted *Dharmaśāstra* and Kautilya's economics. The "Nīti Vākyaṃṛta" (elixirs of policy sentences) was for interpreting kings' Rights and duties and the general people's conduct. It curtailed the schooling time by promulgating an age bar for the wedding of a woman and a man. It said a woman of twelve years and a man of sixteen were fit for conjugal acts (Gupta 1987, p. 316). Somadeva was the royal advisor, as was Kautilya, to Mauryan emperor Chandra Gupta in the fourth century B.C.E. Actually, "Nīti Vākyaṃṛtam" was a code of conduct for statecraft. These ethics of life reduced the wedding age of males and females as there was no restriction. For instance, female Vedic seers were married after the "Samāvartan" ritual, which is done after completing education. As stated above, such provision was further interpreted while MadhavAcharya expanded *Parāsara Smṛti* in the fifteenth century.

Interpretations of *Parāsara Smṛti* (1.24) and *Manusmṛiti* (2.66 & 67) have been controversial among scholars. Ritualists do stress the perspective of Somdeva. Later, in 1875, Dayananda Sarasvatī published a reverse interpretation of Vedic evidence in the name of "Satyārtha Prakash". This line of advocacy promotes Veda education equally to all castes and gender.

Weddings are one of the significant life rituals in Vedic tradition. The scripture of the marriage ritual procedure is similar to that of the Vedic period in terms of Vedic mantra chanting as prescribed by *Pāraskar Grihya Sūtra*. During Havana (oblation and grain sacrifice to fire), which is known as "Lājā homa", both bride and bridegroom should chant Vedic mantra.

Mantras of R̥gveda (10.85.36) and Śukla YajurVeda (3.60) mean strengthening ties life-long and beyond. Similarly, in Pandey's (1969, p. 218) translation of mantras from *Pāraskar Grihya Sūtra* (1.6.2), the bride sacrifices grains mixed with Sami leaves and stands with folded hands while the bridegroom recites the verse, "To the god Āryaman the girl has made the sacrifice, to Agni. May he, God Āryaman, loosen us from here and not from the husband's side, Swāhā! Likewise, the girl strewing grains prays thus: may my husband live long; my relations be prosperous, Swāhā! May this grain I have thrown into the fire bring with thee. May Agni grant us, Swāhā!"

This procedure of the marriage ceremony depicts that the bride must be educated to chant the Vedic mantra, and she has the Right to chant. In other words, there was the provision of training to chant mantras in the Gurukuls. The dispute is that brides have been chanting the mantras only in terms of the wedding ritual till today. Procedures and chronology of weddings are unchanged, but the "Kalpa" has already changed, and the Vedic schooling of girls is dragged into the controversy.

There is no doubt that dual meanings of *Smṛtis* and their interpretations have played a negative role in girls' education in Vedic tradition. During *Parāsara* (Smṛti), Muslim influence had begun in several societies. In 711, 100 years after the demise of Prophet Muhammad, general Muhammad Bin Qasim conquered Baluchistan, Sindh, and Multan along the Sindhu River. Qasim had come from Saudi Arabia. This event might have changed the schooling of Hindus, and they set the wedding time as 12 for girls and 16 for boys to protect and preserve *Dharma*. Somdev Suri and MadhavAcharya thought early marriage would maintain the self.

According to history, the Mughal emperor highly attacked Vedic culture and people. Bangal Sultan Samsuddin attacked Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur temples, including Paśupatināth in 1349 A. D. Pokhrel (2014) thinks philandering was the leading cause of stopping sending girls to Gurukuls. Philanderers targeted unmarried women. Hindu women, as did the Muslim ladies, also came to wear Burqa for the Muslim rulers' influence (Baral, 1994, p. 156). As a result, girls could study only with their father and brother, if possible. These were the barriers to security for the girls. In such critical conditions, the sages and rulers might have prioritized marriage over education to protect girls. The hidden cause was safety and security, and the seen reason was the policy of social management which gradually interrupted the Veda education to the girls.

Neo-Hinduism

Dayananda Sarasvatī, the founder of Ārya Samāj, is famous for the equal status of all in Veda and rituals. There is no discrimination among castes and gender, according to his idea. He reinterpreted Veda as evidence of equal Rights and access. Similarly, several scholars have been exploring the evidence from history. For instance, Yogi Narahari Nath advocated for equal education to all in Nepal through his concept of Vedic communism (2013), as Dayananda Sarasvatī did. Likewise, Swāmi Prapannāchārya (1994, pp. 103-106) and Prasoon (2009) also analyzed the earliest female exponents' thoughts and practices. World Hindu Federation (WHF), Nepal, and UNIFEM emphasized equal participation of females in Vedic education in 2006. As a result, Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul was established for girls in Kathmandu in 2007.

Neo-Hinduism is not an isolated social and religious aspect but an outcome of a changed world economic order. Gender and caste roles have been changing with the influences of the capitalist mode of production. Neo-classicism, Neo-Hinduism, and Neo-Sanskritization are trinary by-products of globalization of the economic system. The Peasantry of Nepal is being destroyed, and the mode of production has begun to be a capitalist way of earning. Priesthood-related traditional barter system of “pre-capitalist caste-stratified village” ‘occupational services’ have begun paying cash instead of grain and land (Uprety, 2021, pp. 207-209). Diversification of cash earning is prioritized in even the peasant society, as Uprety found. There is no doubt that the conclusion of the WHF and UNIFEM report had the same idea of economic empowerment of females through girls’ Gurukul.

Educational Anthropology

Anthropology of education looks after educational processes, cultural contexts, and issues of equality and inequality. This thesis is an analysis of cultural processes. George Spindler, Louise Spindler, Margaret Mead, and others have worked on school processes. Mead’s research was focused on “educational change”, “future of society”, and “social attitudes” (Monroe, 1992). According to disciplinary tradition, educational anthropology is an ethnography of education and pedagogy. So, the anthropological perspective analyzes past and current educational activities and suggests the future. Vedic education also has philosophy, theory, and practice. It has social attitudes and changes in the offing and future. So, such a pulse of change and struggle for change need to be documented.

Theoretical Perspective: Brāhmanical Patriarchy

The gender perspective has a critical lens of analysis. Chakravarti (2006) explores such a view of pre-colonial Indian women in Maharashtra. She focuses on Brāhmanical patriarchy's conceptualization of women as subordinates of men. There was a tradition of early child marriage. Specifically, girls were married before menstruation, so females had a short time for childhood. The Maratha court had prepared *Stri Dharma Paddhati* for the schooling of women. Introductory verses with obedient service to one's husband is the primary duty enjoined by the sacred tradition for women' (p. 200).

Legal amendments gave women access to education. However, as Chakravarti (2006) remarked, the legal processes were not free from Brāhmanical patriarchy. Brāhmanical patriarchy traced its origin to the norms of *Dharmaśāstra*. The societies, whether in Nepal or India, are administered by the standards of *Dharmaśāstra*. Such societal norms could be linked with Harding and Hintikka's notion of masculinity. This phenomenon has already been mentioned in the introductory chapter while problematizing the topic. Though there were exceptional women characters that even composed the mantras of Veda, debated on the philosophy and duties of procreation and protection roles of women were generally treated as subordinate as the literature suggests. Structural-functional approach prevailed in history.

The literature suggests every person could perform Vedic activities. We find this if we go through it from the very beginning and if we go through the current concept of gender. The success of the female sages and scholars was mainly due to the power of Yoga and the power of knowledge (jñāna). Education aimed not to make money and do business but to achieve *Puruṣārtha* mainly for liberation (*Mokṣa*). There was neither restriction on women's education nor compulsory for all. It was based on a personal interest in penance and profound meditation on the quest for knowledge.

The theoretical orientation indicates that the expression of women's talent, particularly those of the women sages' talent, was due to extraordinary circumstances but not by planning. Formal education was focused on something other than girls and women compared to males. These features are obtained due to women's role play being subordinate to men.

Butler's Performativity

Gender theorist Judith Butler developed a greater perspective from linguistics: Performativity. The idea analyses phenomena of performance than speech. According to this theory, gender is not just expression but doing. Doing is the performance, and the performance analysis is the "Performativity". I took "Performativity" as the "Subjectivities" of females in Vedic Traditions. The girls who chanted the mantras of Veda and performed the rituals were affected by gender politics. Butler (1993) opines that "performance" is not a singular "act" or event. Still, a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it thoroughly in advance (p. 95). Girls' chanting Veda and being prepared for ritual work equal to boys' is deconstruction.

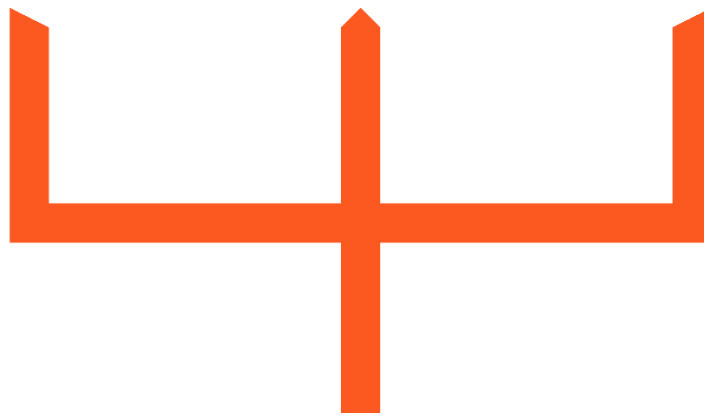
Gender is performative and determined by social norms. However, Butler herself explains that the gender norm is necessary to qualify as 'one' where subject formation depends on the prior operation of legitimating gender norm (p. 232). Female sages were mantra composers who performed debate and ritual work in Vedic history. Later, the tradition was disconnected from the cultural practices in society. Thus, performativity is a better idea in conceptualizing Vedic teaching concerning girls.

Sinu Joseph's Femininity

Menstruation is one of the significant issues of gender, and there is contestation between religions and modernity. Hindu society has its system of isolation and restriction during the menstrual period. Modern gender experts have criticized it. However, Sinu Joseph, a menstrual educator, has defended the traditional menstrual management practices in *Sanātana Dharma*. She published books on *Women and Sabarimala: The Science Behind Restrictions* (2019) and *Ṛtu Vidyā* (menstrual knowledge) (2020). She has explored the science behind the "taboo" of menstrual notions and the traditions.

Figure 7*Trinary Positions of Gender Lenses*

Brāhmanical Patriarchy Performativity Femininity

**Trisūl of Ideas**

According to her, modern science only studied the “gross human body (*Sthula Sharira*)”, and it has not examined the “subtle human body (*SukshmaSharira*)”.
AyurVeda

and *Agama Śāstra* have the science of “Sukshma Sharira”, and the menstrual practice favours restriction and isolation, according to her. It has challenged the Western idea of gender equality. Joseph argues about “femininity” instead of “feminization”. She claims that “femininity” is the power that remains within women, and physical equality does not favour women.

Policy Review on Gender Parity Efforts

Neupane (2020) shows chronological efforts in women's education in seven phases. The first was Nepal National Education Planning Commission- NNEPC in 1955 which had policy intent "to improve women's skills and knowledge to enable them to better perform their traditionally assigned roles," where adult literacy was the proposed program. The All-Round National Education Committee (ARNEC) made the second policy effort in 1960.

The aim was to continue the NNEPC policy along with community development and basic needs components. The proposed program was to ensure that neither girls nor boys are deprived of primary education. It also focused on adult literacy. It added another element- "expansion of primary schools". The third was the National Education System Plan- NESP (1970–1975), which was intended for "no segregated schools and co-education", which was visualized. The fourth National Higher Level Education Committee- NHLEC (1992) planned to "increase women's literacy". Women and girls were prioritized at all levels of education, and stress was

given to teacher training of women, provision of scholarships for women and girls, literacy and/or education for women's empowerment, and 70% of scholarships to be awarded to women, according to NHLEC.

The fifth document was the MoE Policy (2003/2004), which provisioned for at least two lady teachers per school, ten months of pre-service training, and a scholarship for women with potential from ethnic groups and Dalits. EFA Policy (2002–2015) was adopted in the sixth phase. The policy was for gender mainstreaming, training teachers to be gender-sensitive, and socially inclusive gender training for head teachers, teachers, and SMC members. In the seventh year, the School Sector Development Program (SSDP, 2016–2022) was set for quality education for SDGs. It envisioned education development as a key means to achieving SDGs, decentralizing responsibility for the school sector to local government. SSDP had four objective pillars: equity, quality, competence, and relevance. The program focused on vocational education that is relevant to local needs. It proposed restructuring school organizations based on new rules and regulations, enhancing access to primary education, focusing on remote areas and gender and ethnic minorities, and developing model schools in all provinces and districts.

The educational policy table presented by Neupane (2020) needs to include the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP, 2009-2015) that the government of Nepal approved on 20th August 2009. SSRP was a departure point for the traditional school system in Nepal. After the completion of SSRP, SSDP was introduced in 2016. SSRP was the first policy document recognizing the conventional school system and its mainstreaming. It clearly stated: "Strengthen and institutionalize traditional modes of education such as Madrasā, Gumbā/Vihar and Gurukuls/Āśrams so that the education provided by these institutions meets national standards and is equivalent to formal education". However, it does not mention gender aspects in traditional schools, including Gurukul/Āśram. There might be two reasons: the policymakers did not see the need for gender parity in the school system at the age of gender equality. Second, they might have thought that such schools were only for males and forgotten the issue of equal access.

In the chronology of policy review, the Constitution of Nepal (Government of Nepal, 2015) provisioned in Article 31 (5) that "Every Nepali community residing in Nepal shall have the Right to get education in its mother tongue and, for that

purpose, to open and operate schools and educational institutes, following the law". This provision continued the concept of SSRP. Likewise, Article 32 envisioned the "Right to language and culture", which means every Nepali has the Right to follow their language and culture. In another fundamental Right, Article 37 (3) states: "No woman shall be subjected to physical, mental, sexual, psychological or another form of violence or exploitation on the grounds of religion, social, cultural tradition, practice or any other.

Such an act shall be punishable by law, and the victim shall have the Right to obtain compensation per law". In implementing the provisions, the constitution, in Article 252, provisions for National Women Commission, which can look after the issues concerning girls' equal access to Gurukuls.

National Education Policy (2019) has envisioned the regulatory board system for religious-type conventional education. "Gurukul education board, Madarsha education board, and Gumba education board can be formed," the policy indicated (MoEST, 2019). The boards will facilitate the mainstreaming of respective organizations, curriculum designing and amendment, bridge courses, and equivalence criteria setting at all levels of education. These are indicative only. Gender issues are not stated in the policy. Still, the boards have yet to be formed.

No document shows the girls' participation in Gurukul education in the country. They do not talk about girls' education in the Āśram and Gurukuls. There is no provision for separate pedagogy for females. In 2022, the Government of Nepal's ministry of education, Science and technology published a criteria guideline (Government of Nepal, 2022) for traditional educational institutions where free sanitary pad provision is stated. The words "sanitary pad" might be copied from general schools' guidelines. But this is only one policy document that indicates for the first time that there are girls in the conventional schools (Gurukul/Āśram, Gumbā, and Madrasā).

Nepal School Education Sector Plan (SESP) 2022/23-2031/32 has an estimated annual budget for the SESP's major programs of Āśram/Gurukul, Gumba and Madrasa (MoEST, 2022). According to the estimate, all Gurukul, Gumba, and Madrasa of 1-10 graders can only get grants from the total annual fund of Rs. 54,000,000. The policy provisions of separate toilets for girls and boys. Similarly, girls of 9-12 grade can get sanitary pads too. There are different provisions for gender parity in school education. However, there is no one word for a gender-friendly

concept for conventional schools. The latest policy has not perceived the idea of Neo-Sanskritization of Gurukul, specifically gender parity in Vedic schools and girls' Gurukul/s.

Concept of Sin: Source of Hesitation

Religions have the concept of curse or sin generally found deeply rooted. Learning Veda by women has a central associated idea of 'sin'. The job of Veda learning, chanting, and priesthood is interpreted as assigned only to men and Brāhman. Others hesitate to complete their studies or be retained in the field for fear of sin. The concept of sin is found in Veda, but that does not restrict a particular group or gender from reciting the mantras. The mantras of Ṛgveda have the ideas of sin (Pātak) and its expiation (Prayaschitta) and the residual consequences of sins (Karmavipāk) (Kane, 1953). Whether the terminology of sin belongs to ethics or psychology, Kane has analyzed it from a Western perspective.

Kane (1953) tried to clarify how the idea of sin varies from religion to religion, from age to age, and from country to country. The discussion concerns the growth and development of the doctrine of sin from Vedic times to the medieval digests and commentaries on *Dharmaśāstra*. This discussion is very important for conceptualizing the Rights and duties in the Vedic society because people always refer to *Dharmaśāstra* for introducing sin (Kane, 1953). This word belongs to the terminology of religion rather than ethics based on psychologist Barbour (1927)'s Christian doctrine of sin and psychology (1927). As Barbour discusses, Christianity also has the concept of sin associated with the evil psyche. He focuses mainly on his psychological disciplinary points. Ideas of Christian Theology, its explanation of God, the need of man, sin, and way of redemption have guided people to believe in sin (Barbour, 1927, pp. 2-3). In general, it may be said that it is an act that is regarded as a willful rebellion against, or disobedience of some law supposed to be laid down by God or Revelation; it is opposition to the will of God manifest in an authoritative work or at least failure to abide by the regulations contained therein Kane (1953, p. 1).

The followers of the atheist Chārvak philosophy of Hinduism have also been reflected in the analysis of Kane: Man should live among pleasures as long as life lasts, and he should feed himself sumptuously (should drink ghee) even by borrowing

money from others. There is no coming again into the world after the body is reduced to ashes by cremation.²⁵

However, Parajuli (2015 V.S.) cites the story of *Purāṇa* that the guru of Gods Brihaspati had propounded the ‘Lokāyata philosophy’ in controlling the *Asuras* (monsters) in the attire of Shukra, the guru of Asuras to weaken their power of Austerity (pp. 1-7). The stories show theologies in religions; many people believe in sin and redemption, and at the same time, many others do not care about the fear of evil.

The Ṛgveda is full of fervent and heartfelt expressions of the sense of sin and betrays an intense desire on the part of the sages of old to be free from it. Kane (1953) reconnected the Western cognition on sin to the Veda. The idea of sin in the Ṛgveda is bound up with the conception of *Ṛta*. The *Ṛta* is necessary to be able to convey what the Vedic doctrine of sin was. Kane’s *History of Dharmasāstra* (1953) analyzes the threefold aspects of the *Ṛta*. It means, ‘the course of nature’ or ‘the regular and general order in the cosmoses. Concerning the sacrifice, it means ‘the correct and ordered way of the cult of the Gods’, and thirdly, it also means the ‘moral conduct of man’ (p.2). The author presents a few passages to illustrate the three aspects of *Ṛta* from Ṛg Veda IV 23.8-10. There are three mantras in which the word *Ṛta* occurs no less than twelve times. It breathes the all-pervading influence throughout the universe ‘Plentiful waters (or riches or gifts) belong to *Ṛta*, the thought (or laudation) of *Ṛta* destroys crooked acts (sins), the brilliant and rousing hymn of praise to *Ṛta* pierces the benumbed ears of man.

The props of *Ṛta* are firm, and its (physical) manifestations are many and lovely for the sake of the body (i.e., man). Through *Ṛta*, they (people) desire food. The cows (sun’s rays) entered *Ṛta*. He who wins over *Ṛta* acquires it. For the sake of *Ṛta*, heaven, and earth are broad and deep, and the two highest cows (i. e. Heaven and Earth) yield milk (desires or rewards) for the sake of *Ṛta*. Some other passages are- ‘The Sindhus (rivers) follow the *ṛta* of Varuna’ (ṛtamsindhavoVarunasyayanti, Ṛgveda, II.28.4). Similarly, Ṛgveda I.105.12 (tramarsantisindhavah) writes that the

²⁵यावत्जीवेत् सुखी जीवेत् । ऋणं कृत्वा घृतंपिवेत् ।
भस्मीभूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनं कुतः ॥ (चार्वाक दर्शन)

Yāvatjeevetsukhimjivet.

Rinamkritwaghrítampivet.

BhashmiBhūtasadehasyapunarāgamanamkutah. (charvak Darśan)

wheel of *ṛta* (i. e. the year) revolves around the sky with twelve spokes (dwadarsham... varvartichakramparidyams-ṛtasya, Ṛgveda I.164.11), the down, the daughter of heaven, correctly follows the path of *ṛta*... ..' ('ṛtasyapanthābam-anveti sadhu, Ṛgveda I.124.3); the young woman (Ushas) does not destroy (or come in the way of) the light of *ṛta* (Ṛgveda I.123.9); the sun is the bRight and lovely face of *ṛta* (Ṛgveda VI.51.1 'ṛtasyasūcīdarshatam-anikam); 'the path of *ṛta* became united with the rays' (Ṛgveda I.136.2); when exhilarated by drinking this (Soma), Indra released for the sake of *ṛta* the concealed host of cows' (Ṛgveda I.121.4, probably a reference to drought and subsequent rainfall).

The consciousness of guilt and sin is mentioned in ancient hymns and verses of Ṛgveda, Upaniṣads, Bhagavat Gītā, and Mahābhārata. Kane goes to Gītā, which has the three Guṇas- *Sattva*, *Raja*, *Tama*. *Sattva* is the best. However, lust, anger, and greed bring people to guilt. Such conducts have been defined in *Sūtras* and *Smṛtis* as well. Controlling forbidden speech and controlling senses and deeds have been associated with sin (*pātaka*) in the scriptures. The theological interpretations from different commentaries have also been interpreted as male and female duties. Thus, *Dharmaśāstra* incorporated the concept of sin that designs the division of labour and gender role.

Figure 8

Trinary Positions of Neo Stages

Neo-Classicism Neo-Hinduism Neo-Sanskritization



Triśūl of Neoism

(personal communication, January 16, 2017). Now the land can be used for farming again. Similarly, girls were taught Veda in the past and later discontinued. Now they should teach in Gurukul as did Sita and Ram in two different Gurukuls in *Satya Yuga*.”

Professor R. R. Pokhrel, who did a doctorate in Vedic governance, pointed to an open field in front of his home in Sundarijal, Kathmandu told- “the land was used for farming in the

past but later it became fallow land for years

Conceptualizing the Study

There was no study on gender perspective like today in the past. The scriptures and policies do not restrict women from learning and chanting Veda's mantra and performing the rituals equal to men. According to the documents, the menstrual period cannot be considered an obstacle to work. However, while making the concept, most stakeholders argued that the four days of the monthly period is better to avoid learning Veda and doing rituals to maintain the purity of tradition. The equality notion is found Paradoxical in practice. The practice has been changing according to times, and the current time is a new time of Neo-Sanskritization issues of gender equality have been debated in Vedic education. I had set this scene in chapter one.

This chapter charted the theoretical landscape that emerged from my research, serving as a bridge between the introductory and methodological sections. This involved a comprehensive review of relevant literature and documents, through which I identified a gap as outlined in the first chapter. Now, it is crucial to connect these concepts with the thesis topic, “Vedic Education Towards Feminization: A *Triśūl* Ethnography”.

The rationale behind this title is twofold: The primary reason behind the formulation of the research topic, as indicated in the first chapter, is the absence of research documentation of the way the Vedic education was processed and delivered in the Nepali society unlike in the past. First, the initiation of Vedic education in Nepal was made in an inclusive modality. The modality showed both the engendering process and Neo-Sanskritization process into action at the ground level. Second, the ground level performance showed that the girls' access to Vedic education was by their human Rights, and not a gesture of patriarchal generosity and kindness. This was a move towards the establishment of women's human Rights—a long fought process of addressing women's identification through several activities, in several fields. Vedic education was one such important activity, particularly in the Nepali society. That feminization is a long-going process is shown at the global level, the study of women's condition and position in gender studies, inclusive of the third gender, shows us the path to establishment of women's human Rights—a path as well towards feminization. Gender and feminization work together. They cannot be conceptualized in isolation, as is shown by the history of feminism. For example, the French existentialist writer Simone de Beauvoir's “The Second Sex” (1949) is an extensive depiction of women's condition and position Right through the history. In the absence

of the practice of their human Rights to their own body, to their own identification, they were and still are, in various parts of the world, in the condition and position of “the second sex”, the first sex being the male. The crux of the argument is what the women experience, what their living situation is and whether they have the access to make decisions on matters that affect their life. All these observations justify my selection of the present research topic: “*Vedic Education Towards Feminization: A Triśūl Ethnography*”.

The Essence of the Chapter

The Chapter reviewed the literature chronologically. In the chronology, Time is a stage manager. Time tells the episodes of the drama. The three-dimensional way of thinking showed the status of female education in Pre-Vedic, Vedic, and modern times. The Vedic period was good for gender equality as 34 female sages composed the mantra of Veda. The post-Vedic period is declining for girls' education, similar to boys. The Time *says* that the contemporary situation is shifting to three-dimensional changes in classical notions- neo-classicism, neo-Hinduism, and Neo-Sanskritization. In this stage of evolution, there are three contrasting ideas of gender: Brāhmanical patriarchy, gender equality, and femininity. Besides, the Chapter explored the Mantra composer female sages, Veda learning restricting scriptures and related policies in Nepal. Time, territory, and technology are significant components of the perceptions. Thus, the Chapter came up with how the gap in knowledge construction can bridge through ethnographic analysis.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY WITH *TRISŪL* WORLDVIEW

Philosophical stances of research and methodological aspects have been discussed in this chapter. I have introduced positivism, post-positivism, non-positivism, and interpretivism and have justified the selection of my paradigm *Triśūl*. Similarly, a background of methodology, theory of reality, way of knowing, and aesthetics of the research are also included here. In designing the research, I have chosen ethnography as the methodology. Research sites, processes of ethnographic fieldwork, meaning-making procedures, quality standards, and ethical considerations of the work are also discussed in the chapter. Moreover, the anonymity policy of the research has also been addressed.

Paradigm

A paradigm is a worldview, mindset, general attitude, or general way of understanding the world. It has its lens to look at the world. This is a lens of understanding. Lens and understanding can vary from person to person, time to time, location to location, and issue to issue. So, the paradigm is subject to shift or change. A paradigm shift is shifting the looking lens. Academic history has a record of shifting. Scholars have used different paradigms at different times in the past. In scientific studies, positivism prevailed for a long time.

Human beings have been endeavoring to go through domains of their understanding. Every thoughtful person has his/her own lens called a paradigm to observe the world. A paradigm helps create knowledge (Lather, 2006). Paradigms are taken as synonymous to ‘worldviews. Guba (1990, p. 17) defined the term as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action”. Lincoln and Guba (2013) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) defined paradigm as the lens of viewing, analyzing, and interpreting the world. Such scholars have discussed positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, and criticalism as major paradigms. Knowledge is constructed using such frameworks in research endeavors. The components of a paradigm are ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

Research Paradigms: Positivism to *Triśūl* (Trident)

Paradigms have their history and meanings. I have my paradigm for this study. Before introducing my paradigm of *Triśūl*, I would like to refer to the paradigms of positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, and non-positivism, which are used in most academic works. Before describing my paradigm *Triśūl*, I intend to review the forepart of the contemporary lenses of the research philosophies as "Purva Paksha" means forepart of the discussion or review of related literature. In reaching my paradigm *Triśūl*, I briefly discuss the three dimensions of pragmatic shifts from positivism to post-positivism to Interpretivism.

Positivism and Post-positivism

Positivism has a trinary set of control, logic, and measurement. Subjectivity is ignored in this tripod of positivism. It would be better to go back to the history of the positivistic idea. Though Auguste Comte called himself the 'pope of positivism' (Lichtman, 2013, p. 10), in the decade of 1830s, the term 'Positivism' was first coined by Saint Simon (1760-1825) and was later popularized by Comte (1798-1857). It was known as 'logical positivism', 'logical empiricism', and 'neo-positivism' (Marsonet, 2002). Early anthropologists, e. g. L. H. Morgan, and E. B. Tylor, were also interested in positivistic generalization (Erickson, 2011). The positivistic idea was renamed as 'post-positivism' later. Post-positivism is an amended and modified objectivist version of positivism. Positivism applies the idea of knowledge generation through experiment, quasi-experiment, objectivity, and reductionist notion where deductive reasoning generalizes the situations. Post-positivism is the successor of positivism (Mertens, 2015). Thus, post-positivism is another version of positivism.

Positivism itself evolved as part of the development of interpretivism. History of the path of positivism indicates the growth towards interpretivism. During such evolutionary development of interpretivism, Kuhn (1962) coined the "paradigm shift", which shifted the objective and experimental single reality to subjective and multiple reality. Shifting the paradigm means changing the viewpoint. Geertz (1973) interpreted interpretivism on webs of meaning (Yanow & Schwartz, 2014) and scientific practices focusing on meaning and meaning-making in specific situational contexts and on processes of sense-making more broadly informed by interpretive philosophies and presuppositions thinking interpretively. Interpretivism has also been interpreted as pre-interpretivism and post-interpretivism anthropologically (Nader, 1988). Keeping the way of operation and synthesis requires instrumental and

expressive tools. Debate on the interpretation of interpretivism goes beyond interpretivism while discussing qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Saldana (2015) interprets positivism as 'thinking quantitatively'. "For some social scientists who embrace positivism, numbers exemplify a realistic perspective. The objectivity of a statistic, assuming the behavior or phenomenon it represents has been reliably and validly measured, asserts that it is an evidence-based fact (p.55)". 'Thinking qualitatively' refers to qualitative research that includes various methodological approaches for studying natural social life (p. 3). In other words, thinking quantitatively means thinking and working positivistically, post-positivistically, and objectively. Paradigms beyond post-positivism deal with qualitative thinking. Such a non-positivist lens looks at the issues and events or activities subjectively.

Interpretivism

Positivism itself evolved as part of the development of interpretivism. The path of positivism indicates the development of interpretivism. The developmental stages can be seen in three shifts- 1. Positivism 2. Paradigm shift 3. Interpreting cultures. Early anthropologists like Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski interpreted society and culture. But they had used a lens of positivism/post-positivism. The post-structural idea of Jacques Derrida in 1966 criticized positivistic or structural lenses. During such an evolutionary process of development of interpretivism, Kuhn (1962) coined the 'paradigm shift', which shifted the objective and experimental single reality to subjective and multiple reality.

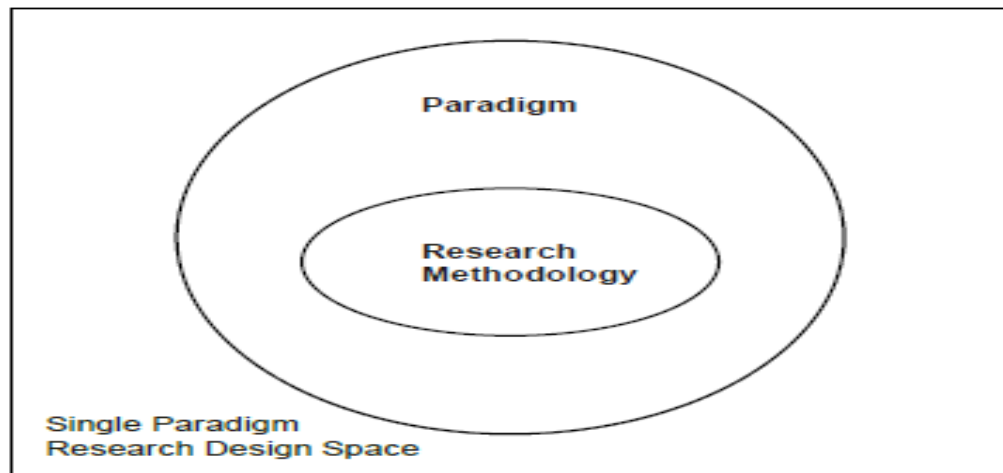
Clifford Geertz did field work and contributed further to interpretivism through the 'interpretation of cultures' (1973). Geertz wrote about meaning-making ideas through interpretations. In other words, Geertz interpreted 'interpretive anthropology'. Nader (1988) indicated the need for 'post-interpretive anthropology' that requires "tools that are both instrumental and expressive". Anthropologists and methodologists have been continuing the debate from interpretivism to decolonized ideas of research lens.

In so doing, a Trinary of Interpretivism is manifested by Taylor et al. (2012) that is the trinary of 'context', 'culture', and 'meaning'. Decolonizing the Research Philosophies, scientists developed interpretivism as an anti-naturalistic approach. However, there is a long history of interpretivism and other paradigms in human civilization from Vedic society to the present, though they may not have been

mentioned as interpretivism. Vedas were interpreted as Vedānta (Upaniṣads) and other works were interpreted in Vedic tradition. Mathematics interpreted astrology, astronomy, and the universe (Tekriwal, 2015). But the writers did not mention the lens of interpretation. They used deep meditation and observation in interpreting the texts and contexts.

Figure 9

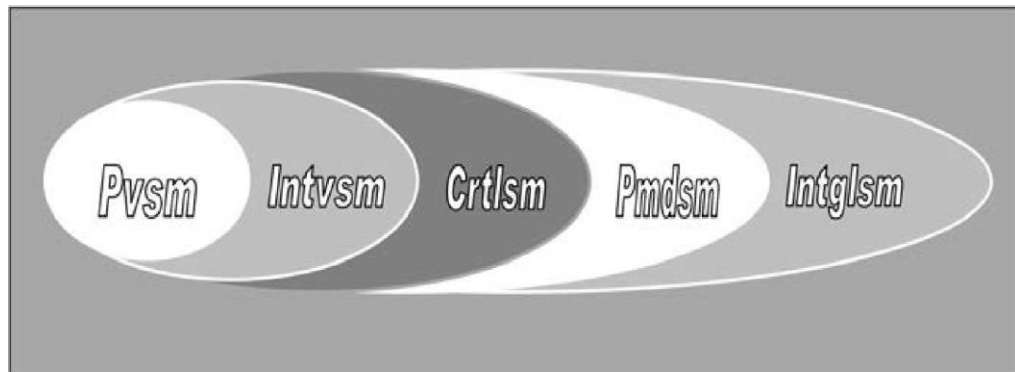
Research Paradigm



(Source: Taylor et al., 2012, p. 376)

It is very hard to find ancient systems of ways of knowledge construction in the works of modern methodologists, yet they try to go beyond interpretivism. The critiques take positivism and post-positivism as colonial frames. Scholars have been propagating decolonized methodologies and paradigms as efforts of rewriting the philosophical history of methodologies. This is possible because of non-positivistic paradigm shifts. Luitel (2009); Gautam and Luitel (2013); Dhungana and Rai (2017) and others have shed light on the multiple realities of knowledge generation.

In this regard, Taylor et al. (2012) have suggested a multi-paradigmatic transformative research paradigm. According to them, positivism, interpretivism, criticalism, and integralism paradigms can be used in educational research. They have been claiming that the notion will be established as 'integralism' finally. The three diagrams presented below visualize the paradigmatic evolution and future of non-positivism as sketched by Taylor et al. (2012):

Figure 10*Evolution of Paradigms*

(Source: Taylor et al., 2012, p. 384)

The diagram shows a range of paradigms beginning from positivism, interpretivism, criticalism, and postmodernism to integralism. But my research paradigm *Trisūl* is a bundle of paradigms. This means, there are several paradigms, equally powerful, and which can be applied depending on the nature of research issues and questions. The researcher must be able to select what features of the paradigm he or she needs to use to interpret the information collected from the field. There is no controversy between subjectivism and objectivism in my paradigm of *Trisūl* because these features are its integral parts.

If we go through the post-positivistic paradigm or Interpretivism, almost all places can be seen as a tridentic bunch of analytical ideas. Non-positivistic methodologists Taylor et al. (2012) did set a trident of ‘context’, ‘culture’ and ‘meaning’ while generating knowledge with non-colonial paradigms. With this background, I wonder why I do not use decolonial's own contextual, cultural analyzer, and meaning maker- that is *Trisūl*. The *Trisūl* paradigm was selected according to the researchers’ context of research topic, field, and data. Below I describe why I chose the *Trisūl* paradigm and how I would apply it to my study.

Philosophical Root of *Trisūl* Paradigm

I developed the paradigm influenced by the neo-logical school of Nyāya philosophy— Navya-Nyāya. Modern scholars interpret the logic of Navya-Nyāya as the "theory of cognition" Bhattacharyya (1974). Jñāna, or Knowledge or cognition, has its nature. Bhattacharyya says, "Jñāna is always used to denote propositional acts like judging, believing, disbelieving, doubting, assuming, inferring, remembering, perceiving, and non-propositional states like sensing. Jñāna is, therefore, identical with awareness (of facts, objects, sensory qualities)" (Bhattacharyya, 1974).

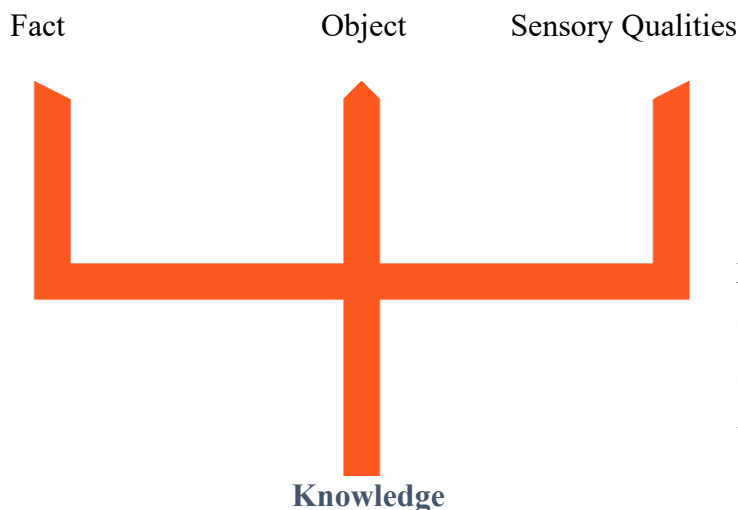
I adopted Bhattacharya's paradigm of Nyāya Darśana as the basis for selecting the *Trisūl* paradigm. The *Trisūl* paradigm here is a non-positivist lens to view the world and make an analysis. *Trisūl* contains several meanings and different forms. It is constructed of the sub-paradigms of Dukha and the Trinity of Gods— Brahma, Viṣṇu, and Mahesh.

***Trisūl*: Binary Opposition to Trinary Position**

Thinking anthropologically, according to the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, “binary oppositions are contrasting pairs of mental constructs that create social meaning” (Erickson & Murphy, 2017). In this approach to cultural understanding, there are only two sides to ideas: they are binary opposition. The binary oppositions are ‘life versus death, culture versus nature, and self-versus other’. Good and bad, day and night, and men and women are other examples. The binary notion construct does not recognize moderate conditions between good and evil. On the other side, neutrality is between negative and positive. According to my data, my paradigm goes beyond the binary idea of analysis, which is a trinary set of perceptions. This is a combination of the triplet. The perceptions are analyzed under the *Trisūl* worldview.

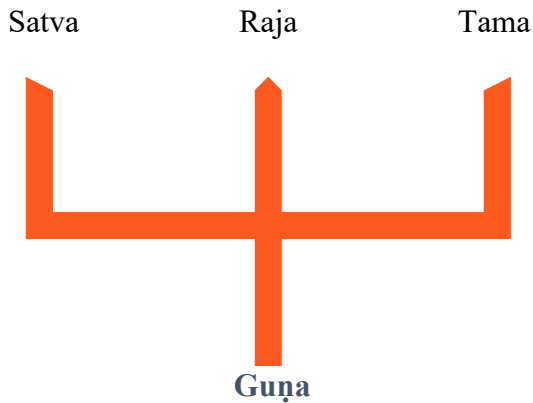
Figure 11

Trinary Sources of Epistemology



Trisūl is a comprehensive paradigm and yet a scientific one. One can explain everything under the earth through this paradigm. I was fascinated to see such a broad scope of the paradigm.

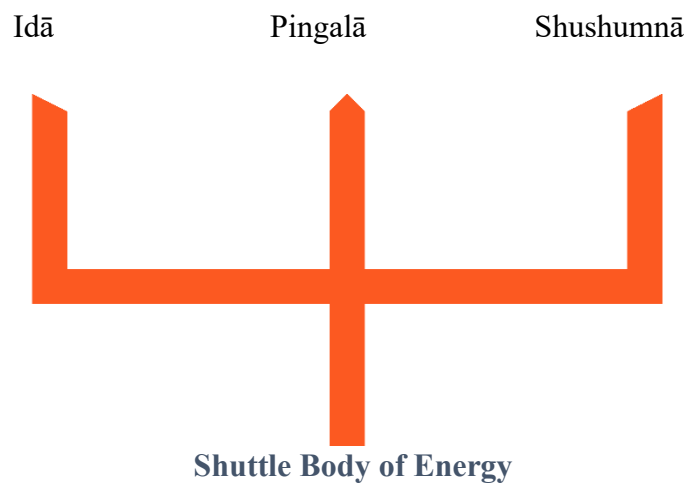
So, there is a wide scope of feeling and a broad spectrum of experience for humans.

Figure 12*The Qualities*

A set of Tri-Guṇas is the fundamental driving force of people. It determines the quality of life, mindset, and manifestation. Vedic and Ayurvedic gurus have interpreted the Guṇas as qualities of a person. Lord Krishna informed about the Guṇas to Arjun in the 14th

chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. "Sattva, Raja, Tamas—these three qualities born of nature tie down the imperishable soul to the body"²⁶ (Kaushik, 1994, pp. 319-320). Lord Krishna describes features of *Tri- Guṇas* in the 9th verse of the chapter 14th: Sattva drives one to joy, and Rajas to action, while Tamas' clouding wisdom incites one to error as well as slip and sloth (p. 322).

Likewise, other trinary positions of *Trisūl* also be interpreted according to respective philosophical interpretations. Another example is the *Nādi* and *chakra* system of the subtle body according to AyurVeda which is associated with the three phases of the energy ignition from three energy centers- *Idā*, *Pingalā*, and *Suśumnā*. The three are activated in the left, Right, and center.

Figure 13*The Microcosm*

²⁶ सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥ गीता १४.५

Sub-Paradigms of *Trisūl*

The number 'tri' (three) possesses different meanings in Hindu society, religion, culture, and philosophy. For example, age is divided into childhood, youth, and old age. Time is divided into morning, day, and night. Thus, time, age, God, and many other things have the number three. 'Tri' is used mainly concerning time, space, and consciousness. It shows 'Tri' has several aspects, and some of them are as below:

Aspect 1: Morning, day, night

Aspect 2: Ākāsh, Pātāl. Martyalok

Aspect 3: Seen, unseen, and both seen-unseen

Aspect 4: Brahma, Viṣṇu, Maheshwar

Aspect 5: Knowing, knower, and the subject

Aspect 6: Agony of birth, life, and death

Aspect 7: Observing, facing, suffering

Aspect 8: Physical, spiritual, and divine

Trisūl is a metal instrument of temple, house, and yogis, but it has a broader scope of meanings and uses. It is a supernatural weapon for protection and mental strength. Spirituality, philosophy, and linguistics have interpreted the triplet or trinary ideas. For example Trimurti, Tridevī, TriŚakti, Tribichar, Trikhutti (tripod), Tridashā, Tritāp, Tridanda, Trilok, Tribhuvan, Tripada (Gāyatrī), Triyug (Satya, Tretā, and Dwāpar), Trikul (clan of father, mother, and father in law), Triveni, Trivedi, Tribhuj, Trinetra, Trimarga (Tripath), Triphala, Trisandhyā, Trika, Trikon (triangle), Trivarga (Dharma, Artha, kama; loss, stability, growth), Trikuti (Ida, Pingala, Sushumna), TriŚakti Ichcha, Jñāna, Ichhā; Kali Tara, Tripura), Tiranga (combination of three colors), Tritanrika (lute with three codes), Trikanda (karma, Jñāna, Upasana), Trividha (three types), Trimadhu (combination of butter, sugar, and honey), Triyog (Gan, karma and bhakti), Tripaksha (three parties or branches or aspects).

Scope of *Trisūl* Paradigm

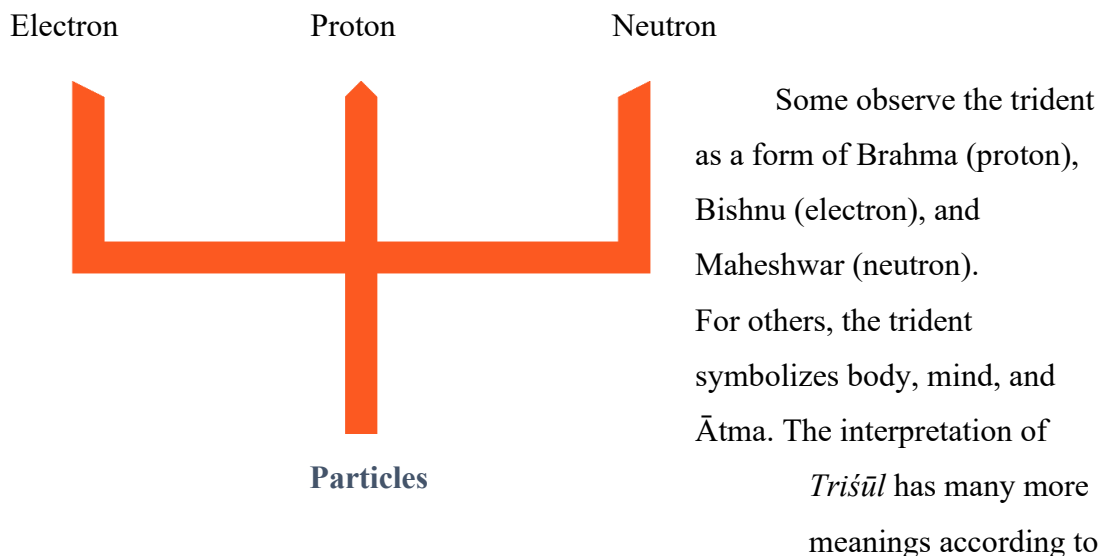
In Vedic philosophy and theosophy, paradigm and sub-paradigms of *Trisūl* are available in metaphysical, symbolic, and physical terms. The meaning of *Śul* is suffering. Suffering has philosophical and physical senses. *Śul* is also a weapon of Lord Śiva and Goddess while in need of destroying evil powers (asuras). *Trisūl* is a weapon of Sadhus in modern Hindu society. In “Encyclopedia of Mythological Objects,” Bane (2020) writes similar to what I listened to in my culture from my childhood about *Trisūl*: “In Hindu mythology, the three-pronged trident of Śiva is not

only a weapon he wields to destroy ignorance but also a symbol of his three powers of action (Kriyā), knowledge (jñana), and will (ichhā), as well as transcendence over the three qualities of nature (Guṇas), which are dynamic (rajas), inert (tamas), and pure (sattva).” The Encyclopedia further states: “Each prong is also symbolic of three rivers. Śiva is lord over the Ganges, the Sarasvatī, and the Yamuna. Unlike PINAKA (the named personal bow of Śiva), the trident is not named.” Trisūli River flows to the west of Kathmandu Valley.

Nepal’s Jagat Guru Mohan Śaraṇ Devāchārya has a hermeneutical way of analysis of Purāṇa on ‘lake culture’ (Sarovar Sanskriti). According to his interpretation of *Trisūli*, Lord Śiva had inflammation of poison after churning the sea. He went near Gosaikunda, a lap of Himalaya, where he dug the land using the *Trisūl* weapon. As a result, three fountains originated and later got mixed into one river called the ‘*Trisūli* River’ (2021). Thus, *Trisūl* is vast/ broad to explore and address human problems.

Figure 14

Trident of Particles



time and context. Here, to address the issues of my study, I have applied the *Trisūl* paradigm to analyze and interpret information on the status of girls studying Veda in Gurukul. The paradigm focuses on *Trisūl*, which means the three forms of suffering (Dukha) and their solutions with particular reference to the participants' consciousness as their point of view.

I have used Lord Śiva's three-trident weapon *Trisūl* paradigm in terms of its metaphysical lens. The *Trisūl* paradigm is three-dimensional. According to Vedic

philosophy and *Dharmaśāstra*, people face three types of suffering and can remove them through knowledge. Vachaspati Mishra interpreted Sāṅkhya philosophy which explains the three types of seen, unseen, and seen-unseen suffering or pain. First stanza of Sāṅkhya philosophy problematizes the curiosity of the three types of pain that is “Dukha”²⁷ and its debates for liberation. In Sanskrit, such pain is synonymously called *Dukha*, *Tāp*, and *Shūla*. Sāṅkhya philosophy describes the three pains named "Dukha Trayam" (Mishra, 1921). They are- (a) *Ādhyātmika*²⁸ *Dukha* (spiritual suffering). It has two ways of misery—the suffering of body and sorrow of mind (*Shāriram*, *Mānasam*). Body pain comes through an imbalance among *Vāta*, *Pitta*, and *phlegm* of the body. Mental pain comes because of thoughts of the person—*Kāma* (desire), *Krodha* (anger), *Lobha* (greed), *Moha* (temptation), *Bhaya* (fear), and *Bishād* (poison of anxiety). Jha (1896) and Banshi Dhara Misra (Mishra, 1921) have interpreted the stanza with other verses, (b) *Ādhi Bhautika*²⁹ *Dukha* is suffering caused by others, including other persons and animals. Humans and animals like deer, birds, and reptiles can create pain for people. Such suffering can be removed using external measures, and (c) third, *Dukha* was created by a supernatural called *Adhidaivika*³⁰.

The supernatural cause of suffering is metaphysical, where unseen metaphors of *Yakshya* (dual role of negative as well as positive), *Rakshasas* (evils), *Vinayaka* (God), and *Grahas* (bodies of the universe). The person can feel seen-unseen sufferings. Knowledge is only one solution to remove all three categories of suffering. Knowledge is awareness of the matter³¹. Whether experiences are negative or positive can be realized through feeling. Pleasures are taken positively, and pains are negative. Sāṅkhya philosophy focuses on awareness of removing pain. The philosophical

²⁷दुःखत्रयाभिघाताज् जिज्ञासा तदपघातके हेतौ ।

दृष्टे साऽपार्था चेन् नैकान्तात्यन्ततोऽभावाद् ॥

²⁸शारीरं- वातपित्तश्लेष्मणां वैषम्यनिमित्तम् ।

मानसं- कामक्रोधलोभमोहभयेष्व्याविषादविषविशेषादर्शननिबन्धनम् ।

Shāriram- vātapittashleshmanāmyanimittam. Mānasam-

kāmakrodhalobhamihabhayeshyavishādavishavisheshādarśananibandhanam)

²⁹मानुषपशुमृगपक्षिसरीसृपस्थावरनिमित्तम् । *Mānushapashumrigapakshisarisripasthāvaranimittam*

³⁰यक्षराक्षसविनायकग्रहाद्यावेशनिबन्धनम् । *Yakshyarākshyasavināyakagrahādyāveshanibandhanam*

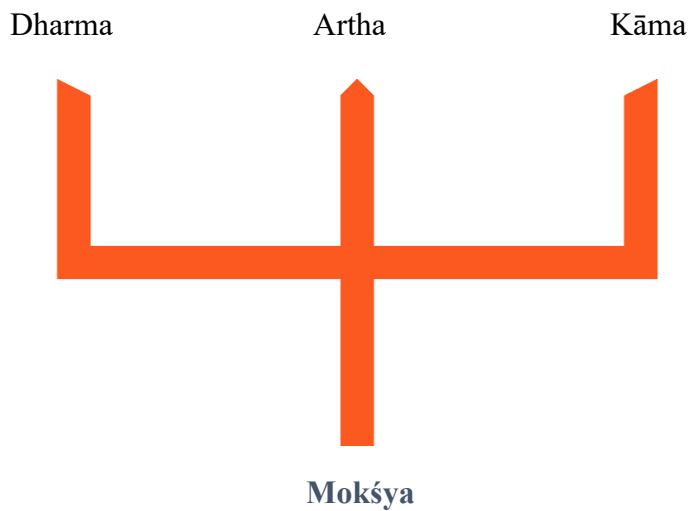
³¹चेतनाशक्तेः प्रतिकूलवेदनीयतयाऽभिसम्बन्धोऽभिघात ।

Chetanāshaktehpratikulavedaneeyatayābhisambhandhobhighāta.

interpretation of Sāṅkhya reiterates three types of *Tāp* (*Dukha*) in religious and spiritual texts and prayers. For example, the most famous devotion in Shrimad Bhāgavat Puraṇa is made to Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Śiva³². In other words, Lord Śiva uses the trident with a small drum (*Damaru*). Pāṇini generated all letters and words through the sound of *Damaru*, played by the Lord. With the blessing, Pāṇini created refined grammar (*Aṣṭādhyāyī*) from this sound (*nāda*) of *Damaru*, played by Śiva.

Figure 15

The Way of Liberation



In addition to the scopes mentioned above of *Triśūl* based on Sāṅkhya philosophy, Abhinav Gupta, a tenth-century philosopher, has developed an idea on the three-dimensional idea of knowledge. It is called Trident or "Trika." This is Advaita's perspective of

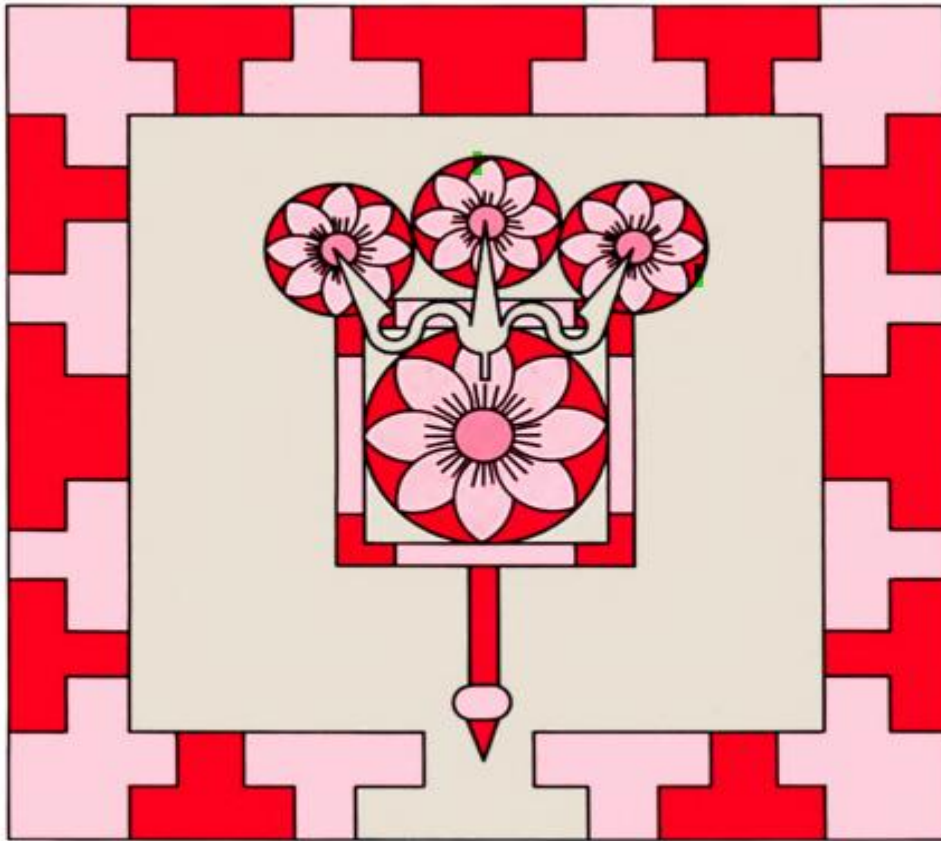
Śaiva Darśana (Shaivites philosophy) developed by him in Kashmir. So, it has been known as Kashmiri Shaivism. The Trident is the symbol-yantra of *Param* (great) Śiva. It has powers that are energy. The Trident of the points is called- *Parā*, *Parā-Aparā*, and *Aparā Śakti*. These three are 'Parātrimśikā,' which is the doctrine of consciousness. This is a *Triśūl* of knowledge. On the foundation of the *Yantra*, this symbol creates energy by practicing a mantra where the practitioner can become Śiva. The domain of Abhinav Gupta's Trident of knowledge is as given below:

³²सच्चिदानन्दरूपाय विश्वोत्पत्यादिहेतवे ।

तापत्रयविनाशाय श्रीकृष्णाय वयं नमः॥

Sachchidānandarupāyavishwotpatyādihetave.

TāpatrayavināshāyaShreekrishnāyavayamnamah.

Figure 16*Trident of Wisdom*

(Source: Singh, 1989, Cover page)

In praying to Śiva for liberation, the person has to follow three ways of their powers. The powers are *Jñānā Śakti* (knowledge power), *Kriyā Śakti* (actions power), and *Ichhā Śakti* (will power). So, this is another *Trisūl*.

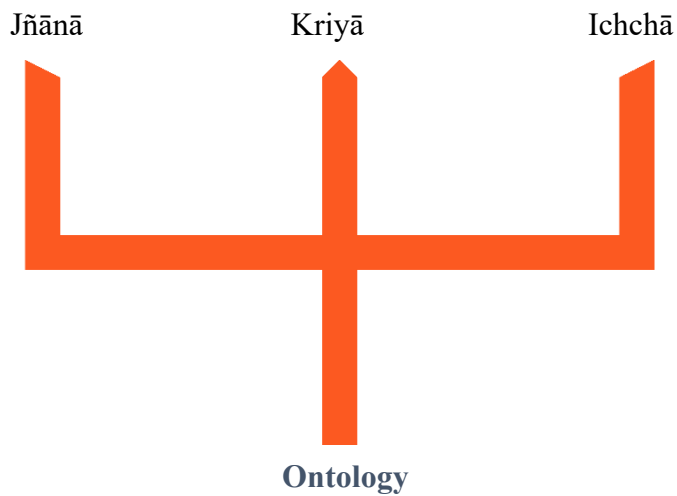
The performer can set paradigms through deep meditation and divine power or by linking to others. In other words, paradigm-making has several influences from previous knowledge. The impact made me frame the *Trisūl* paradigm with the three philosophical ideas of *Trisūl* or tridents. Among them, one has three pains or sufferings: *Ādhyātmikā*, *Ādhibhautikā*, and *Ādhidaivikā*. The second possesses three energies: *Para*, *Para-Aparā*, and *Aparā*. The third possesses three powers: *Jñāna Shakti*, *Kriyā Śakti*, and *Ichcha Śakti*. The trident presented below tries to visualize the three types of the triadic idea of the paradigm:

Trisūl 1: Ādhyātmikā, Ādhibhautikā, Ādhidaivikā

Trisūl 2: Para, Para-Aparā, Aparā

Trisūl 3: Jñānā Śakti, Kriyā Śakti, Ichchā Śakti



Figure 17*The Trident of Powers*

Ontology deals with the nature of reality. Obviously, reality is viewed as social and societal embedded and existing within the mind. This reality is fluid, changing, and knowledge is constructed jointly in interaction by the researcher and the researched through

consensus" (Grbich, 2013. p. 7). I believe in Vedic knowledge, modern inventions, innovation, and development. I follow Vedic culture and knowledge as tradition and adapt to the Western daily lifestyle. Western education pulled me beyond Vedic education after my school education. Mainstream education is still leading us to the Western system. However, many people in Nepali society follow Vedic traditions and rituals in daily life.

Trinary position Vedas that are 'TriVeda'. The three Vedas are *R̥g*, *Yaju*, and *Sāma*. Similarly, there is a combination of uses of Veda's mantra and trinary practices. Vedic philosophy has mainly three branches: *Jñāna Kand*, *Upasana Kand*, and *Karmakāṇḍa*. The three Vedas have nearly 100000 mantras. Out of the total number of mantras, four thousand are for *Jñāna Kanda* (epistemic discourse), sixteen thousand are for *Upasana* (for a meditative state of the follower), and the rest of the eighty thousand mantras are used for ritual works. We can find major philosophical guidelines if we consolidate the three parts of the Veda into spirituality and ritualism. They are *Pūrva-Mimāmsā* and *Uttar-Mimāmsā*.

Sage Jaimini propounded *Pūrva-Mimāmsā*, and Shābar interpreted it (*Shābarbhāshyam*). *Pūrva-Mimāmsā* consists of multiple realities of suffering and liberation depending on education and conduct. Similarly, *Uttar-Mimāmsā* is Vedānta which focuses mainly on *ātma* and *anātmā*. Thus, Vedic philosophy has subjective realities which are measured by the norms and values of society. My ontology is based on my experience, reading, and reflection collected from the participants in Vedic schools.

The ontology is based on the paradigm, which believes in multiple realities and subjectivity instead of single truth and objectivity. I have been experiencing such multiplicities—my realities. For instance, I learned the skills of reciting *Rudrī* (Subedi, 2016), which is taught as a beginner textbook for Vedic students and refers to Rudra (God Śiva). *Rudrī* worshiping is performed to fulfill a desire or for the peace of mind of the devotee.

However, *Rudrī* starts with a prayer to God Ganesh. There are mantras to pray to several other deities as well. One can pray for only one God, like Ganesh, Śiva, or all 33 types of Gods. Other mantras are recited for universal cosmic peace and cosmic being. This shows that power has been centralized vis-à-vis power everywhere and that reality is subject to the performers and perceivers.

There are multiple (four) Vedas and branches (*Shakas*) of the Vedas. Upaniṣads have been divided based on the components as well. Let's look at Vedānta, the highest form of Upaniṣadic philosophy. It also manifests dualism and non-dualism though we can find many perceivers of non-dualism on the metaphysical ground. Neither time nor space presents a single reality in literature. Constant changes have been found from *Satya Yuga* to *Kali Yuga*. Moreover, the interpretation or meaning making of Vedic philosophy, law, and procedures vary based on time, space, and person. The provisions and practices of the past did not restrict females from learning Veda. On the other side, there were also restrictive provisions in different contexts. Therefore, I used multiple realities in this study.

Epistemology

Epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge can be created, acquired, and communicated, in other words, what it means to know (Scotland, 2012). It is a subject of known and known both. Knowingly, unknowingly or both states generated a set of *Trisūl*. My schooling in Vedic culture was a foundation, later influenced by Western ideas till my mid-age, and now, I can compare both ways of knowing tentatively. Ritualism was the principal aim of the Vedic school I attended. I studied the epistemic ground of *Jaimini*. Modern subjects of world history, political science, and sociology was college life education.

With the educational background, subjective realities were captured by observing everyday life in the field. Also, I made meaning based on participant interaction and observation of the activities. Field study was the primary source of

knowledge. I observed the Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul mainly for rituals, priesthood, and associated issues of culture based on the prescribed pedagogies.

Jaimini's Pūrva Mimāmsā is a requirement for classical subjects and the practical world (Musalgaonkar, 2004). Confusion and contradictions are eliminated using Pūrva Mimāmsā (p. 8). Veda interpreters apply Jaimini's aphorism and its interpretations by Sāber Swāmi. Śankarāchārya's interpretation of Vedānta was brought out through *Sāber Bhashyam* (Interpretation of Jaimini's aphorism by Shabar Swāmi), as Musalgaonkar states. Generally speaking, *Shābar Bhāshyam* concentrates on the mystery of Karma through the philosophy of ritualism.

There is no provision for learning Veda independently by unmarried women in Pūrva Mimāmsā because marriage itself has been taken as an *Upanayana* ritual for females, and they can study and perform rituals together with their husbands. But for boys, *Upanayana* is generally performed at 5 to 12 years of age. The classical provisions are tallied with the ethnography at Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul (KGG) for knowledge generation. I observed the recitation comparatively by both the girls and boys and their performance of the rituals. Finally, I explored knowledge through the idea of physical (*Bhautik*), spiritual (*Ādhyātmika*), and divine (*Daivik*). This epistemic exploration also focuses on a trinary set of ideas on Vedic education, its modernization, and the status of girls' education.

Axiology

Taittirīyopaniṣad (a section of Uttar Mimāmsā) shows me a *Trisūl* of teachings: “Speak the truth, follow dharma, and do not be derailed from self-study as well as the study of ‘the self’.”³³ Thus, the values of Mimāmsā are my axiology which has teachings of morality, character development, rebirth or next life based on karma, gratitude, forgiveness, tolerance, and ahimsa as well. I have tried to establish a correlation between influences of modern values of earning money, gender equality, and the values derived through “*Dharma*,” “*Yajña*,” and “*Mokṣa*,” which are linked with the livelihood of the girls in the future.

Similarly, I have linked ethical thinking to creative thinking, as Kara (2015, pp. 37, 47, 55) emphasized in the age of growing pressure on researchers like me to be innovative (p. 5). I have tried to give answers to ethical questions (p. 55) during the whole process of this study. I have maintained the anonymity of the participants. But I

³³ सत्यं वद । धर्मं चर । स्वाध्यायान्माप्रमद ।

have disclosed the actual name of the Gurukul I studied because the school is registered and public, and it is a history of gender equality efforts. It requires truth and transparency institutionally. Thus, I have applied both oriental and occidental aesthetics in this exploration.

Methodology: Parāṅusandhān or Ethnography

The methodology is a trinary combination of "practice, methods, and theory", as Leavy (2023) defines it. According to her, the methodology is a research process plan, combining different elements of research into the plan and its implementation. "In addition to one's philosophical beliefs and selecting appropriate methods and theories, ethics influence how a study is designed and executed. (Leavy, 2023, pp. 16-17). In other words, the methodology is a set of research philosophies, tools, and techniques. The methodology is selected according to paradigm, philosophy, and procedures. This thesis applies ethnography as a methodology under *Triśūl*'s doctrine.

Any paradigm comprises the components of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. I used the ethnography of the *Triśūl* paradigm in terms of a qualitative approach to taking the school as culture. *Triśūl* paradigm is a constructivist paradigm adopted from Navya Nyāya's logic³⁴. Such tradition was developed in the name of interpretivism in modern research practices as that grew out of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Wilhelm Dilthey's and other German philosophers' study of interpretive understanding called hermeneutics (Mertens, 2015, p. 16).

Ethnography is the study of others. The meaning of ethnography in Nepali is *Parāṅusandhān*. It has a combination of trinary syllables- Parā+Aṅu+Sandhān³⁵. *Parā* denotes other/s, *Anu* denotes atomic or microscopic, and *Sandhān* denotes exploration. This is a study of culture-sharing groups. The methodology is *Triśūl* or trinary position of people, culture, and research. Ethnographic study methods such as interviews, observations, and document reviews are predominant in applying the paradigm (Mertens, 2015). Since it is an ethnographic study, I selected and studied the girls' Gurukul as a whole case.

Also, I have used the *Triśūl* paradigm as a decolonized paradigm similar to the role of the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm in an ethnographic study or

³⁴ नव्यन्याय

³⁵ पर+अणु+सन्धान= पराणुसन्धान

Parāṇusandhān. Cohen and Manion (1994) state that the interpretive/constructivist approaches to research intend to understand "the world of human experience (p.36)." As an ethnographer, I tried to capture the experiences at the girls' Gurukul. I relied on the participants as Creswell (2003) said that the interpretivist/constructivist researcher tends to rely upon the "participants' views of the situation being studied (p.8)" and recognizes the impact of the research on their background and experiences.

Research Design

The research design is a trident of participants, method, and theoretical orientation. Moreover, the research design informs about the research participants, methods of data collection (information collection through qualitative approach), and theoretical background for the central research question. I adopted exploratory methods. The findings are based on observation, interview, and literature review. The changes and the hurdles faced in Vedic education have been explored. I particularly observed the principles and practices in Vedic education in a girls' Gurukul in Kathmandu.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research is an inquiry project and a moral, allegorical, and therapeutic project. Ethnography is a method of inquiry in my research. Some scholars have taken ethnography as a methodology as well. If we are interested in documenting and describing the culture of a group of people, then ethnography is a methodology (Saldana, 2015). I admit my study has benefitted from Fetterman's approach to ethnography, as cited below:

Ethnography is about telling a credible, rigorous, and authentic story.

Ethnography gives voice to people in their local context, typically relying on verbatim quotations and a "thick" description of events. The story is told through the eyes of local people as they pursue their daily lives in their communities. The ethnographer adopts a cultural lens to interpret observed behavior, ensuring that the behaviors are placed in a culturally relevant and meaningful context. The ethnographer is focused on the predictable, daily patterns of human thought and behavior. Ethnography is thus both a research method and a product, typically a written text. (Fetterman, 2010, p. 1)

I did ethnography or *Parāṇusandhān* in natural settings, and the analysis was made inductively, with the researcher paying particular attention to the discourse and behavior of participants. I analyzed and interpreted the information collected from the field using ethnographic and hermeneutical approaches. According to Denzin and

Lincoln (2011, p. 92), constructivism, interpretivism, and hermeneutics fall in the same philosophical arena. They further say: Constructivism connects action to praxis and builds on anti-foundational while encouraging experimental and multi-voiced texts. Social constructivism often combines with interpretivism. On the methodological ground, my study was constructed in the field. In other words, the study combined interpretivism, hermeneutics, and constructivism. Grbich (2013) described interpretivism as synonymous with constructionism because it reconstructs views through interaction. I interacted with research participants in the field.

On this ground, my understanding constructed views through an interpretation that may be limited to the *Trisūl* frames I derived from my life experiences. There is a play between subjectivity (the researcher's views and how they have been constructed) and inter-subjectivity (reconstruction of views through interaction with others through language and written texts). Crotty (1998, cited in Scotland, 2012), explains interpretivism with an identity of a tree: a tree is not a tree without someone calling it a tree. Meaning is not discovered; it is constructed through the interpretation between consciousness and the world. Consciousness is always consciousness (Creswell, 2013). As a process my ethnographic research involves extended observation of the group, especially participant observation, in which I immersed myself in the day-to-day lives of the research participants and observed and interviewed them.

Research Site

My research site was mid-Kathmandu, where a girls' Gurukul was running during the research. At the final stage, after completing the entire ethnographic fieldwork in Kathmandu, I visited Devghāt Chitwan, because the girls' Gurukul I studied was merged into another girls' Gurukul there. I updated my data from the merged school as well. I intensively interacted with the girls, teachers, founders, guardians, and Vedic scholars. I also visited the boys' Gurukuls located in different districts and discussed with the boys and gurus in acquiring ideas about the Gurukul system for drawing comparative perspectives.

Research Participants

The study's participants were purposefully chosen to facilitate the researcher's understanding of the problem and research questions, as suggested by Creswell (2013). In ethnography, observation necessitates the clarification and interpretation of the activities observed. As such, participants were selected to

comprehend subjective realities. Numerous individuals were engaged in discussions about the research questions and recent activities at various locations. It included, 22 individuals were identified as key informants, including one Head Teacher (HT), five teachers, nine girls, two parents, two Vedic scholars, and three founders.

The nine girls selected from table number 4 (presented in chapter VI) served as key informant students. These girls, numbered 8 to 16, were undergoing their menarche/menstrual cycle and were senior students. They acted as informative bridges between school management and society. The group comprised girls from Brāhman, Kṣetrī, Janajati, Madheshi, and Dalit families. Economically, all have peasantry background. Despite their lower or middle-lower income status, their families were well-informed about opportunities and progress. They were eager to shift from peasantry to cashmaking service.

The HT was an indispensable participant in the research due to her comprehensive knowledge about the Gurukul. She holds a master's degree in Sanskrit and teaches the same subject. She experienced the Upanayana ritual during her childhood at Koṭihom, organized by Yogi Narahari Nath.

The teachers represented different disciplinary backgrounds. They provided insights into teaching-learning outcomes and daily cultural activities. All teachers had prior teaching experience in other institutions. The founders were another source of data. Three of them were retired professors, with two being Sanskritists. They have been involved in the KGG campaign since its inception. Two forward-looking parents from similar socioeconomic backgrounds were also interviewed.

Finally, some Vedic scholars supported the inclusive approach of KGG while others critiqued it. A professor at Nepal Sanskrit University who was involved in preparing the World Hindu Federation/UNIFEM report for the feminization of Vedic education was interviewed. Another scholar who had visited and criticized the efforts of inclusion in Veda teaching was also interviewed.

The successful completion of the in-depth interviews was facilitated by field observations. In addition to these interviews, Group Discussions (GDs) were conducted as a means to triangulate the information gathered and validate the observations made. Three GDs involved all the girls, one included teacher, and the final one was conducted with parents. Notably, the girls participated in all the GDs.

Ethnographic Fieldwork

The fieldwork had *Trisūl* of observation, conversation, and text exploration. The Data were collected through the field as well as through scriptures. So, I was an observer and participant throughout the research process. This means the observation tool played an essential role in this qualitative study. In other words, I did in-depth interviews and observations of school activities and group discussions. A daily diary/notebook was maintained, and a unified field note was prepared as a reflective journal. There was some difficulty at the primary stage since I was a male researcher, and the subject of my fieldwork was a girls' Gurukul. It took much work to collect complete information about females as a male researcher. A Canadian female professor asked me, "How can a male do an ethnography of a female Gurukul? This can be seen as lacking in information collection".

Historically, E. B. Tylor used tribal female informants as his assistant while working in the tribal community in case he could not get information from women informants. Anthropologists have taken help from their spouses. Doing female research by a female is taken as proper and able to gain additional information. However, there has been a remark that female is essentially a gender and an empirical or descriptive category (Visweswaran, 1997). The analysis incorporates male researchers' ethnographies of women and children which were wider in collecting in-depth information. In my case, I had full access to collecting all in-depth information at the Gurukul. I also took help from my wife, Archana, in several venues and events.

Fieldwork Process

I divided my fieldwork processes into a trinary set of phases: continuous participant observation in Kathmandu, a follow-up to Chitwan after shifting the Gurukul, and data updating before writing. First, I visited the girls' Gurukul, located in mid-Kathmandu. I met the girls studying in the Vedic School and talked to them. Similarly, I also talked to the principal, teachers, founders, ritual experts, scholars, and parents. I visited the girls' Gurukul for nine months regularly. Then, I visited occasionally, based on invitations.

Almost all the time I reached the KGG, the gate was usually locked. Many times, I had to shriek; sometimes, I phoned, and other times, I used to knock. Sometimes, the insiders used to understand the time of my arrival. One or two girls were sent to open the gate so I could enter. After entering the Gurukul, I was free to act as an observer. In addition, I interacted with teachers, the girls, and the visitors. I

had to return after 8:30 or 9 PM. The next day I used to go randomly- someday, I had reached the gate before they woke up. Some other days, I reached them while they were having breakfast. Some days, I reached the teachers' arrival time. Such flexible times made it easy to collect varied situations at different times. I talked with them about their family, selection to come to the Gurukul, the teaching-learning process, hurdles, the future of the girls, and challenges. Matters of the interactions were not limited to personal development but also spirituality, religion, and metaphysics. Sometimes, I not only exchanged my ideas and knowledge, but also taught informally. Such knowledge-sharing activities helped me to collect information from the field.

I made a news story on the Gurukul and transmitted it, and the girls named me a *photo khichne dai* (photographer brother). I informed them that I was studying them as students of a girls' Gurukul. Such an impression helped me explore the students' practices and feelings about why and how they were interested in being there. That was my participatory observation. Second, I used separate interview guidelines for the principal, teachers, founders, parents, ritual scholars, and other Gurukul boys and their teachers. Third, I did group discussions (GD) with the girl students, parents, and teachers in separate contexts and settings. Fourth, I interacted with stakeholders on daily rituals performed at Gurukuls and the pedagogies practiced there.

Sometimes I took my wife and sometimes my daughter to the field. They were familiar with the participants. I was impressed that the Gurukul was a finishing school. As a result, I decided to transfer my daughter there in grade 5. I phoned. But no one responded. Then, I called the principal. She said that the Gurukul was merged with the Chitwan orphanage, and they just shifted to the district. Then, I had to follow them there. I observed the transitional phase of 2018 and 2019. The principal and her mother, both employed as wardens at KGG, had also traveled to Chitwan. However, they were not welcomed in the main building of Gurukul orphanage. Instead, they stayed in a small house, akin to a guardhouse, attached to the main gate. The principal continued to teach Sanskrit, just as she had done in Kathmandu's KGG. The rest of the authority was held by Gurukul's local leadership. After a few months, the KGG principal and her mother returned to Kathmandu. They revealed that they had been ignored, and their salaries were unpaid by the management of the merged Gurukul. Consequently, they decided to part ways with KGG.

The internal dispute within the Chitwan Gurukul led to conflicts over management issues, primarily revolving around power dynamics. This eventually resulted in the split of the merged KGG. The girls were also divided between two Gurukuls. I followed both Gurukuls during this period, expanding my involvement beyond my usual field and presenting data on various academic platforms.

Among the platforms, the Kathmandu Annual Conference organized by Social Science Baha (2017) was a significant venue for feedback collection on my fieldwork. My topic was: 'Re-emergence of Gurukul in Nepal: Deconstructing Vedic tradition for girls.' Another feedback collection was the 'national seminar on anthropology of Nepal' in 2018. It was organized in Pokhara by Prithvi Narayan Campus, where I presented on 'Beyond Sanskritization.' These two conferences made me wait for the product of KGG before sitting to write the final thesis.

One of the pieces of information obtained from the platform was the difference in vocal frequency level between males and females while chanting mantras. I intended to test it technically. I visited the ENT department of the Teaching hospital of Tribhuvan University and received some ideas about audiological frequency. Then I went to Chitwan and collected four girls from KGG and four boys from a boy Gurukul. They were selected randomly from the same grade as the respective Gurukuls. My wife managed the recorder devices as well. The venue was Professor Guru Prasad Subedi's home library. However, that was unsuccessful since the performance of chanting was unequal between the two Gurukuls. The professor witnessed that the KGG girls performed better than the boys. The technical process was experimental and time-consuming. As a result, I stopped that frequency level testing and comparison.

If I recall the ups and downs of KGG, the transitional phase of more than a year was a hard time for many stakeholders. I revisited Chitwan to update the data. Finally, I got my data saturated and my fieldwork observed mainly three types of results. One, I saw that some girls completed grade 12 and performed *Karmakanda* (ritual) works, including *Rudrī*, for the devotee clients. Second, some took the path of Sanskritist, and the third type of girls took the path of astrology. Thus, the field visit that started in 2014 found the logical ending in 2022, and I sat to write this thesis in completing my degree project of a decade.

Meaning-Making Process

A widely used Sanskrit proverb for meaning-making and the epistemic outcome is *Vāde Vāde Jāyate Tatwabodhaḥ*. Meaning of this Sanskrit proverb has three-dimensional ways of knowledge generation: Intra-personal communication, interpersonal communication, and group communication. This brainstorming occurs in three places- between heart and mind, between persons, and among group/s. In so doing, firstly, I did self-talk. Secondly, I observed and discussed with people in an in-depth interview. Thirdly, I jointly conducted group discussions with the girls, teachers, and parents. The activities were collected in journals, diaries, and cameras. The field records were analyzed and internalized with three-dimensional ways of the Vedānta process of knowledge path: *Śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *Nididhyāsana*. *Śravaṇa* hears the facts that I collected carefully. *Manana* is reflection and contemplation. I did that while consolidating the field note before sitting to start writing this thesis. *Nididhyāsana* is the concluding *Śravaṇa*, and *manana* is knowledge. Thus, I made the meaning.

In completing the path of meaning-making, I went to the ritual experts and professor of theosophy of Hinduism on the principles and practices which helped me make the study's meaning. I reviewed different theories and ideas from male and female experts. In doing so, I categorized the works with three-dimensional aspects. The one is from male scholars' works.

In this, the propagation of Yogi Narahari Nath and Śiva Raj Acharya Kaundinnyāyan have been analyzed. 'Vedic communism' of Yogi Narahari Nath doesn't have discrimination in learning Veda regarding gender and caste. However, Kaundinnyāyan states that only '*Dvija*' (twice-born caste) females can learn Veda. The second dimension of the theory is theories of gender equality. Uma Chakravarti's 'Brāhmanical patriarchy' and Judith Butler's 'Performativity' have a cultural discrimination setting. Likewise, the third dimension is a central idea that helped me make meaning from the field data. The notion is propagated by Sinu Joseph, who criticizes feminization but advocates for 'Femininity'. In other words, after I communicated with the self, it caused communication between my heart and mind. After discussing with various people, I became reflective as my study required.

During this analysis course, I encountered three directional metaphors in the field and used them for meaning making. Among them, one is related to two types of trees- *Chilāune* (*Schima wallichii*) and *Katus* (Chestnut). Another one is

Ardhanārīśvara, the form of Lord Śiva and Parvati (half man, half woman). *Śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *Nididhyāsana* processes also followed the analysis of theories. They were also in a set of three: Structuralism/functionalism from sociological/anthropological perspectives, post-structuralism from ‘post...’ perspectives, and gender theories from gender perspectives. They were tied up while analyzing the activities from a genderization perspective during the meaning-making process of the study.

Finally, the meaning-making processes found three major themes in the girls’ Gurukul: the status of recitation or mantra chanting, daily ritual works for producing priests for the future, and menstrual effects in teaching-learning activities. Framework of this *Triśūl* paradigm eventually found Paradoxes in the field, which I took as gaps. Another finding is the Neo-Sanskritization process, and the third is- the *Ardhanārīśvara* theory of gender equality.

Quality Standards

Systematic information collection by observing, interviewing, discussing, and analyzing is necessary for qualitative research. There are techniques for conducting interviews, observation and analysis, and interpretation of documents as well. As I have studied in other literature on qualitative research, the study demands mainly: justification and clarification, procedural rigor, interpretive rigor, reflexivity, and evaluative rigor and transferability. Kara (2015) cites Sarah Tracy's quality criteria for good qualitative research: a worthy topic, richly rigorous, sincere, credible, resonant, significant, ethical, and coherent would-be good quality (p. 69).

Nonetheless, there is a trident of the quality standard: trustworthiness, rigor, and quality. This set of qualities in a qualitative approach is parallel to the reliability and validity of the quantitative paradigm. Lincoln and Guba’s definition of 1985 has been widely used in the qualitative field, and I have contextualized the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability in my study.

1. Credibility (rather than validity): Participants only can judge the credibility of the results. Girls, teachers, and founders were my study participants. They allowed me to observe, converse, and frequently visit during the research because of their confidence in me. I replicated the credibility through this thesis so that they could recognize that my work was credible and real.
2. Transferability (rather than generalizability): The meanings of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings. Meanings made in this study could

not be used for generalization, but this is undoubtedly useful for similar contexts and settings.

3. **Dependability:** Stability and consistency in research findings over time, situations, and researchers is called dependability. Before starting ethnography, I assumed that the efforts made at the proposal-making phase were for the feminization of Vedic education. However, my prolonged engagement in Kathmandu girls' Gurukul noted the challenges and uncertainty of their hardship. The study found different situations in the field. Nonetheless, the study's outcome is expected to help bring change in similar efforts in the days to come.

4. **Conformability:** I was checking and rechecking data throughout the study. Observing again and again, was very important in the field. The participants sometimes needed clarification. For instance, the cause of students' absence was not told or taken as an essential aspect. At times, the number of absentee girls increased, and the principal also was absent. Comparatively, younger girls gave me the information at the last stage of the fieldwork that such absence was because of the girls' menstruation.

Likewise, prolonged engagement and rigor are other quality criteria for qualitative research. I spent nine months continuously for the fieldwork, and it helped me excavate several untold stories of the school and the learning processes

Ethical Considerations

Integrity, welfare, and service is a set of tridents of ethics in the Vedic knowledge system. Vyāsa who divided the Veda in several sections and Vedic scriptures including 18 Purāṇa, ends his writing with two messages: 1. Welfare gives heaven. 2. Sadism gives hell (Yogi Narahari Nath, 2059 V.S.). In other words, helping others is merit, and hurting others is a sin! This proverb has been interpreted as the gist of all 18 Purāṇas³⁶. The Vedic ethical considerations are similar to those of modern qualitative research. I respected the following ethical considerations during the entire study period with the commitments:

1. **Do not harm the participants:** During the research process, I met female students who were my significant participants in the study. I was aware of probable sensitive aspects of gender, social and cultural perspectives.

³⁶ अष्टादशपुराणेषु व्यासस्य वचनद्वयम् ।
परोपकारः पुण्याय पापाय परपीडनम् ॥

2. Take permission from the participants for observation and interaction: Before the interaction, I sought the participants' consent telling them what they would share, what kinds of questions I would ask them, and what the study result would be like.
3. Show honesty before the participants: I always reminded them that I was a researcher and would publish the participants' activities. I informed them of my audio and video recording before the instrument was switched on. I presented myself as an open person and an open participant.
4. Do not violate secrecy: I maintained confidentiality about what the participants said on record and off the record, mainly their information about the school culture.
5. Action and competence of researcher: I played my role of researcher, and I acted as a knowledge seeker among the participants.
6. Occupation with collaborators: I became cooperative and got the same from the side of the participants. I did not act rude, even in inconvenient conditions.
7. Release or publication of the findings: The thesis releases the fieldwork, as I promised among the participants during the study.

According to the house rules of my university, I used pseudo names of the adult participants. In this research, I have introduced girls with numbers instead of their real names for ethical consideration. Further, I have used the real names of experts on their consent, who are not affiliated with the girls' Gurukul.

Essence of the Chapter

The primary objective of this Chapter was to set trinary positions of paradigmatic development. I introduced *Triśūl* paradigm after analyzing the existing paradigms according to the nature of this research. It has moved forward 'beyond binary opposition' of Claude Levi-Strauss's structural set of cultural analysis. It has tried to establish a three-dimensional idea of cultural studies, which I coined as the 'Trinary Position' of ideas. From there, I explained its research processes in particular fields where girls were studying Vedic education. Moreover, this Chapter manifested transparency of the research process with a qualitative approach and ethnographic methodology under the non-positivistic *Triśūl* paradigm.

CHAPTER IV

ON RECITAL

This chapter addresses my first sub-research question: "What is the Vedic educational condition of Vedic mantra recitation for girls in Nepal?" In so doing, I observed trinary aspects of pronunciation, visitors' reactions, and theoretical relevance. First, I carefully observed the chanting of the mantras by the girls. Also, I observed what the Vedic visitors gave the reaction at the Gurukul. Second, I studied social encouragement, discouragement, and boycotting of girls for their mantra chanting in public places. Neo-Hinduism and Vedic Communism were analyzed for answers to the research question.

Girls' Buzzing Mantra: Application of *Triśūl*

The resonant sound of mantra chanting could be heard near the main entrance of Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul (KGG) as I approached. I realized that the chorus sound was created for liberation from *Triśūl*, or three types of suffering. Veda is learned to remove sufferings of *Triśūl: Ādhyātmika* (Spiritual), *Ādhidaivika* (supernatural), and *Ādhibhautika* (supper physical) as Adhikari (2007) assessed the need for the study in his writeup. The rhythmic mantra vibration took me immediately to the upstairs building where a guru sat on a chair and girls chanted the Veda mantras squatting on the floor. They were chanting and moving their hands as per the rule for the signs of pitch and pause. The male guru was an associate professor at Nepal Sanskrit University and had taught at the school since it was established in 2011. The girl students' chanting and singing were like the boy students. I captured the scene both in my mind and the camera's memory.

The next day, when I reached the school at 5 a.m., the girls were prepared for their yoga class. A female teacher came in and made the girls practice yoga. After yoga, they prayed to the goddess Sarasvatī and other gods. When this was over, another female teacher took a Gītā spiritual class. It was tiffin time. Following the homework and self-study. They had their brunch. The food was served by GuruĀma (female teacher). There were hostel times and school times. They started their school hour with a prayer and exercise guided by the GuruĀma. English, Nepali, Sanskrit, Veda, Music, Dance, and drawing classes were run as the routine of any public

school. Different teachers came in and taught according to the routine. There was the time allotted for indoor games for the girls.

In the evening, the girls prayed with the light inside the room. Also, they chanted several mantras and verses and made moral commitments to becoming honest citizens of the land. The scene was observed in Maligaun, Kathmandu, where the Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul (pseudonym) was running.

I showed the footage at my office, Nepal Television, and my colleagues encouraged me to make a news story and air it from the state broadcaster. Finally, the story was aired on prime bulletins (<https://tinyurl.com/msz6bchb>). There were reactions from the public like, "Oh, can a female chant Veda?" The question was the final theme of reflections. With this feedback, I searched for proof of Veda's recitation by females in literature and practice.

I recalled my family history of education because I had six elder sisters and one elder brother. My home itself was Gurukul. I grew up listening to Veda chanting by my father, brother, and students who came to my father's guidance. Later, I started learning from my father after my Upanayana Sanskar (*Vratibandha*) was performed. That was a structural-functional way practiced in society.

However, I always found a different process in my sisters' education. That was a practice of post-structuralism. The girls participated in the worship and read and chanted verses from sources other than the Veda. Recalling my school life, a female student was in classes 8 to 10 at Sanskrit Secondary School, Pokhara. People were surprised that a female student was studying at a Sanskrit school. That was the climax of modernization and Western influence in Nepali society and the school was in the tourist city of Pokhara. She was compelled to study *Karmakāṇḍa* (rituals), and the course contained hundreds of mantras from the Veda, the Sanskrit language, Pāṇini's grammar, and Sanskrit literature. She was the wife of a university lecturer. But she neither passed the School Leaving Certificate Examinations (SLCE) nor chanted the mantras as male students did. I never saw a single woman chanting Veda. No female came to my father to learn chanting skills with a hand wave. Thus, the feedback on the television news was obvious.

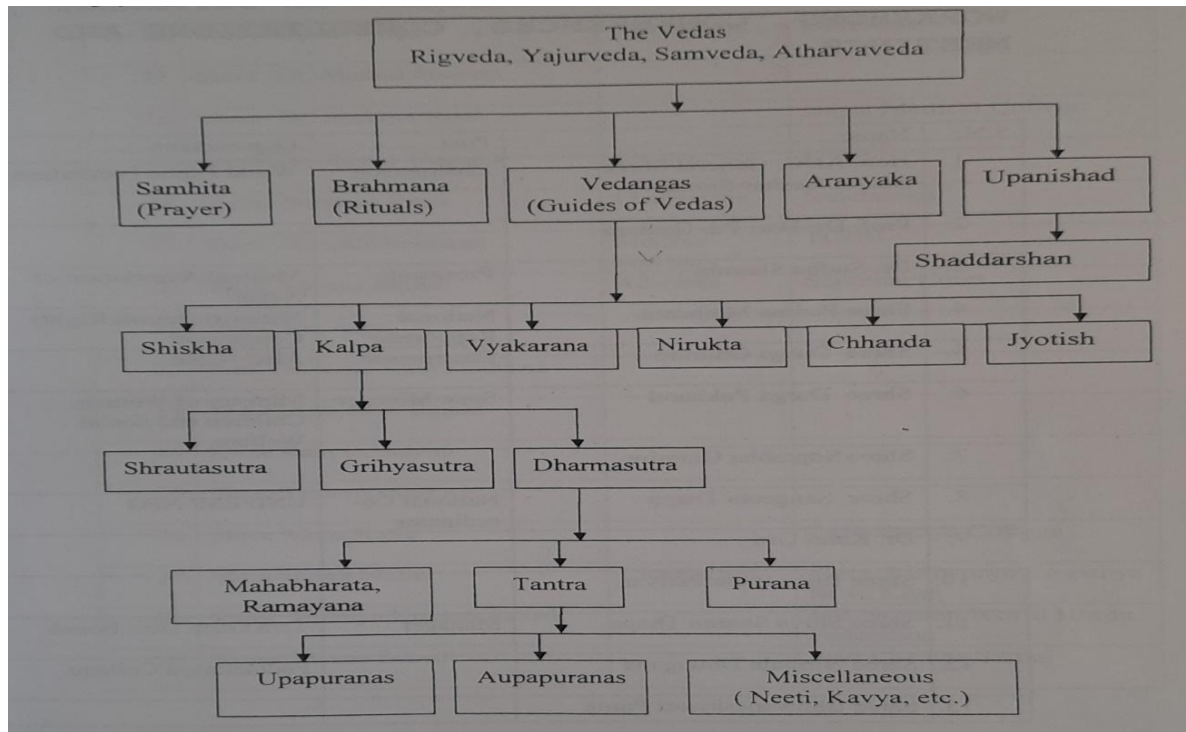
The Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul (KGG) was the first to focus on Veda chanting. The Veda-guru informed that the girl students were perfect at chanting *Rudrī* according to Indian tradition and that he was trying to make them link it up with

the Nepali tradition of "*Śata Rudrīya Parampara*³⁷". *Rudrī* is known as the summary of Veda on praying to gods with a focus on lord Śiva. Two hundred forty-two mantras are extracted from Ṛgveda and YajurVeda, used in rituals performed from birth to death ceremonies. Thus, *Rudrī* learning/chanting is crucial in Vedic tradition. It is the beginning of Vedic education in Nepal as the government incorporated the topic in grade 6 (CDC, 2005). The students must complete it Right there to go for further ritual studies. It is to be noted that Rudrī-chanting students can chant all other Veda mantras easily, of course, under a guru's guidance.

Rudrī is a form of prayer/worship for the liberation of the human soul. The rote learning achievement is used in *Rudrābhishek* worship, where lord Śiva is pledged with milk and water pouring. *Rudrābhishek* is essential in 5 ways (Dwivedi, 2002, p. 13): every success, healthy life, longevity, divine departure, and liberation. Proper procedures of worship as well as chanting with inner vocals should be followed to achieve the intended target according to the classical practice of *udrābhishek*.

Figure 18

Scriptures of the Sanatana Dharma



Source: World Hindu Federation and UNIFEM, 2006, p. 359)

³⁷ शतरुद्रीय परम्परा

Eligibility of Pronunciation: Physical, Practical and Consequential

The KGG girls completed the practice of *Rudrī* before they reached grade six. They practiced as guided by the "Veda learning process" in vernacular Nepali (Adhikari, 2007, pp.24-28). The process was set by Vedic sage Yājñavalkya's education (*Yājñavalkya Śikṣā*) which also determined the students' eligibility. The criteria that decide a student's eligibility for learning are:

Long-toothed, unnatural lips, deaf, speaking in a bumbling way, stutters, and the person with forked tongue. Similarly, humble persons with a natural cog and lips can chant the Veda, according to Yājñavalkya³⁸ (Swāmi Keshavānanda Giri, 2022, p. 51).

There are body postures and gestures: seven types of hand postures, hand moving rules, pause, peach, pace, and pronunciation rules set by the seer as described by Adhikari. According to Frawley, Mantra chanting is like poetry chanting. He says, Mantra is the original form of all language, the original language from which all others derive. Māntric language, to define succinctly, is language in which sound and meaning correspond. It is like poetry wherein the sound of words reflects their meaning and aids in their manifestation. More than this, it is a science of sound wherein the meaning and force of all sounds are known and developed towards emergence in the Divine world (Frawley, 1992, p. 43).

Grammarians Pāṇini has set a verse for exact pronunciation for accurate results citing a story of the enemy of Indra as an example of the result of wrong pronunciation, which is famous in *Taittirīyopaniṣad*. Pāṇini's verse³⁹ says that the performer will be punished without a proper mantra. To the lack of exact pronunciation of vowels and consonants, the demon *Vritrasura*⁴⁰ was killed by Indra. According to the story, Vritra had organized a sacrificial ceremony to create enemies against Indra. However, the pronunciation of Mantra chanting gave the opposite result. The verse was pronounced as 'Indra shatter Vardhaswa.' The meaning should

³⁸ न करालो न लम्बोष्ठो नाऽव्यक्तो नाऽनुनासिकः ।

गद्गदो बद्धजिह्वश्च न वर्णान् वक्तुमर्हति ॥

³⁹ मन्त्रो हीनः स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्या प्रयुक्तो न तमर्थमाह ।

स वाग्रजो यजमानं हिनस्ति यथेन्द्रशत्रुः स्वरतोऽपराधात् ।

(Mantro hinah swarato Varṇato va mithya prayukto na tamartha mah; sa vagvrajo yajamanam hinasti yathendra shatru swarato aparadhat).

⁴⁰ वृत्रासुर

have been: May my 'enemy Indra' die. However, the accent of "Indra Shatru" was adversely pronounced as 'enemy of Indra.' Indra's enemy was Vritrasur, so he was killed in his ceremony (Dvivedi, 1927, p. 31).

***Triśūl* of Like, Dislike, and Unlike**

Mantra chanting by girls was unique and gender parity. So, it was appreciated. On the other hand, another prong of *Triśūl* was not acceptable for fundamental Gurus. The third prong of *Triśūl* found that many founders of the Gurukul became out of contact after inclusively criticizing the opening Gurukul.

The girls followed almost all the rules their guru taught them. The girls' Gurukul was typical for other Gurukul managers as well. People found it curious to visit the Gurukul and observe the mantra recitation by the girls. The visitors distributed food and tiffin to the girls as charity initiatives. They praised the girl students' work. They thought female capacity building through Veda education would remove all kinds of suffering.

However, there was another facet of the reaction as well. The other category of people also visited the Gurukul to confirm whether the news of girls' chanting of Veda they heard was Right or wrong. They were also worried about the adverse effect of *Triśūl*:

Priests and other Vedagurus did come here to observe the Veda chanting by the girls because this was a unique practice in the society. Then, they used to object: "why have you been chanting Veda since women have no Right to do so? Who is the founder of this Gurukul?" "We replied: this was founded by a renowned social activist Mālatī (pseudonym). Then, they just answered: Oh, by her? What to say? They went silent when they heard the founder's name". (Field note: 18 July 2017).

Vedic scholars and priests frequently questioned the Right to Veda-chanting by females. Reflection of 'Brāhmanical patriarchy' (Chakravarti, 2006) was expected from a circle of the tradition. However, the opposition confirmed that the efforts were beyond structuralism when they heard the name of Mālatī. She was a social activist and former principal of a famous girls' college in Kathmandu. The opposition voices were divided into four categories: The first category thought no female had the Right to learn/chant Veda. The second category perceived that only girl of *Dvija* (twice-born castes) could chant Veda. The third category argued that the *Dvija* girls could chant only after receiving *Upanayana Samskāra*. The rest of the Veda experts advised

that in Kali Yuga, the *Dvija* girls can learn and chant Vedic mantras but only by being guided by their father and brother.

The field observation showed that the Gurukul performed its job without going through the said criteria because it was an all-inclusive Gurukul where Brāhman, *Kṣetrī*, Janajāti (ethnic), and Dalit girls chanted the mantras. A Sanskrit guru from the opposing group who visited the Gurukul blamed: "Westerns have been trying to destroy Nepal's indigenous education system, and the founder of the girls' Gurukul has been falling into the foreign conspiracy" (Field Note, May 13, 2017).

There are three strong reasons behind the charges against Mālatī, the founder of the Gurukul. One, she has been known as a social activist who always advocated for equal Rights Two, KGG was initiated by Mālatī, according to a study report jointly prepared by World Hindu Federation, Nepal and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). She coordinated the study task force (World Hindu Federation & UNIFEM 2006, p. 354). The task force comprised Vedic scholars. They reviewed scriptures focused on 'norms, codes, and scriptures of *Sanātana Dharma* concerning gender equality and violence against women.' Similarly, the task force analyzed the reformist wing of Hinduism and Ārya Samāj's provision and interpretations based on the 'Satyārtha Prakash' of Dayananda Sarasvatī (pp. 144-173). Third, Ārya Samāj does not believe in idol worship, even in the Paśupatināth temple.

On the other hand, the report was prepared based on discussions with scholars, academicians, theologians, and experts (p. 15). However, the scholars were moderate, and the critique was not seen in the attendance copy annexed in the report. The study recommended establishing inter-caste Gurukuls (p.308-3-9), aligned to twenty-first-century education.

The establishment and administration of Gurukul schools aim to provide education for girls from all societal segments, including those traditionally marginalized, such as the Dalits. This initiative seeks to cultivate well-educated female scholars with the Right perspectives in significantly greater numbers. The observed decline in the overall status of women in society appears to correlate with the lack of Gurukul education and training opportunities for girls. These learned women just as the women *Rishis* of the Vedic period, together with learned men with proper understanding shall do the research and propagate the eternal norms and

principles of the Sanātana Dharma in true Vedic spirit. (World Hindu Federation & UNIFEM, 2006, p. 308).

The recommendation is like that of the Dayananda Sarasvatī founded *Satyartha Prakash*- Light of Truth (1875) which recognizes the education of only Veda and Upaniṣads. This idea does not follow *Brāhmaṇa Granthas*, *Aranyakas*, *Purāṇa*, *Smṛtis*, and *Sūtras*, which have been taken as interpretations of the Veda by the *Sanātana Veda* (Hindu) Societies. *Sanātana Dharma* is conventional, and Ārya Samāj is a reformist. Moreover, the WHF and UNIFEM report embraces the reformative path. "All of the Smṛti texts starting from Manusmṛiti appear to have taken a conservative and Rightist attitude regarding women, as we will see in our discussion on various topics appearing in the main body of this monograph" (p. 322). It has classified Smṛti literature into two major divisions: conservative and progressive. Manusmṛiti dating 200 BC to 200 AD, gives general sentiments about women, which are most dishonorable and humiliating to the class as a whole.

"There were people who did not like the KGG because of the inclusion of Dalits," Mālatī explained: "Still, there are conservatives who do not eat touched by others. But I do not follow the concept of untouchability" (personal communication, May 10, 2017). Her conviction of deprivation of Veda chanting and ritual works hampered women's psychological and social morals. Mālatī's statement is similar to that of Murty (1993, p. 14), which takes the obstacles to preserve and propagates the Veda as a denial of universal access. Further, Murty cites YajurVeda (26.2).

For several centuries only the *traivarnika* men (men of the three upper castes) have been generally considered eligible to undertake Vedic study, but in effect, it has been the exclusive privilege and prerogative of male Brāhmans only. Even today most Brāhmans who have learned the Veda either with or without meaning generally do not teach it to women, Śūdras, and others. But the Veda itself does not say that it is meant for any sex, caste, or race. On the contrary, it declares that it is meant for all. There is the following Yajurvedic text: "Just as I have revealed this auspicious word to all human beings, so must you. I have revealed the Vedic truth to Brāhmans, *Kṣetrīyas*, Śūdras, *Āryāvartas*, personal servants (*swaya*), and to the lowest of Śūdras (*aranayaka*) also." (Murty, 1993, p. 14)

The field note claims no discrimination, and all can learn Veda. Not only Dayananda Sarasvatī but several Nepali scholars also voiced equal Vedic learning opportunities. Yogi Narahari Nath and Swāmi Prapannāchārya advocated for equality

in the current era. For propagation, the Yogi published a book ‘Vedic Communism⁴¹’ and Swāmi wrote a book ‘What is in Veda?’⁴² Both works are in vernacular Nepali.

Requiring Śikha, Sūtra and Dvija

There are Paradoxical perceptions in society. Some say that females cannot perform priesthood the same as males because there is no tradition of Upanayana (vratabandha) and deprivation of sacred thread (*Yagyopabita*) for females, which commences the learning of Veda. They have no *Śikha* (crest of hair), essential during the ritual work. Likewise, another segment of society thinks that menstruation and pregnancy are other obstacles to the free handwork of ritual and chanting. Still, another argument has been associated with their prolonged stamina in performing ritual works. “Our ancestors set that all Brāhmans cannot chant Veda since its complex practices and fundamental eligibility for Veda chanting,” said Guru Prasad Subedi, the then principal of Mahesh Sanskrit Gurukul, Devghāt, Tanahun. According to him, every Veda alphabet gives vibration, affecting space and society. However, it has been hard to maintain even by eligible Brāhman practitioners, and the impact of Veda chanting cannot be gained through another ineligible. “All males cannot chant Veda since its vibrated pronunciation, and it is tough for a female to generate the vocal for vibration,” Subedi argued.

Contradictions can be found among *Smṛtis* like *Manusmṛiti*⁴³, *Harita Smṛti*⁴⁴, and *Parāśara Smṛti*⁴⁵ themselves. There are contrary opinions about their interpretation. Retired professor of Veda, Rishi Ram Pokhrel, sanctions and supports Mālatī’s efforts because he finds there was a tradition of Veda education in Vedic times, and it should be revived (personal communication, January 16, 2017). Similarly, another fraction of such scholars also supports the idea of moral ground. However, there is also a contradiction in the eligibility of the girls to start Veda chanting. Some say all girls can learn; others say *Dvija* (twice-born caste) females only can chant. The third section of the community of practice thinks that there is the provision of Upanayana and after the which has provisioned that marriage is the Upanayana ritual for females and they can learn Veda after marriage: “*Vaivahiko*

⁴¹ वैदिक साम्यवाद

⁴² वेदमा के छ ?

⁴³ मनुस्मृति

⁴⁴ हारीतस्मृति

⁴⁵ पारासरस्मृति

Vidhistrīnam”⁴⁶. A similar provision has been written in Manusmṛiti, which states that marriage is the Upanayana (*Aupanaenikasmṛta* for females).

Analyzing 121 kinds of literature, Kaundinnyāyanī (2051 V.S.) claims that a *Dvija* female has the Right to Upanayana and learn Veda. In contrast, her father says the Right starts from the marriage of the female (2047 V.S.). Similarly, her brother Kaundinnyāyan (2007) also states that there was a tradition of Upanayana for girls in Vedic history. Still, there is no objection to continuing the custom and starting Vedic learning (pp. 110-122). However, the female who is eager to learn can only go to the dedicated learning path. For example, Sage *Yajñavalkya* had two wives. *Kātyāyanī* was interested in domestic life, and *Maitreyī* was known for metaphysical exploration (p.113). The person's interest is a must for learning their subject.

Experiencing Svastivācan: Preparing, Welcoming, and Boycotting

Contemporary society has some dilemmas in preaching and practicing. Those who have written or advocated for Veda education for females have yet to gain experience with its implementation. Neither do they perform the ritual of Upanayana for their female child nor teach the chanting of Veda. It has remained only as a topic for academic/religious discourse.

Girls of Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul were famous for *Svastivācan* (chanting) in several formal ceremonies organized in Kathmandu. *Svastivācan* is chanting Vedic mantras with hands in waves. The girls performed their *Svastivācan* before Indian president Pranav Mukharjee in Paśupatināth temple while he was on a state visit to Nepal. They chanted Veda at various functions where Nepal's president and prime ministers were chief guests. It created a kind of different feeling.

On the other hand, this act took much work to digest for traditional groups. A Swāmi opposed the chanting and boycotted a ceremony organized in a Kathmandu temple when he knew there were also Dalit girls involved in the act in 2015 (Field note, March 13, 2017). It was another contradiction that girls could chant the mantras but not "by Dalit girls!" The caste issue, in this case, was a reflection of not only patriarchy but also "Brāhmanical patriarchy," to borrow the expression from Uma Chakravarti.

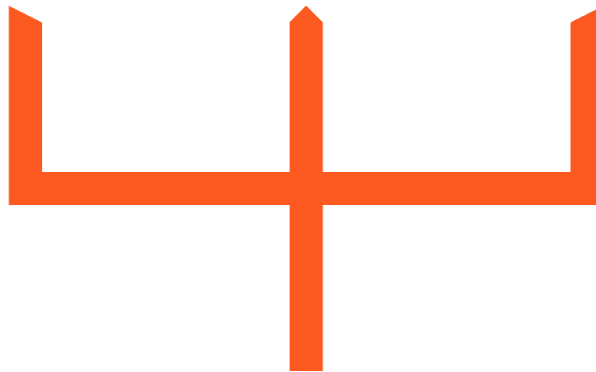
⁴⁶ वैवाहिकोविधिस्त्रिणाम्

Figure 19*The Feedback*

Appreciation

Criticism

Skepticism

**Veda Chanting**

To recall my father's action, though he did not teach Veda chanting to my sisters, he taught it to some other women individually. One of them completed *Rudrī*, and another woman and her husband completed *Śukla Yajur* Veda.

Father's granddaughter-in-law

completed two chapters of *Rudrī*. I saw such a transformation in my father over the last two decades. I asked him why he had changed his rules. He answered that my mother was taught the mantras of Veda for Agnihotra's daily ritual when he became Agnihotri. Agnihotra is a daily fire sacrifice ritual where the couple is a must.

Other women were limited to reciting mantras, he explained, citing societal constraints. The restrictive notion became apparent in the permissions granted for *Vratibandha* and Veda chanting by girls after 1980. Yogi Narahari Nath was the prominent campaigner for this. King Birendra recognized him, and he performed more than one hundred "Koti Homs" (Vedic ceremonies) in different parts of Nepal. He performed *Vratibandha* for girls. According to my father, the Yogi had organized Koti Hom in Pokhara in 1984. The restoration of democracy in 1990 created a liberal environment in the society, and that helped teach Vedic mantras to girls and women (Personal communication, 15 April 2020). However, I needed help finding that the skills of mantra chanting were brought to people's practical life.

Here, in KGG, a team of Brāhmans went to Mālatī to complain of the repercussions of the Veda chanting by the female. "Yes, a delegation from Morang and Jhapa districts warned her not to teach the girls Veda chanting, for it had side effects on their uterus. They claimed that they had faced the problem while they ran similar classes for females in the past." (Field note, 2017). Joshi denied getting this complaint, and no one objected face to face, but she was well informed about opposing views and comments about the inclusive model of girls' Vedic education.

'Vedic Communism': Past, Present and Future

Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul students' Veda chanting was still to be improved. The principal, Rudra, said that the girls had to correct their nasal sounds and change the verse to the vocalist's mantric style. Though she had been working as a principal in a Vedic Gurukul, she did not chant the mantra. She was not taught Veda chanting during her Gurukul life in India.

She acquired proficiency in Sanskrit and attained mastery in Vedānta, though not in Veda. Vedānta is a philosophical interpretation of the Veda, but it does not involve the learning of mantra chanting for ritual performance. Nevertheless, she underwent the *Saṃskāra* of *Upanayana* and received the *Gāyatrī* mantras because Yogi Narahari Nath imparted the Vedic mantras to her during a *Koṭihom*—a more elaborate sacrificial oblation program held in Balaju, Kathmandu. She was seven at that time, she informed me. The Yogi upheld the philosophy of Vedic communism (Yogi Narahari Nath, 2048 V.S.), which does not discriminate based on caste and gender. His notion was that 'humanity is Vedic communism'. Rudra's father died in an accident, and her mother brought her to Balaju, Kathmandu, from Nuwakot. The child needed education. In the meantime, the Yogi organized a 'Koṭihom', where including the child Rudra and several girls' *Upanayana Saṃskāra* was performed. There, she received the same *Gāyatrī mantra* from the guru as is given to the boys.

Thus, she received the *Saṃskāra* (Personal communication with Rudra's mother, November 14, 2015). However, no positive impact was seen in women's day-to-day life in society. It remained simply an event in the history of Yogi Narhari Nath's transformative act. Hundreds of such girls received the *Upanayana Saṃskāra* during Yogi's *Koṭihoms* organized in various parts of Nepal. No girl was found either chanting/teaching Veda or performing ritual work/*Karmakāṇḍa*. He lived an Ārya Samājee reformist life. He argued that Hindu Jurisprudence (Manusmṛiti) was based on an absolute monarchy. He was known as the nation's guru (Rashtra Guru), and no conservative could attack him. He was a significant critic of King Mahendra and King Birendra for not working as real Hindu kings. He used to argue that the Hindu king had to rule according to Hindu jurisprudence but not Western influence. He was campaigning for a discrimination-free nation. He had named his philosophy "Vedic Sāmyavad" (Vedic communism).

Teaching girls was a tradition in Vedic times. The Vedas have shed light on the importance of an educated mother. Ṛgveda (5.47.6) and YajurVeda (10.6) have

emphasized girls' education. The mantra means a prayer to the king to appoint female teachers to impart training to girl students who, on obtaining maturity, would be able to select their partners for marriage (Agrawal et al., 1996, p. 279). The authors have cited the R̥gveda (3.55.16) and YajurVeda (8.1) regarding an educated and mature girl. 1) Unmarried young, learned daughters should be married to a bridegroom who is like her. 2) Never think of giving in marriage to a daughter at a very young age. These mantras show that there was a tradition of girls' education. The girls matured through education so that they would be able to choose a matching partner. They could do so after graduation. There is also a provision of chanting mantra from Veda during the wedding ceremony/ritual. However, the texts need to be clarified whether the girls practiced mantra reciting days after their marriage.

Historically, there were females like Yogmaya who challenged priesthood society for truth (Neupane, 2002) and Yogeśvarī Anjana Devī (1991-1981), who was known as Nepali Mira Bai in India (Swāmi Prapannāchārya, 2013) for their struggle against existing society and devotion. However, they both did perform Veda chanting and *Karmakāṇḍa*. Thirty-three female sages perceived the mantras of Veda and others. Brahmavādinis were famous for philosophical/Upaniṣadic debates with great sages, as did Gārgi with *Yājñavalkya*.

Spiritual and religious preachers, scholars, and priests are still highly respected (World Hindu Federation & UNIFEM, 2006, p. 308). The heads of the religious societies have challenged the Veda chanting and priesthood concepts. These people are authorities in interpreting Veda and the literature concerned. For instance, Professor Deergha Raj Ghimire asks, "Does the larger society accept females as priests? Can you invite women as priests for rites and rituals? Do you see any female priests around Paśupatināth temple who chant mantras? (Timilsina, 2016)." Males studying at Gurukuls perform *Sandhyopāsan*, the daily ritual with Vedic mantra chanting (Timilsina, 2015) early in the morning and the evening. Some do this thrice as well.

In Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul, the scene was different. The girls performed the act of *Sandhyopāsan* (prayer), which, based on the government-prescribed syllabus, is to be taught in grade 6. Similarly, the girls were taught *Rudrī* from the beginning, which, as per the government-prescribed syllabus, was to be taught in grade 6. Nevertheless, there was some contradiction.

The girls were treated differently from the boys. The girls completed the grade but could not practice the daily ritual like the boys. Moreover, girls' menstruation was an obstacle to their uninterrupted learning at the Gurukul. Every month, girls were found absent for four days. They remained absent from the Gurukul because they used to be kept isolated from prayers, chanting of mantras, and Sanskrit studies during their menstruation period (Field notes, 2017).

WHF/UNIFEM Report and Vedic literature have highlighted a higher role for women in Veda. Ṛgvedic women appear to have enjoyed greater freedom and equality because great seer Śaunak's book Brihad-Devata mentions the names of 27 female sages who well perceived Vedic mantras. All mantras must have been composed before the Christian Era (De, 1953, p. 131). However, Vedic literature is found to have praised women for their scholasticism. They are mentioned as perceiving the mantra as Ghosha did or participating in the philosophical debates as Gārgi did.

There needs to be more clarity on whether females chanted mantras at the professional level as males did. There were hundreds of male sages' stories about their priesthood, including that of guru Baśishtha. We need help finding the same about female sages' priesthood. Nonetheless, various Vedic-era documents show women of higher status. Such a contradictory situation indicates the need for further debate and investigation into the question in days to come.

The Constraints: Space, Students, and Human Resource

The qualification for Veda learning set by *Yājñavalkya* does not mention the female voice indicating their eligibility for Veda learning. Veda learners mainly intend to liberate themselves from three types of suffering called *Triśūl* or *tri-Tāp*. Information gathered from KGG links up to the metaphysical lens of the Vedic syllogism of suffering. The inferential lens of *Nyāya Darśana* (Bhattacharyya, 1974) is explicit about three types of human suffering: *Triśūl*. And this is my research paradigm as stated in the methodology chapter. The Trident of human suffering indicates *Ādhyātmika* (spiritual suffering), *Ādhibhautika* (suffering from other persons and animals), and *Ādhidaivika* (supernatural suffering). *Ādhyātmika* suffering is suffering from mind and body.

On the one hand, the girls of KGG were studying in their home district. Information sent from KGG through the district education office attracted them to learn in Kathmandu. They thought that the new type of girls' boarding school would

make their future prosperous. They were talented students of their respective schools and they had access to information from the office. Both the girls and their parents had a dream of success in the future.

On the other hand, the cognition of the majority of Vedic gurus and Swāmis was against mantra chanting by all girls. Some of them stood against allowing the twice-born girls and some others objected to all caste and ethnic group girls. Their *Ādhyātmika* tāp (suffering) contested the *Ādhyātmika* suffering of the girls and the founders. As a result, KGG faced negative criticism from the community of practitioners. This indicated that the community of practitioners did not like the act of the girls' recitation of the Veda mantra. This is *Ādhibhautik* and *Ādhidaivika* suffering as well. As a result, KGG suffered from humans but not from animals. Looking at the physical facilities, KGG faced resource constraints, space constraints, and human resource constraints as well. A rented house on a small piece of land was where the Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul was situated. The third *Dukha* or suffering is *Ādhidaivika* (supernatural, unseen). The girls face unseen suffering as well. They were brought in there from their homes assured of all facilities but were faced with insufficiency and lack of community support.

Some of the founders of KGG disappeared or became inactive after commencing classes. They forgot their commitment to KGG activities. Even the Sanskritist scholars disappeared and showed dishonesty to the mission, the founders informed me. Nobody knew why they disappeared. Thus, some founders and the girls suffered from their minds and body, and other unseen persons and factors. Finally, the image of *Trisūl* (trident of sufferings) symbolized a lot of hesitation in people's minds to recognize Veda chanting by girl students inclusive of all caste and ethnic groups.

Comparing Girls and Boys on Content, Voice, and Hand Gesture

I had gathered the identical grader boys of Devghāt and KGG girls in Chitwan. I gave the exact texts of *Svastivācan* to both groups and recorded them on camera and audio recorder. The recording aimed to identify audiological frequency variation between boys and girls. However, the experiment shows better performance of KGG girls. The girls were shifted from Kathmandu to Chitwan, and they discontinued the practice. However, they performed better than the boys. The recording was done to differentiate the vocal vibration of male and female voices. Both groups used hand gestures too.

Nevertheless, the boy group needs clarification about the mantras. The boys were taught for future priests, and the practice of the mantra was regular. They regularly chant the *Svastivācan*, whereas the girls did well. Missing the lines of content missed the voice and the gesture as well.

The recording event indicated three aspects of the teaching-learning process: Girls are more robust than boys in chanting the mantra if they get a chance to practice. The teacher's role is vital as the university's professor teaches the girls rigorously. Performance is not determined by birth or gender, or opportunity but is a result of self-practice. Thus, girls can chant mantras.

Brāhmanical Patriarchy, Performativity, and Ancestry

An associate professor at Nepal Sanskrit University made the girls stand qualified. The girls learned the required skills in chanting the Veda mantra as the professor taught them.

However, some visitors and others questioned their qualifications based on gender and caste status, as noted by the "Brāhmanical patriarchy" of Uma Chakrabarty. The notion assesses the situation of gender, caste, and economic connection and decision-making. I found a similar condition in the case of KGG. In other words, Brāhman boys learned the Veda mantra by Right, unlike the girls. In the case of Brāhman, *Kṣetrī*, and Vaishya girls, they had the Right only after receiving Upanayana Saṁskāra. However, Dalits were excluded. There was no term 'Dalit' in ancient times. Śūdra was treated as a Dalit in contemporary caste-based societies. Recitation is a practice, and the practice makes a person perfect. In the case of KGG, the girls were accepted before knowing the caste background. When Gurus and others learned about the girl students' caste background, they began to think and behave negatively about the innovative efforts. Consequently, in my reflection, Chakravarti's notion of Brāhmanical patriarchy operates in KGG.

An activist of *Jayatu Sanskritam Nepal*, Pantha (2023) says, discrimination and isolation in Hinduism have detached females and Dalits from their culture and lifestyle. He claims that Manusmṛiti is promulgated only one thousand years ago, which curtails the Right to study Veda to females and Śūdra. The stanza is *Stri Śūdrau nādhiyātām* (do not teach Veda to female and Śūdra).

On the other hand, as Pantha cited, the Mantra of YajurVeda, "Yathe māmavācham Kalyāni..." has reserved the Right to study Veda of females. To look at KGG from a gender perspective, the notion of "gender trouble," as coined by Judith

Butler (1990), is much in operation. Similarly, Butler's 'performativity' is also applicable in KGG. The founders of KGG tried to go beyond the notion of patriarchy and run the Gurukul safely for girls. Traditional performers in society could not accept the new efforts. According to Butler (1990), "gender is socially constructed through commonplace speech acts and nonverbal communication that are performative, in that they serve to define and maintain identities". Cultural performances make identity, and that, in turn, communicates to society. In KGG, the girls were identified by their ancestry rather than their recent performance. The learned achievements were ignored. However, the majority of the girls, founders, and teachers continued the mantra chanting practice.

The 21st century marks an era of co-education, allowing boys and girls to study together in the same class. The tradition of segregating Vedic Gurukuls for girls has been upheld everywhere, and KGG is no exception. However, Mishra (2003) claims in his book on Vaidik Shikṣya Paddhati (Vedic education system) that Special attention had not been given to female education because of the absence of a co-ed system (p. 148). Here in Kathmandu, KGG founders had demanded a space for KGG adjoining premises of Nepal Veda Vidyāśram run by Paśupati Area Development Trust, near Paśupatināth temple. Nevertheless, the proposal was not for co-ed.

Variating Streams: Veda, Vedic, and Sanskrit

In Vedic education, Mantra chanting is the highest form of learning practice. Such chanting practitioners can go to any field of Vedic ritual work practically. There are diversified arguments among critics. One type of critic says female scholars have no permission to Upanayana and Veda chanting. There were mantra perceivers, female seers, and scholars. They were famous for philosophical debates. Proof is yet to be found of mantra chanting by mantra composer females, listed in chapter two earlier. However, the UNIFEM-led report, 2006 admits that '... highly educated women of Vedic times also acted as women priests' (*Purohit*). But there is no clear evidence. Manusmṛiti prohibits women's serving as priests (p.182). The stakeholders have contradictory ideas about Kali Yuga, performing the Rights of Upanayana, the age for marriage, and Veda practice. Veda education, Vedic education, and Sanskrit education have vast differences.

Firstly, Veda education is chanting the mantra of Veda and their meaning-making. The mantra is used in the ritual works of priests. Such chanting practice makes one a good priest in society as well.

Secondly, Vedic education has no necessity to chant and perform rituals as priests, unlike Veda education. But the learner can easily understand and teach others the philosophy and practical ways if s/he has the idea of proper mantra chanting. The learner can go to philosophy (Vedānta), *Nyāya*, *Itihāsa* (Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata), *Purāṇa*, etc., rather than to mantra chanting and priesthood. This type of Vedic education is easier for girls/women in the existing structure of society.

Thirdly, Sanskrit education mainly focuses on language rather than Veda and priesthood. This education develops the way of spirituality in the person and teaches grammar, vocabulary, and literature. However, the subjects make people able to catch the first two paths. Sanskrit education is more accessible than the first two and is widely acceptable for girls because they can understand it. Veda education has no unipolar thought because the stakeholders have contradictions within their ideas and things and saying and doing.

Critics hold diverse viewpoints on the role of female scholars, particularly regarding their permission for Upanayana and Veda chanting. One group of critics argues that female scholars do not have the authorization for Upanayana and Veda chanting. While there were female mantra perceivers, seers, and scholars engaged in philosophical debates, there is no evidence of mantra chanting by female composers, as mentioned in chapter two. Despite this, the World Hindu Federation & UNIFEM report from 2006 acknowledges that "highly educated women of Vedic times also acted as women priests" (Purohit), although clear evidence is lacking. Conversely, Manusmṛiti explicitly prohibits women from acting as priests.

Stakeholders hold conflicting opinions on various aspects such as *Kali Yuga*, the performance of *Upanayana* rites, the suitable age for marriage, and Veda practice. Moreover, distinctions exist among Veda education, Vedic education, and Sanskrit education. Firstly, Veda education involves chanting Vedic mantras and understanding their meanings, primarily used in ritualistic works performed by priests. Proficiency in such chanting establishes one as a respected priest in society. Secondly, Vedic education does not necessitate the chanting and performance of rituals like Veda education. However, a learner can comprehend and teach the philosophy and practical aspects effectively if they have a grasp of correct mantra chanting. This form of Vedic education allows individuals to delve into areas such as Vedānta, *Nyāya*, *Itihāsa* (Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata), *Purāṇa*, etc., rather than focusing solely on mantra chanting and priesthood. This type of Vedic education is

more accessible for girls and women within the existing societal structure. Thirdly, Sanskrit education primarily emphasizes language skills rather than Veda and priesthood. This form of education nurtures spiritual development and imparts knowledge in grammar, vocabulary, and literature, making it easier for individuals to pursue the first two paths. Sanskrit education is widely acceptable for girls as it is more understandable to them. The complexity in Veda education arises from the contradictions within stakeholders' ideas, beliefs, and actions, with recitation being intertwined with multiple paradoxical realities.

Character Building, Morality, and Ethics

Gurukul education is generally known as moral, spiritual, and religious. Besides, this is a foundation of character building, morality, and ethics. According to Swāmi Vishuddha Dev (2059 V.S.) who is also known for "Characterology", character-building is a virtue of Vedic education. He defines 'character' in his book 'Characterology' as balancing these three: willpower, knowledge power, and working power. "Yoga and meditation build character as Veda and Vedic scriptures", he pointed to the reference. In KGG, the girls were not chanting mantras of Veda but used to chant moral verses daily. Yoga and meditation were also regular segments of the education system.

They wore the uniform during formal classes and used to model the rest of the religious, spiritual, and moral chanting, yoga, meditation, and music. After the religious and spiritual chanting, the girls' commitments were chanted as listed below in Nepali (my translation.):

1. I always study correctly. म सधैं सत्य बोल्छु ।
2. I always speak well. म सधैं राम्रो बोल्छु ।
3. I always direct my mind to think only about the best. म सधैं राम्रो मात्रै सोच्छु ।
4. I always remain pure in my mind, words, and deeds. म सधैं मन, वचन र कर्मले पवित्र रहन्छु ।
5. I always believe in and devote myself to the super-being structure of God. म सधैं आफूलाई परमात्मा परमेश्वरमा समर्पण गर्दछु ।
6. I always honour my mother, father, guru, and respectable people. म सधैं माता, पिता, गुरू र आदरणीय व्यक्तिहरूको सम्मान गर्दछु ।
7. I always become ready to serve deprived people. म सधैं असहाय व्यक्तिको सहयोगको लागि तयार रहन्छु ।

8. I always extend my respect and salutation to Mother Nepal. म सधैं मेरो मातृभूमि नेपाललाई सम्मान र आदर गर्दछु ।
9. I always speak the truth. म सधैं सत्य बोल्छु ।
10. I always follow Dharma. म सधैं धर्म पालना गर्दछु ।

The daily commitment chanting is seen as a self-reminder of self-awareness of morality. Swāmi argues in an interview with a magazine named ‘Voice of Character’ (in Nepali) that people should go back to controlling thinking by humans instead of controlling humans by thinking. They should come back to human originality, which is natural (Bhattarai, 2072 V.S.). The idea of naturality is an ancient idea of wisdom. Professor of anthropology, Prem Kumar Khatri opines that character building was the main objective of education in the old period, which made the people self-sustained, accountable to society. Female education was also heart-touching (Khatri, 2060 V.S. pp. 143-144). The senses of character, morality, and ethics are also connected to sin. As a result, the girls became isolated from Veda's classes during the four days of menstruation.

Trisūl of Being: Genderization, Feminism, and Femininity

A distinct set of genderization, feminism, and femininity is evident in the culture of KGG. The girls' Gurukul serves as a platform for pursuing gender equality, as they aspire to become Vedic experts and priests. Additionally, feminism encompasses the involvement of females in all activities typically performed by males, with male teachers and personnel actively contributing to the operations of KGG. Lastly, femininity is a prominent aspect present within the institution. Joseph (2020) claims that this is "femininity", which is "striving."⁴⁷ According to this notion, other roles are identical, but menstrual rest is needed to observe health. Physical, mental, and spiritual concepts are found interconnected in KGG processes.

According to the *Trisūl* paradigm, on one hand, the girls and teachers experience happiness as they believe their efforts can free them from all suffering, both in this life and the next. On the other hand, they endure hidden and unnoticed struggles. There is a fear associated with the daily tasks during the menstrual period, leading them to attempt to avoid regular activities for four days.

⁴⁷स्त्रीत्व *stritva* (femininity)

The paradigm analyzes the seen and unseen *Dukha*. They felt *Dukha* criticized them for learning Veda as girls. The *Dukha* was removed when welcomed and appreciated in the field when they chanted the *Svastivācan* mantra.

The existing structure of Brāhman society does not accept Veda chanting by females, especially Dalits. The system suggests they learn Sanskrit or Vedic education rather than the mantra chanting and performance of rituals. The WHF and UNIFEM study states that priests have a higher social status and means conducting Gurukuls in each district of the country. But the practice at the ground level could be more conducive for females to do mantra chanting. However, the founder of KGG Mālatī expressed her conviction to me, saying, "they will be chanting Vedic mantra one day, and I will be watching from the sky after this life".

Observations on mantra recitation have yielded critical insights for discussion. Adhikari (2007) underscored the alleviation of *Trisūl- Ādhyātmika* (Spiritual), *Ādhidaivika* (supernatural), and *Ādhibhautika* (supper physical) sufferings through Veda learning. The girls chanting the Veda aim to alleviate suffering and become competent human resources in the field of mantra chanting. They have encountered various forms of *Trisūl* during their performances. Visitors to KGG, where the feminization of Vedic education is observed, have had mixed reactions. Some were encouraged to continue the practice, while others criticized the inclusive approach of Neo-Sanskritization without Upanayana Samskara.

The Right to Veda chanting for girls is a subject of scholarly debate. Retired professor Rishiram Pokhrel, who holds a Ph.D. in Vedic government, argues that there was a tradition of a parallel Gurukul system for boys and girls until the times of Ram and Sita. He links the discontinuity to farming land becoming fallow due to lack of plowing. Now, he asserts, farming has restarted with the opening of the girls Gurukul, which he deems necessary.

However, Śivaraj Acharya Kaundinnyāyan advocates for limited access of females to Veda chanting and opposes KGG's activities in this regard. According to him, only females who have completed the "Dvija" and Upanayana rituals can learn Veda.

The girls have met the criteria for Veda chanting as set by Yajñavalkya. They have mastered proper pronunciation as taught by the Guru and can move their hands just like boys do. Interestingly, they were found to be more brilliant than boys during

a recording session involving randomly selected students from Devghat of Tanhun and KGG.

Changes in socio-cultural and livelihood systems rely on a political-economic system. Similarly, modernizing and feminizing in the Gurukul system is also an effect of the politico-economic-livelihood system. The socioeconomic background of the girls is peasantry, and the peasantry system of Nepal has been transforming into a commodity production connection, as seen by Uprety (2021). According to him, transformations of the traditional peasantry have connections with regional and global capital centers, and the girls are searching for a capitalist market beyond their peasant societies. Moreover, the KGG effort of Veda chanting is the path for ‘deagrarization’ and transformational steps towards commodified subsistence from the traditional subsistence economy. Uprety’s notion of development anthropology analyses the transformation of the livelihood pattern as diversification of earnings because of the country’s neo-liberal economy. Founder of KGG Mālatī, the girls, and their parents are interested in grasping the opportunity of changing the politico-economic system. Thus, the mantra chanting is a cash-making job in this neo-liberal market.

The observations suggest that girls need an environment for Veda chanting similar to boys, which reflects their success. The age-old question of who is “Dvija” (twice-born caste) needs to be reinterpreted in this context. It is said that *Samskarena Dvija Uchyate* meaning a Brāhman cannot be a Brāhman without learning Veda and Samskar. Similarly, gender also needs redefining in an age where having only one child is common. Girls can perform recitations if there are no male children or male priests in the locality. Therefore, it is recommended to train some batches of girl mantra chanters to challenge traditional restrictive notions.

The Essence of the Chapter

The practice of femininity is found in KGG rather than feminization. The girls and female teachers do not attend class during the menstrual days. However, girls can chant mantras similar to boys. Besides the mantra, they chant moral teachings as well. Chanting is not merely chanting but is associated with character-building and morality. Yoga and meditation are inseparable parts of ‘characterology’. However, the gendered society reflected a trinary position on mantra chanting by the girls. One type of observer was surprised by the act and expressed happiness. The second type of observers criticized and boycotted them. The third group remained neutral or withdrew support and became silent. Issues of gender and caste are still obstacles to

gender equality which certainly hampers the voice for gender parity in Vedic education.

CHAPTER V ON RITUALS

In Chapter V, I have addressed the second sub-research question, "How have the Nepali girl's Gurukul students experienced ritual performance in response to the re-emergence of Vedic education?" As I discussed mantra recitation practice in chapter four, this chapter is another part of the recitation because the mantra practice is for ritual works. Gurukul is the starting point for daily routine and life ritual performance. This practice is focused on turning girl disciples into priests. So, the chapter observes the ritualistic preparation ensured in the KGG. The exploration records several challenges for girls on their march to the career of a female priest in a gender-bias society.

Observing Trikāla Sandhyā: Morning, Noon, and Evening

Learning Veda, as discussed in chapter 1, is for eradicating the sufferings as defined in the philosophy of *Triśūl*. The application of the learning is ritual. During my childhood, I observed my father practising *Sandhyopāsan* three times a day: morning, noon, and evening. To perform *Sandhyopāsan*⁴⁸, waking up before the Sun, bathing, wearing fresh clothes, praying, and making water oblation to the Sun are necessary. My father taught me this after I received *Upanayana (Vratibandha) Samskāra*⁴⁹. Every individual student's duty of manifest ritual starts from the very first day at Gurukul or *Āśram*. *Sandhyopāsan* daily ritual is the foundation of Vedic education (Timilsina, 2015). Synonymously, it is also known as '*Sandhyā Vandana*'.⁵⁰ *Sandhyā* refers to the times between night and morning, morning and afternoon, and day and night. *Upasana* or *Vandan* refers to an offering of a prayer.

Sandhyopāsan is divine communication through prayer (Swāmi Vedananda, 1993, p. 18). This form of worship combines yoga, meditation and chanting Veda mantras, and verses from different *Śāstras*. Saying the Gāyatrī mantra with silent repetition is the central point of *Sandhyopāsan*. Every moment of the Sun during the day—the rising Sun, midday Sun and setting Sun—is prayed in this ritual. However, I

⁴⁸ सन्ध्योपासन

⁴⁹ उपनयन (व्रतबन्ध) संस्कार

⁵⁰ सन्ध्यावन्दन

found *Sandhyopāsan* being observed only two times—morning and evening—in some Gurukuls. Also, I found the tradition of “*Trikāla Sandhyā*” or three times *Sandhyopāsan* given continuation, such as in the boys’ Gurukuls in Kathmandu, Chitwan, Nawal Parāsī, Rupandehi, Tanahun, and Kāski districts.

According to Pattis (2002), the Gāyatrī mantra is the main component of the *Sandhyā-Upasana* ceremony, a ritual component for Brāhmanic definitions within Hinduism, and it is used as a practice to train meditation teachers and initiators in Siddha Samadhi Yoga – a meditation tradition in South India. Pattis Rightly says that this is used for meditation. Meditation with the Gāyatrī mantra has higher and more profound aspects. Such rituals make pupils devoted and dedicated to observing ritual work all their life.

Preparing for Life-Rituals: Regular, Occasional, and Purposive

Daily Bathing and performing specific prayers are necessary for all three branches of Vedic philosophy- *Jñāna Kānda*, *Upāsanā Kānda*, and *Karmakāṇḍa*. In other words, *Sandhyopāsan* is essential for Hindus though the form might be different or moderate. There are three types of life rituals. Every day, occasional and life events or important events have been taken as three traditions in behavioural life. They are *Nitya*, *Naimitya*, and *Kamyā*.⁵¹ According to Jan Gonda, "there are 'invariable' (*nitya*), obligatory rites, some of them to be performed daily, others on precise dates of the lunar calendar; occasional (*naimittika*) ceremonies to be carried out on the occurrence of certain events; and purposive (*kamyā*) rites performed by those who are desirous of special favors, personal advantages, etc., and consisting of the ordinary procedures with the addition of special aphorisms (Gonda, 1977, pp. 467-468).

Janardan Shastri Pandeya introduces *Karmakāṇḍa* in his book in Sanskrit, "Karmakāṇḍa Pradeep" (In Light of Rituals) that human civilization has various *Saṃskāras*. There were up to 48 rituals set by sages for a person's lifetime, and now they are limited to 16. Every day is festive in Vedic culture, and the persons should perform different ceremonies. They start from the inception ceremony to after the funeral ceremonies. The foundation of all traditions is the daily ritual of *Sandhyopāsan*, taught on the very first day of school in Vedic education. These rituals feature peace of mind and self-control. Thus, the pedagogy of *Sandhyopāsan* is set at every Gurukul.

⁵¹नित्य, नैमित्य, काम्य (Nitya, Naimitya, Kāmya)

Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul (KGG) was found to be different from the boys' Gurukuls in applying the daily ritual. The boys bathed every morning before *Sandhyopāsan*, whereas, in KGG, the girl students were not made to do so. The girls refreshed themselves after they woke up in the morning. They were made to pray during the time the observation of *Sandhyopāsan* took. But that was not the observation of *Sandhyopāsan* as contained in the textbook prescribed by the Curriculum Development Center (CDC, 2068 V.S.). The girls practised yoga for nearly an hour. They prayed in the evening, but that was not included in their prescribed textbook.

The cause of the difference in observing the Vedic rituals between boys' Gurukul and girls' Gurukul could be seen by associating it with the observance of the *Upanayana* (initiation) ritual. The observation of *Upanayana Saṁskāra* (ritual) is compulsory for boys to join a Gurukul, but this Vedic Saṁskāra is not allowed for girls. They can join a Gurukul without this. Instead, a girl child is worshipped as goddess Lakṣmī or Kumari before she enters the menstrual cycle. In Vedic society, she used to be, and still, she is thought to be as pure as the goddess. But the case is different with the boys. They are not taken in the image of any god, so they must undergo the *Upanayana Saṁskāra*.

This conceptual, perceptual, and attitudinal differentiation between a girl child's and a boy child's state of purity-impurity has impacted their performance throughout life. There is still a question of how far Gurukul education has helped girl students become productive human resources. The principal of KGG was invested with *Upanayana Saṁskāra* during a Koṭihom⁵² organized by Yogi Narahari Nath. However, Gurukul in India, where she studied, did not give the girls the practice of *Sandhyopāsan* as is given to the boys. So, she applied the same method to KGG.

Curiosity over the Secret Mantra

The inception of KGG traces back more than seven decades when its founder, Mālatī was nine. Turning to her memory lane, she felt gender discrimination between a daughter and a son when her younger brother was invested in the initiation ritual (*Upanayana*). She was not because she was a girl. In addition, she was barred from listening to the Gāyatrī mantra while her brother performed the ritual. She was very curious to know the mantra. "My brother was 13 months younger than me but was

⁵² कोटिहोम

invited to the *Vratibandha* (Upanayana) ceremony saying it was a masculine domain.” During the ceremony, the priest kept the mantra-giving process away from other persons, especially those who had not received Gāyatrī Mantra and women. While in the process, they covered Guru and my brother with a double-folded shawl. Guru whispered the Gāyatrī mantra to my brother's ears (*dosalla odhera lukiluki khasyakkhusuk garera Gāyatrī mantra sunāye*)⁵³.

Naturally, my infancy created curiosity in me to know the mantra. Mālatī recalled that earlier, during her cousin's *Vratibandha* (Upanayana) ceremony, she was dismayed when told that she could not hear the Gāyatrī mantra. This time during her younger brother's *Vratibandha*, she hoped to be allowed to listen to it, but she was not. Nevertheless, she hoped her brother would tell her after the sacred-thread-wearing ceremony, but he did not. So, she kept wondering what exactly Gāyatrī's mantra was. She felt restless for months. Mālatī dives into her past and happily narrates a story:

It was the festive occasion of Śivaratri. As usual Indian devotees and hawkers began to flock around Paśupatināth temple. Among them, some came with monkeys to show their dance, some showed magic, and others sold pictures of gods and goddesses. One of the hawkers had carried a picture of goddess Sarasvatī on a basket on his shoulder, and yes, to my happiness, below the picture was printed what for so long I was waiting to know for myself—the Gāyatrī mantra. I bought the photo frame and memorized the mantra. Later, I proudly recited it to my grandmother, but instead of feeling happy, she became angry and warned me not to repeat the mantra! Her belief was females/daughters should not tell the Gāyatrī mantra. (Personal communication, July 11, 2017).

Mālatī's educated family members used to chant Gītā and hear Purāṇa. But they never chanted the Gāyatrī mantra. She said that that particular event hurt her sentiment. And this caused her to step forward to establish the Gurukul for girls. She spent months in a Sanskrit Gurukul in Devghāt, Tanahun, which she informed encouraged her to open the Gurukul for girls. However, the seven years of her

⁵³दोसल्ला ओढेर लुकीलुकी खस्याकखुसुक गरेर गायत्री मन्त्र सुनाए
(*Dosalla odhera lukiluki khasyakkhusuk garera Gāyatrī mantra sunāye*)

Gurukul also could teach neither the mantra nor the *Sandhyopāsan* to the girls whereas the boys' Gurukul performing twice daily.

Nevertheless, the girls have previously encountered the recitation of the Gāyatrī mantra in public. Additionally, during their study of the Rudrī text, they actively participated in chanting it. They have also come across the mantra through ringtones and various media outlets. However, to their disappointment, the Gāyatrī mantra is unfortunately not incorporated into the prescribed daily prayer routine. The Gāyatrī mantra is the most sacred of all Vedic mantras; in it, the Veda lies embodied as in its seed. (Woodroffe, 2008). The mantra is the holiest expression of thought and consciousness (p. 276), and the meaning of the mantra is:

Om Bhūrbhuvahsvaḥ: tat saviturvareṇ yambhargodevasyadhīmaḥi dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt. [Om. The earthly, atmospheric, and celestial spheres. Let us contemplate the wondrous Solar Spirit of the Divine Creator (Sāvitrī). May He direct our minds (that is, towards the attainment of Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa⁵⁴). (Woodroffe, 2008, p. 265).

A reading of Nehra's (2013) collection of different versions of the translation of Gāyatrī mantras, such as those by Max Muller, Colebrook, and Wilson, suggests that the words there can have different meanings depending on the reader's perception, knowledge, and attitude and thinking. Such meaning-making is normal in ancient Sanskrit literature. Let us look at their versions of translation of Muller (1886), "We meditate in the adorable light of the divine Savitri that she may raise our thoughts." In the series, Colebrook makes meanings, "Earth, sky, heaven; let us meditate on the most excellent light and power of that generous, sportive, and resplendent Sun, praying that it may guide our intellect." Likewise, Wilson states: "We may meditate on that desirable light of the divine Savitri, who influences our pious rites." Similarly, Vedalankar (2014) considers this a universal prayer: "O God, the giver of life, remover of pains and sorrows, bestower of happiness, and creator of the universe- Thou art most luminous, pure, and adorable. We meditate on Thee. May thou inspire and guide our intellect in the Right direction?" The mantra's translations vary for two reasons—one, the philosophical weightage of the text, and two, the difference between the Vedic Sanskrit language and the *laukik* (general) Sanskrit language.

⁵⁴ धर्म, अर्थ, काम, मोक्ष

Gāyatrī Mantra signifies more symbolic meaning and less literal meaning. In other words, it has a more profound sense. The mantra has a bundle of interpretations. In a bundle, it has a cosmology, a rule, and structuralism/functionalism. Another bundle of *Trisūl*, it guides the performer towards good action, this is a ritual for meditation, and this accepts the almighty above the person. The next bundle of *Trisūl* of the mantra has life and death, pain and suffering, and their solution. Finally, it explores the inner possibilities of personality through more profound self-practice. The whispering under the shawl indicates its practice of mantra meditation. The cloak creates solitude for the Guru and the new disciple. Mookerji (1951) cites Śatapatha Brāhman, XI, 5, 4 that the meaning of Upanayana is profound, deeper than what is seen. Education is an “intimate relationship between the teacher and the pupil.”

The relationship is inaugurated by a religious ceremony called Upanayana. It is not like the admission of a pupil to the register of a school on payment of the prescribed fee. The spiritual meaning of Upanayana, and its details inspired by the meaning, are elaborated in many texts and explained below in the proper place. By Upanayana, the teacher, “holding the pupil within him as a new birth”. The pupil is then known as a *Dvija*, “born afresh” in a new existence, twice “born” [Shata Patha Brāhmaṇa, XI, 5, 4]. The education that is thus begun is called by the significant term *Brahmacarya*, indicating that it is a mode of life, a system of practices. (Mookerji, 1951)

The rebirth process is heartily done under the shawl, where the Guru and pupil make intimacy. No one can know what they talk about during the whispering. According to Mookerji, "The constant and intimate association between teacher and taught is vital to education as conceived in this system" (Mookerji, 1951). Mookerji compares the education system with apprentice and master craftsman in the apprentice system: "the apprentice must elect" the master "to learn his secrets of work, assimilate his spirit and method, which are not revealed in any formal manner." The teacher adopts the pupil as his apprentice to teach his skills and Knowledge. The essence of the ritual is admitting the pupil to the teacher's hermitage. In ancient times, this ritual was performed in the hermitage, and the boy was taken for the rebirth ritual and left with the teacher from his parents. In the modern age, it has been performed in the house yard for the sake of the ritual only. So, it is just a ritual now. It is just a demo only. Neither are they taken to the Guru nor do they learn Veda. Mālatī's brother also did not study in Gurukul but became a famous lawyer in the country.

However, he had a sense of spirituality and Knowledge of Vedic education and culture.

The shawl has several symbolic meanings, as Victor Turner found in an initiation ceremony of the Ndembu people of Zambia. Ndembu initiation is a circumcision rite for both girls and boys. The boy's rite is done in a group, and the girls are performed in person (Turner, 1967). Zambian initiation rites symbolized the maturity of boys and girls for procreation. However, in the *Upanayana*, this is the initiation of apprenticeship under the Guru.

So far, the question of Mālatī's curiosity since her childhood about the secrecy of mantra transferring under the shawl was not only a secret for women and girls but also a secret for all others. The time is the rebirth of the boy, and he is taken as the most private (Mookerji, 1951). The mantra-induced meditation is a solitary activity for the person's whole life.

Mantras for Male, Brahmavādini, and Sadyovadhū

Rāmāyaṇa has evidence of ritual work performed by females. According to Vartak (1999), in the Rāmāyaṇa, Kausalya did *Homa-Havanaa* as stated in the Ayodhyā section (25-1, 28, 29). Similarly, Seeta had "performed Sandhyā (5-14-5-, 2-87-18)", Vartak substantiated. He claims that the "custom of Sandhyā, Homa and Havanaa being done by ladies is from Ṛgveda".

According to the practice in Nepali society, there are separate mantras for females in Vedic tradition. Females do Jap⁵⁵ at least once daily, getting connected to different gods and goddesses. These mantras are different from the Gāyatrī mantra. The mantras are communicated by their female guruāmas (lady teachers). The guruāmās are newly appointed, and generally, they are relatives. The mantra ceremony is performed at their married home in consultation with the priest or senior.

Thus, the mantras for females are different from those for males. They also say the Gāyatrī or Viṣṇu mantra, or some say the Lakṣmī mantra if asked. My mother, sisters, and sister-in-law used such mantra/s and practiced daily. So, 'It is forbidden for women in the Vedic system' (Woodroffe, 2008, p. 267). The restriction applies only to the Gāyatrī mantra but not to other mantras.

⁵⁵जप

Mookerji (1951) has also explored women's education (p. 208). He categorized women into two classes taking help from Hārīta Smṛti-Brahmavādīnī⁵⁶ and Sadyovadhū⁵⁷. Brahmavādīnī is eligible for Upanayana and Agnyādhān (sacrifice to fire), Veda study, and "practice of begging within the household". The other class of women "had only to perform Upanayana in some form before she is married." Yama Smṛti also allows women to learn Veda. Mookerji writes, "In times of yore, girls were eligible for (1) *Mauji Bandhana* (i. e. Upanayana), (2) study of Veda, and (3) *Savitri Vāchana* (use of Savitri mantra)." Savitri mantra is synonymous to Gāyatrī mantra.

Vedic society has been regulated on the grounds of *Varṇāśrama Dharma*. *Varṇa* means color, which has been interpreted for Brāhmins, *Kṣetrīya*, Vaiśya and Śūdra. Similarly, *Āśram* refers to *Brahmacarya* (student life), *Grhastha* (domestic life), *Vānaprastha* (retired from domestic life), and *Sanyās* (renunciation). This is a categorization of the system of *Varṇāśrama*. The Gāyatrī mantras also are different for different Varṇas. A Brāhman has one Gāyatrī mantra, a *Kṣetrīya* has another, and a Vaiśya has a different Gāyatrī Mantra (CDC, 2014 & Timilsina, 2015). The later mantras are similar to the Gāyatrī mantra in their pronunciation, but the mantras given to females are simple so that even illiterates can perform jap daily. Either male or female, Brāhman or *Kṣetrīya*, Vaiśya or Tantrik practitioner, or Māntric, just listening or informing the self cannot produce any result because mantra should create an image in the mind and body.

According to Timilsina (2015b), in the "process of recollection, mantras are not just simply 'heard', remembered, or brought forth through recall, but rather, they are mentally situated in different parts of the body and 'seen' as images" p. 14). The mantra is internalizing inner images within the mind and body. Such practice and achievement are not expressible in words.

Practices observed at the Gurukul, practices in society, and triangulation to the literature note contradict the philosophical foundation. One, Hindu society itself has a vast contradiction in following the Hindu law of Manu, which restricts females' practice of the Gāyatrī mantra. Two, there are pressures of modernization and feminization issues as recommended by the WHF & UNIFEM report to establish

⁵⁶ ब्रह्मवादिनी

⁵⁷ सद्योवधूः

Gurukuls for girls. Three, the founder/s of the Gurukul are in a dilemma. They lack clarity in coordination between *Dharmaśāstra* and international influence because some Gurukuls have been practicing and reciting the Gāyatrī mantra while others do not. The issue is its social acceptance of ritual works amidst the entire social structure, which has not been changed yet.

Ritual works by priests and labor work by other castes to upper castes called Jajmani. The lower castes called the upper castes who provide the job by paying grains instead of cash as Bista. Jajmani and Bista system (Uprety, 2021, p. 207) is a feature of pre-capitalist socio-economic formations in a society of “caste-mode of production” of Nepali peasantry. The mode of production is the bartering of goods. Contemporary Neo-liberal capital system has been destroying the indigenous system, and such tradition is transforming into diversification. Ritual learning and training at the Gurukul are teaching for producing the Jajman or Purohit. There is money in the market for boys, as the founder of KGG analyzed and established the Gurukul to bring the girls to the Jajmani market of a “neo-liberal capitalist economy.”

Gāyatrī: Singing, Repetition, and Mental Articulation

I never saw female priest/s in Nepal's *Gāyatrī Puraścharan*⁵⁸. Such *Yajñas* are performed silently. Timalsina (2015c) defines its practice as follows: "While the name Gāyatrī comes from the verbal root $\sqrt{gā}$ or \sqrt{gai} , meaning 'to sing,' the mantra is no longer sung, but is quietly articulated or repeated mentally.

The mantra's deity is no longer Savitṛ (the sun) but Sāvitrī, a goddess with a benign anthropomorphic form. The mantra is no longer read-only once in the ritual context but is repeated many times. He connects mantras to tantra and discusses on the ground of Prapanchasara Tantra⁵⁹ that each letter of the mantra links with distinct principles found in Sāṅkhya cosmology, and certain perfections are associated with letters of the mantra. However, Timalsina, the tantra expert, clarifies that tantra has its particular type of Gāyatrī mantra associated with various deities.

Thus, simply knowing or chanting the mantra is not the destination; the practitioner needs to go deeper for its philosophical understanding and learn to perform for varied purposes. During practice, mantras interact with the subjective awareness of the practitioner. The immediately experienced individuality consists of

⁵⁸गायत्री पुरश्चरण यज्ञ (Gāyatrī purashcharan Yajña)

⁵⁹प्रपञ्चसारतन्त्र

personal, physical identity; the second level comprises social awareness in which family members or property, name, and fame emerge as self-identity, while the third identity is the inner I-sense (*Ahamkara*) (Timalsina, 2005, p. 213). The Vedic females have no experience of such identities and that of the direct I-sense through mantric jap.

Jap, Worship, and Ārati

All graduates from Gurukul may not perform the priestly job, but they have imparted the performance skill, including the proper pronunciation of the textual language and necessary knowledge. Gāyatrī mantra jap is necessary to produce dedicated and qualified individuals for Vedic society. The mantra meditation is a segment of the Sandhyopāsan daily ritual. Sandhyopāsan has already been discussed above in the course on mantra practice. Daily prayer and worship are a foundation for preparing for the priesthood. KGG girls prayed to different gods and goddesses, chanting verses daily twice in the morning and the evening. They worshipped the photos pasted on the drawer. They burnt incense as well. The narrative intends to compare the girls' Gurukul practice with that of the boys' Gurukul practice as is provisioned in Dharmaśāstra.

Looking at the field data, the boy students at Veda Vedanga Vidyālaya, Parbat district, were found (field note, August 13, 2013) chanting Vedic mantras and performing Sandhyopāsan daily ritual even though they were below grade 5. In other Gurukuls observed in Kāski, Tanahun, Chitwan, Nawal Parāsī, Rupandehi, and Kathmandu districts, the boys performed the daily ritual, chanting, worshipping, blowing the conch and ringing bell as if they were professional priests (Field note, September 22, 2017). To look at their performances, comparatively, there are similarities and differences between girls' and boys' Gurukuls.

The wake-up time in the morning in both girls' and boys' Gurukuls was 5 AM. Also, there was a similarity in these activities: looking at palms and praying to Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, and Brahma (Karagre Basate Lakṣmī Kara made Sarasvatī; Karamulesthito Brahma, Prabhate Kara darśanam),⁶⁰ praying to the earth, having water and going to the bathroom. Veda chanting, memorizing Panchayatan Gods and Goddesses, verse chanting, and 'Jap' was performed by routine between 5:30 and 6:00

⁶⁰कराग्रे वसते लक्ष्मी करमध्ये सरस्वती
करमध्ये स्थितो ब्रह्मा प्रभाते करदर्शनम् ॥

AM. However, the practice of Sandhyopāsan and Ārati was observed only at the boys' Gurukul, not at the girls' Gurukul. The boys performed all activities instead in a professional manner guided by their gurus and seniors. Besides, the boys were taken to the temple for worship, while the girls at Kathmandu Gurukul were not. They instead were accessed to a symbolic temple in a rack.

Jap for Girls Instead of Sandhyopāsan

In girls' Gurukul, the practice of *jap* was a regular feature, but not the practice of *Sandhyopāsan*. *Jap* seems to have been practiced as a substitution for *Sandhyopāsan*. The girls silently recalled the Śiva mantra 'Om Namah Śivaya!' 108 times. Besides, they chanted the Śiva-panchakshari⁶¹ (five letters) mantra, an elaborative form of 'Om Namah Śivaya.' The verse is known as the creation of Śankarāchārya, the interpreter of Vedānta. The girls said, *Guru Brahma, Guru Bishnu, Guru Deva Maheshwara; Guru Sakshat Para-Brahma, Tasmai Shri Gurave namah* to the Guru in the morning and evening. The prayer means: "The Guru is Brahma (creator), the Guru is Bishnu (protector), the Guru is Maheshwar (destroyer), and the Guru is the real super being (Para Brahma). Salutation to the guru!" In addition, they chanted another prayer that could be heard across all Gurukuls⁶²: *Akhanda mandalakaram bapamm hyena characharam; tatpadam darśan yena tasmai shree gurave namah*. Salutations to the Guru whose form is an indivisible whole of presence and by whom is pervaded the moving and the non-moving beings, by whom is revealed (out of grace) that feet (of indivisible presence); salutations to that Guru. (English Translation retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/bd2tre68>)

Then, the girls bowed down to the earth and sang, accompanied by a harmonium played by a senior girl. The other 15 girls followed her with their hand-clapping. The chanting was like this⁶³:

Shree guru charanam; Om namonamah!

⁶¹ ओम् नमः शिवाय (there are only five alphabets- Om namah Shivaya).

⁶² अखण्ड मण्डलाकारं व्याप्तं येन चराचरम् ।

तत्पदं दर्शितम् येन तस्मैश्री गुरवे नमः ॥

⁶³ श्री गुरुचरणं; ओम् नमोनमः ।

श्री राधा चरणं; ओम् नमोनमः ।

श्री हरि चरणं; ओम् नमोनमः ।

श्री रघुपति चरणं; ओम् नमोनमः ।

श्री पशुपति चरणं; ओम् नमोनमः ।

श्री गुरुचरणं; ओम् नमोनमः ।

Shree Radha charanam; Om namonamah!

Shree Hari charanam; Om namo namah!

Shree Raghupaticharanm; Om namonamah!

Shree Paśupaticharanam; Namonamah!

Shree Guru Charanam; Namonamah!

Gods Krishna, Ram, Bishnu, and Śiva were also prayed, chanting the respective verses. The girls chanted mantras from Brihadaranyaka Upaniṣad. It means: "Lead me to light from the dark; Lead me to truth from untruth; Lead me from death to deathlessness. Jayagān followed this in the name of different gods/goddesses: Paśupatināth, *Viśwanath Bhagavan*, *Brindavan Krishnachandra*, *Guhyeshwari Mātā*, *Dwadaś Linga*, again Paśupatināth *Bhagavan* 3 times—*Bola Paśupatināth Bhagavan ko!* A senior person spoke it aloud, and the rest spoke the chorus—*Jaya!* They bowed down again to the earth; did Namaste to the photos on their rack temple.

The girls prayed to the Sun god, Ganesh, and other gods/goddesses. They concluded the prayer with a mantra of fulfillment from *Śanti Pāth* of Ishavasya Upaniṣad:⁶⁴ *Om purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate; Purnasya purnamadaya purnameva vashishyate. Om Śantih, Śantih, Śantih!* The English translation of this mantra is suitable from the website "Green Message: The Evergreen Messages of Spirituality, Sanskrit and Nature". The translation is:

Om, That (Outer World) is Purna (Full of Divine Consciousness); This (Inner World) is also Purna (Full of Divine Consciousness); From Purna comes Purna (From the Fullness of Divine Consciousness the World is manifested), Taking Purna from Purna, Purna Indeed Remains (Because Divine Consciousness is Non-Dual and Infinite). Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

(<https://tinyurl.com/3zdunt4d>)

Unlike the girls' Gurukul, the boys' Gurukul had built at least a temple and *Yajñashala*—a venue for daily worship and fire sacrifice (Havana). The boys were taught the processes for different types of worship to be performed later at the client's (*Yajamāna*) homes. They visited the temple and gave baths to the gods and goddesses,

⁶⁴ ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णं मुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय, पूर्णं मेवावशिष्यते ॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

specifically the five deities—Śiva, Viṣṇu, Ganesh, Devī, and the Sun (Sūrya), who are called *Pāñcāyan Devatā*.⁶⁵

Reciting the mantra and adhering to the worship procedures are crucial aspects of Gurukul teaching for aspiring priests. This way, for the boys to go to the temple built in the Gurukul premises collectively twice a day and practice the process under the guidance of a guru, was a regular feature. Sometimes, the students served even the general people who visited Gurukul for ritual performances. The students performed rituals for *Yajamāna*. Mahesh Sanskrit Gurukul, Chitwan students performed *Upanayana Saṁskāra* Right in the Gurukul *Yajñashala* (field note, June 8, 2021). Such practices at Gurukul prepared the boy students ready and perfect to serve their clients' needs as all-time priests later.

Neither the Gurus nor the society can elaborate on the cause of the restriction on learning Veda or Sanskrit during the menstrual period. Joseph (2020) has brought the description in the name of “Ancient science” that is based on the subtle body, celestial influence, and Ayurvedic idea of changing the condition of *tri dosha- Vata, Pitta Kapha*. She does not recommend the Gāyatrī mantra for women in the reproductive age as per the ancient rules. The mantra is said to cause reproductive disorders in women and develop masculine features like excessive facial hair, deepened male voice, and infertility. (Joseph, 2020, pp. 276-277). Aum is also prohibited in the age group female. It may cause hormonal balancing for women because of the male deities *Praṇ Pratishthā* at the temples. She cited the Sabarimala temple as an example, pointing out its unsuitability for women, claiming it fosters male harmony while causing disorder in women. In contrast, based on her experiences, she asserted that the Bhagavathi and Kāmākhyā temples are conducive to balancing the menstrual cycle.

Boys' Pedagogy for Girls

Comparatively, the boys' and girls' Gurukuls use the same textbooks. The text of *Rudrī* is also the same for both. Nevertheless, the spirit, the objective of accessing the girls to Gurukul training, needs to be added to girls' Gurukul. The performance of rituals geared toward preparing future female priests for the market must be included. The girls are rarely taught to pronounce the Vedic mantras during prayer and *Ārati*. Unlike the girls, the boys are taught to use Vedic mantras the most. They are made to

⁶⁵पाञ्चायन देवता

chant *Purusha Sūkta*.⁶⁶ The second chapter of Rudri is chanted in the dining hall while waiting for the meal (brunch/lunch). Also, they are made to chant verses from Gītā and Sanskrit poems on ethics and morality if they have time before and after the meal while in the dining hall.

This shows a fundamental difference in ritual orientation between boys and girls under the same syllabus, textbooks, and pedagogy in Veda Vidyāśram/Gurukul. The joint report prepared by World Hindu Federation and UNIFEM depicts paradoxes. The report suggests parallel Gurukul for girls to produce female priests as for boys to establish gender equality in society. However, KGG practice related to ritual differs from that of boys' Gurukul. Keenly interested girls like female sage Gārgi can only learn the ritual skill (*Karmakāṇḍa*) to provide priesthood service in professional life. They were treated differently, while the founder Mālatī's vision was mantra chanting and priesthood as the final goal for KGG.

If I take my own home as a field, there is a festival each day, celebrated in the morning and evening. Males perform the ritual worship, and females prepare the materials for worship, including the Prasad (offering). Guest/s arriving at home are to be treated as gods/goddesses. The worship over Prasad is to be shared with the guests. Such job description of worshipping and cooking shows a clear division of labor between males and females. Looking at this way, the modern Gurukuls have failed to blend their theory with practice.

Barriers to Priesthood: Job, Gender, and Society

Vedic ritual is not only the oldest surviving ritual of humankind but also the best source material for a theory of ritual (Staal, 1996). "It is sophisticated and already the product of a long development. However, it is the largest, most elaborate, and (on account of the Sanskrit manuals) best documented among the rituals of man (p. 69)." Several people I met were surprised to hear the running of a Gurukul for girls, and that they chanted the Veda mantra. An official of a male Gurukul argued, "Our boys bring Rs. 2500 from a priestly work, but who will give to the girls?"⁶⁷ He informed me there was a remark on Mālatī, the founder of KGG, that she was doing an

⁶⁶ पुरुषसूक्त

⁶⁷ "Hamra keta haru le ek thaumagayerapachchissayarupaiyalyauchhan, ketiharulaikasledinchha?" (हाम्रा केटाहरुले एक ठाउँमा गएर पच्चीस सयरुपैयाँ ल्याउँछन्, केटीहरुलाई कसले दिन्छन्?)

unproductive job. Vedic scholars ask: “Do you invite the girls as priests at your home?” (Timilsina, 2016).

However, Mālatī is convinced that females can perform the ritual after graduation (*Shastri*). This means she is unaware of ritual education because, as per the syllabus, Gurukul/Āśram and Sanskrit schools teach life ritual skills before the completion of class 10. The student is taught the rituals from birth to death during school education. Chanting *Rudrī* and learning worship starts from the day the pupil starts Gurukul life in the male Gurukuls, whether they enter 3, 4, or 6 grades. Generally, these items start between the 6th and 10th grades on the syllabus. This ethnographic study finds different aspects of ritual performance. Meditation on the Gāyatṛī mantra, preparation for priesthood, and contradiction within Girls’ Gurukuls are treated as sub-themes below:

Social Structure, Performativity, and the Client (Yajamāna)

KGG projects a gender perspective, but its paradoxical practices reflect the impact of structural notions instead. The discussion here is much inspired by Levi-Straussian Structuralism (Levi-Strauss, 1963) which argues that cultural constructions—myths, rituals, folk tales—have no apparent practical functions. This notion has been tested by Ortner (1989, p. 76) and Holmberg (1989, p. 7) through ethnographic investigations in Nepal. The roots go back to the 1940s structuralism-functionalism of Radcliff Brown (Behura, 1988, pp. 99-104). The structural-functional roots expanded through Malinowski (1960, pp. 105-110), Tambia (1970 & 1984), and Geertz (1973) through ethnographic studies based on social structures. There is a structure in society, and obviously, that functions through its organs. Anthropologists have taken rituals as their primary objective in the structural vantage of contemporary anthropology (Holmberg, 1989, p. 7).

Sociology and anthropology work on actions and rituals based on their structure and functions. The anthropologists, as mentioned above, worked and interpreted structural performances. The way of interpretation may vary. For example, Geertz did not use a critical way of interpretation but made the meanings in his study on ‘Balinese culture’. He concluded that “meanings are guided by interpretation.” However, unlike Geertz’s ‘Thick description’, feminists interpret the same structure using a different lens.

Judith Butler's performativity (1993) argues on the subjectivities of females. Females' performance in society has no notable example of a woman priest. Only men

get to perform ritual works. The identity of a female is not a priest. She Rightly states that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' 'or event, but a ritualized production.' The performance in KGG seems dualist. They follow boys' Gurukuls' pedagogy, but the practice of the pedagogy is different. Daily rituals and performances have differentiation. Judith Butler's gender performativity explains that born language does not teach 'to behave in particular ways in society,' but society teaches it. Here in KGG, Mālatī's vision has no differentiation. However, pedagogical practice and ritual activities have differentiation. For example, there is a disparity in Gāyatrī mantra practice. They follow a separate, non-Veda stanza for daily rituals instead of the mantra of Veda. They do not follow 'gender norms' in Butler's terms. The inception of KGG was not for the practice of disparity.

The disparity is seen in the use of the same textbooks. The girls neither performed *Upanayana* rites nor *Sandhyopāsan* daily rituals as prescribed in the textbooks. There is "prohibition and taboo" yet. In practice, KGG could not move far from structural functionalism though they chanted mantras under the guidance of a qualified professor of Nepal Sanskrit University. True, they are taught the course, but its objective of making them practice the daily rituals is missing.

Here, Vedic culture has its system as well as structure. My ethnographic investigation finds a division of labour as in other religious cultures. The teaching of the Gāyatrī mantra is targeted to make the student a pure priest. Priesthood must follow all rituals at the clients' (*Yajamāna*) homes. They need to perform meditation like *Gāyatrī Puraścharaṇ* *Yajña*. The priest may not have to undergo the probable biological difficulty in performing Gāyatrī meditation for long.

"In *Gāyatrī Puraścharaṇ*, the priest/s should sit in meditative gesture and posture for three, five or more days which is much monotonous and difficult for non-meditative minds. The Gāyatrī meditating priests must control themselves including going to the toilet during the *Yajña*. There are strict rules for the priest. In such a situation, how can a female priest perform as does a male priest because she might suffer monthly period cycles or its fluctuations?" (Field note, May 16, 2017).

He, who recites the Gāyatrī mantra daily for three years, will enter (after death) the highest Brāhman, move as air, and assume an ethereal form (Manusmṛiti, 2. 82; Muller, 1886, p. 45; Dvivedi, 1917 p. 37). However, meditative yoga is practiced rigorously. Pather (2006) sees *Gāyatrī Upāsanā* as mantra yoga- the technique of

spiritual unfoldment through the practice of Jap is only the practice of repeating the mantra any number of times the mantra with the object of producing specific changes in the mind (pp. 114-115). Such meditational depth can bring people to prolonged attraction, which might hamper the course of procreation, and for that reason, the lawmaker might have chosen the mantra for males only. The social structure and its function are what Ortner and Holmberg found in the Buddhist tradition, and they have photos of male priests on the cover page of their books. Besides they have also discussed the Hindu Brāhmanic influence on the Buddhist tradition.

Despite the trinary position of structure, function, and culture obstacles, some clients want to hire female priest/s. For example, some *Yajamāna* went to Chitwan to perform rituals by my research participants who learned at KGG. I witnessed the three girls providing priestly service to the clients performing *Rudrī* and *Nawah* (the nine-day Puranic ritual).

Ritual Process: Imagination, Visualization, and Memory

Ritual works are performed with the imagination and visualization of particular deities. The daily ritual prepares the priest for ritual works. Vedic rituals at Gurukul are essential in producing priests for society because they perform as mediators of rituals. Timalsina (2015a) argues that the perceiver can connect with deities through imagination and visualization of mantra meditation:

Visualization, a central ritual aspect where a practitioner meditates upon the form of a deity and engages in deciphering the symbols, constitute the processes of both memory and imagination. Texts and traditions are called into play in the process of memory formation and retrieval when the subject enlivens the past experiences by calling them to mind. (Timalsina, 2015a, p. 142)

KGG girls have been deprived of such a type of imagination and visualization of their deities through deep meditation, as Timalsina stated. In KGG, the girls chanted the *Gāyatrī* mantra while practicing *Rudrī*, knowingly or unknowingly, because that is the third mantra out of 24 mantras of Śānti Adhyaya (Chapter on Peace Prayer). I asked the girls from grades three to six, "Do you know *Gāyatrī* mantra?" They answered, "Yes, we know." I wanted to know whether they could chant it or not. I found they could do it.

Half of the participants said they knew the mantra before joining the Gurukul. Some claimed they heard it in the mobile ringtone; others stated they heard it on the

television, and others noticed they saw it on the back side of public vehicles. The rest of the participants responded that they did not know the mantra before reading *Rudrī* at the Gurukul. They chanted the mantra as a mantra of *Rudrī* but not as a special mantra for *Sandhyopāsan* or *jap*. In their *jap*, they practiced “Om Namah Shivāya”⁶⁸ instead of “Om Bhūr Bhuva Swah⁶⁹ ...”, the words from *Gāyatrī mantra*.

The performer should neither produce the vocal sound of the mantra nor chant with hand gestures/signs during the *jap* because the practice is silent repetition minimum of 10 to 1008 or more at a time. Similarly, the meaning of the mantra is not harmful. However, the situation is almost as it was seven decades ago while Mālatī was a child, except that recorded audio of the mantra was publicized since the 1990s. All female students knew the mantra, but they did not make a *jap* of it.

According to GuruĀma Suniti, the principal of the Gurukul, the procedure of *Sandhyā* (*Sandhyā Vandan*) was followed as she practiced during her Gurukul life in India. There is considerable debate on the females' Right to chant the mantra. A study by Khandelwal (2004) substantiates that female renouncer (yoginis) had confusion about whether they had the Right to use the Gāyatrī mantra during daily prayers and thought that the mantra had a specific tone (swar/vocal) which only men had (p. 181) in Sanātana Hindu tradition. In the meantime, in the Ārya Samāj reformist campaign (1875), followers chanted the mantra daily indiscriminately (p. 81) in their religious prayers and worship. The debate is not limited to yogis, yoginis, Sadhus, and Sadhwis; instead, it has also received the attention of new media. The debate stands on two pillars: the traditional *Sanātana Dharma* and two Ārya Samāj founded by Swāmi Dayananda Sarasvatī (<https://www.quora.com/Why-shouldnt-girls-chant-the-gayathri-mantra>). Denton (2004, p. 25) interprets women as *amantravat* (without mantra) in Dharma, and they do not practice mantra. Denton (2004, p. 25) interprets women as *amantravat* (without mantra) in Dharma and they do not practice mantra.

Women's Role, Vedic Learning, and Priestly Practice

In Vedic society, as indicated earlier in Chapter two, changes have occurred in women's role in Vedic learning and practice. Vedas do not restrict, but Vedic literature defines the male and female division of labour. The multiplicity of script has multiple ways of thinking that have created diversified ideas.

⁶⁸ ओम नमः शिवाय ।

⁶⁹ ओम भूर्भुवस्वः ...

The Puranic storyteller females think that the authority of Veda learning is the sole responsibility of males. She thinks females have demarcation for Puranic storytelling but not Veda chanting and priesthood services. For example, Yamuna and her former classmates have been performing Puranic storytelling. They have been arguing that there is femininity in the job of Veda chanting, and priestly ritual work is suitable for males. In other words, there are three schools of thought in the present Vedic society: One, Veda chanting and ritual work must be performed only by males. Two, females have Rights to perform Puranic work, Sanskrit studies, and astrology. Three, Ārya Samāj, as a reformist institution, does not accept Purāṇa and recognizes only the Vedas. The organization dismisses all types of discrimination.

However, evidence-based debates continue in Vedic society because there is a daily ritual to be performed. However, Ārya Samāj is not seen as influential in reforming the ritual performance, for it opposes the doing of ancestral worship (Shraddha). Ārya Samāj does not believe in afterlife rituals, a crucial sentiment in Hindu society. Unlike in Christianity and Islam, Nepali women can be appointed priests in the existing temples; they can build the temple and perform pūja and shamanic rituals.

The Government of Nepal has appointed Sahanshila Jha Sharma, a priest at Annapurna temple in Asan, central downtown Kathmandu. “It came down because I got massive support from different sections of the society, including academia,” said the 48-year-old Jha (Ojha, 2021). This old temple at Asan is known for its prosperity, where devotees are primarily merchants. These days, not only females but also Dalit females serve as priests in different temples of the country. One among them is the Nageshwar Parvati temple in Dang district, where Reeta Nepali has been serving as a priest for the last year (Budhathoki, 2078 V.S.).

According to the news story, she dreamt about a snake god, and her body started shaking for days. As a result, the community built the temple, and she started serving there. People from all castes visit the temple and receive teeka from her hand. There is no issue with Dalit as reported. Ritual scholar of India Veni Ram Sharma Gaud, known as 'Yajñik Samrat'⁷⁰, permitted women and Śūdra to establish temples with images without chanting the mantra. Brāhman should perform such rituals using

⁷⁰यः शूद्रसंस्कृतं लिङ्गं विष्णु वापि नमेन्नरः ।

इहैवात्यन्तदुःखानि पश्यामुष्मिके किमु ॥ (बृहन्नारदपुराण)

the "nām mantra" and not chant Vedic mantras. *Nām* means name. These are deities' names like Ram, Krishna, Hari, and Śiva. It is said that such name repetitions also have power for liberation. Scholar Gaud restricts bowing down to the temples and idols established by women and Śūdra, citing Narada Puraṇa (Gaud, 2014). This direction is for Brāhmins.

On the other hand, Shamanism has no caste or gender restrictions. Shamanism is based on Tantra. Tantra does not discriminate against any category of social classification. Many women have been working as Shamanists in different parts of Nepal. People go to them for counselling and treatment.

I recalled that my Upanayana Saṁskāra created in me a feeling of maturity. Before the Saṁskāra, I had no Rights and responsibilities in ritual ceremonies. I was just a child. Since that day, I was asked to perform the changed roles. I had to follow the worship rules, and I had to cook my food and do my study. With these new roles, I was now a mature person with some authority and recognition in the family and society. Later, I saw another child who looked happy about and responsible for ritual work at home and at relatives' houses. After receiving the Saṁskāra, boys could chant scriptures in the ceremonies. Finally, this ritual was for further learning and attaining maturity toward marriage. The youth must receive Vratibandha (Upanayana) Saṁskāra before the marriage ceremony, even in the modern busy and semi-atheist life. Nowadays, in Kathmandu and urban areas, relatives take the Upanayana occasion as an opportunity to gather and celebrate parties at hotels and commercial venues. Finally, the ritual opens the door to a new life. This may have been the reason for taking the Saṁskāra as a second birth in life called 'Dvija.'

In Vedic law, a law of Manu (Manusmṛiti) has no provision for women's initiation or Upanayana (Dvivedi, 1917, p. 35)⁷¹. According to this provision, the wedding ritual initiates Upanayana or Vratibandha for women. They chant the Veda mantra in the Wedding ritual.

Muller (1886) observed, "The nuptial ceremony is stated to be the Vedic sacrament for women (and to be equal to the initiation), serving the husband (equivalent to) the residence in (the house of the) teacher and the household duties (the same) as the (daily) worship of the sacred fire". This verse demarcates the total role and duties of women in Vedic society. In other words, she has no initiation

⁷¹ वैवाहिको विधिस्त्रिणाम् । (मनुस्मृति २.६७)

ceremony, does not go to Gurukul, and no graduation and home returning ceremonies (Smavartan). Domestic chores are the sacrifice or *Havana*.

However, Mālatī thinks that such verses might have been added and amended with provisions to dominate women in later editions by unauthorized persons. She gave her logic, "Otherwise, how can the god discriminate between its creations?" Dvivedi (1917) clarifies the suspicion of amendment of Manusmṛiti in his critical comments. I cited this to her. Nevertheless, she could not satisfy with my information. Mālatī hoped that her pupils would be graduates; they would do priestly work and research work. They would interpret *Dharmaśāstra* and analyze mistakes and twisted portions in Manusmṛiti that are not women-friendly. However, Professor Deergaraj Ghimire countered the possibility of distortion and addition in Manusmṛiti, citing its authenticity and coherence of the subject matter. He suggested studying Manusmṛiti holistically, not partially.

Manusmṛiti (3.55-61) too is discriminatory against women only to save them under the provision of the dignity of women. According to the provision, except for the initiation, Gāyatrī mantra, and Veda chanting, there is a high honour for women (Max Muller's translation. Verse 55 provisions:

Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law, who desire (their own) welfare. Similarly, verse 56 mentions, "Where women are honored, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honored, no sacred rite yields rewards. Moreover, verse 57 says, Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes; but the family where they are not unhappy ever prospers. Similarly, Muller's translation of the other four verses of Manusmṛiti (3.58-61) shows the status of women in society:

58. The houses on which female relations, not being duly honored, pronounce a curse perish completely as if destroyed by magic.

59. Hence men, who seek (their own) welfare, should always honor women on holidays and festivals with (gifts of) ornaments, clothes, and (dainty) food.

60. In that family, where the husband is pleased with his wife with her husband, happiness will assuredly be lasting.

61. For if the wife is radiant with beauty, the whole house is bright; but if she is destitute of beauty, all will appear dismal. (Muller, 1886, pp. 85-86).

Law of Manu (Manusmṛiti) and other Smṛtis are for household chores only, and sacrificial festivals and ceremonies should be looked at in Sahakhasūtras like Katayayana Shrauta Sūtra and Grihya Sūtra. (Dvivedi, 1917, p. 129)

Thus, females are separated from hectic ritual works and priesthood where the priest/s might spend a long time for sacrificial ceremonies. In the field context, there is confusion about the destination of female priests, their acceptability, and professional guarantee in society. Social structure and its functions appear more male-friendly in the absence of female priests. There is a Paradox, but it is within the order, as Holmberg and Ortner remark.

Still, KGG founder Mālatī was courageous and convinced that "It takes time to accept female priests in religious work. It is natural that it is time-consuming but it will be acceptable. I may not live to see it but you will see later that there will be a number of Vedic scholars who will be performing Rituals" (Mālatī, personal communication, June 22, 2017). Though pedagogy and practices were contradictory, the Gurukul has run for seven years with the conviction of Mālatī's team. She was hopeful that the girl priests would be accepted in society gradually. "Society will accept women priests if they are prepared for the priestly work." She was hopeful. Looking at her family's ritual practice, she questions if she has ever invited a female priest. "How to search while no one is ever prepared as a female priest?" She questions the existing practice. Her son participated in the interview and explained that his mother performed the priest's job when he was unavailable, and he (the son) performed as "*Yajamāna*" or a host of the ritual. "There is no difficulty. I see the book and perform the rituals," she informed. She has the idea, knowledge, and skills, for she is a graduate of Sanskrit from Banaras Hindu University (BHU). She has been in practice for a long. However, such cases of absenteeism by priests are rare.

Discussing the field, the inner walls of KGG were colorful through banners of quotations on spirituality, honesty, hardship, morality, and education. The girls were taught all compulsory subjects and were made to perform extra-curricular activities (ECA) and co-curricular activities (CCA), including morning and evening prayers. They were given practice in Rudrī as well. However, the use of mantras and the skills in performing ritual work were not prioritized at KGG. There might be various reasons behind this.

Mālatī, the school's founder, grew up without being accessed to the performance of priestly work. Though she graduated in Sanskrit from BHU, her

learning did not contain the ritual performance skills. KGG principal Subhadra Nepal also needed to gain skills in ritual performance, for she studied only Sanskrit and philosophy. There was a protest by Vedic scholars and other stakeholders against learning Veda by caste-inclusive girls and without the Upanayana ritual. However, the principal claimed that the school was about to commence *Karmakāṇḍa* class (ritual class) for the girls. Knowingly or unknowingly, she had missed the fact that the curriculum of grade 6th had already contained lessons on performing priestly skills, including the necessary verses/mantras. It is a picture of a Paradox in teaching rituals at the school.

Contrasting aspects were found between the two Gurukuls for girls. KGG has been known as Veda Vidyāśram for girls, where Veda was taught as the principal subject. In contrast, another girls' Gurukul named Muktinath Kanyā Gurukulam, taught *Puranic* education in the Vedic sense. Muktinath Guru Swāmi Kamalanayan Acharya founded the Puranic Gurukul, and the Gurukul was run in Golfutar Kathmandu and Chhāling, Bhaktapur, but it is now stopped for girls and opened for boys. Nonetheless, the products of the Gurukul are famous for Puranic storytelling. For example, Yamuna, Shuklāmbārā, and Ganga are now the storytellers for fundraising for welfare activities in different parts of Nepal. I met Yamuna at Gaidakot, Nawalparāsī, at her married home. She and her husband argued in one voice that there is no Right to priestly work for women in society, unlike the Vedic *Śāstra* (scripture). She presented data on Puranic storytelling events and differentiated that there was a vast difference between public and family purpose in accepting the female priests by the clients. She led more than five hundred events for public purposes, which were organized for fundraising for schools, health posts, and similar institutions. However, the events organized for home purposes counted only 40. The home/family purpose Puranic events are organized to liberate ancestors. "We know that females have no Right to perform priestly work. So, I advise the organizer to invite a male priest for ritual work. I only tell the story of the respective Purāṇa," Yasho said. As per public demand, she stated she led the storytelling team, wherein she invited male Pandits like Ganesh and Vyasa for ritual work and chanting. This is a matter of schooling as well because the Puranic storyteller is well-taught the rule of tradition. In addition, the storytellers themselves are aware of the stories in Purāṇa about the Rights and duties of males and females. Yamuna confirmed that this is not discrimination against women but the division of labor.

"There is no evidence of females' Veda chanting and performing *Karmakāṇḍa* (ritual) independently, though there were great women scholars and mantra perceivers", Professor Ghimire claimed. Ghimire opines this cannot be called a distortion since Brihadaranyakopaniṣhad recognizes Manusmṛiti. Manusmṛiti says that Brāhman should not participate in a Havana (*Yajña*), which a non-Brāhman, a third gender, or a female performs. The literature shows that Vedas have been interpreted by different Sūtras that "Mantra-Samhitā" and "Brāhman- Grantha" are known as Veda (Mantra Brāhmaṇayoh Vedanamadheyam). The verse has been taken as a classic verse in Vedic ritualistic literature. (Apastamba Sruta Sūtra 24.1.31, Satyāshādhaḥ Shrauta Sūtra⁷² 1.17, Baudhayana Grihya Sūtra 2.6.3, and Pratigya Sūtra 1.2).⁷³ According to this aphorism, the Mantra part covers all Samhitās of the Veda, and the term "Brāhman" covers all Brāhmaṇa Granthas, Aranyaka, and all Upaniṣads.

Deergha Raj Ghimire is highly impressed by Vachaspati Mishra (900-980 A. D.). Indian "polymath," Mishra, in his commentaries, covers significant works of the most important Hindu schools of thought of his day (Potter, 1999). He also wrote independent works on Pūrva Mimāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta (p. 172). Ghimire, referring to Vachaspati, says that no one could be enlightened though some Vedic Rishis succeeded in making upward mobility from Śūdra (Dalit) to divine Rishis. That happened mainly through their meditative practices. This cannot happen in this period of Kali because of degradation in capacity, education, and talent, as is explained in Nyāya Philosophy below:

Nyāya, Dharmasāstra, Mahābhārata, and other scriptures have mentioned that there must be three Śukla (whites) which mean purity in birth, Vidyā (education), and Āchār (conducts). A person's quality is ascribed to the practice of Vidyā and conduct. Delivery cannot guarantee the talent of Vidyā; it needs Samskar like Upanayana. The three together determine a person's quality (Pātrata). There is no need to go by classification of a person's caste or class. You can experiment with it. It will take tens of years, but it will prove. You can call it the quality of the gene. This is the first thing. Expecting achievement from someone with no Samskāra (Upanayana) and conduct is

⁷²सत्याषाढः श्रौतसूत्रम्

⁷³मन्त्रब्राह्मणयोर्वेदनामधेयम् (Mantra BrahmanorVedanāmadheyam)

needless. These elements are interconnected, and they should be practiced as interconnected. You cannot separate them—*Śravaṇa, Manana, Nididhyāsana*⁷⁴—if you want to achieve the desired result in life. (Deergharaj Ghimire, Personal communication, August, 26, 2017).

According to Ṛgveda -Pratisakhya, every person can learn Veda, whoever respects the guru and *Dharmaśāstra* (Mishra, 2003). Nirukta (2.4.1) states that the goddess of *Vidyā* (education) prays, 'he who tends to blame others, is Devious and cannot control their own mind and senses, please do not send such people to me' (p. 103). Moreover, Nirukta (2.1.4) further elaborates on the features of disqualification (p. 104) of a student if they hate *Vidyā*, intend to learn for a destructive purpose, are dubious and inconsistent, or whose lifestyle is against the code of *Dharmaśāstra*; such students cannot be allowed for *Vidyā*. There is a similarity between Professor Ghimire's concept of "pātratā" and Nirukta.

Rights, Spirituality, and Metaphysical Concepts

Dharmaśāstra is mainly associated with Manusmṛiti. Manusmṛiti was propounded and taught to Manu by Brahma (Manusmṛiti 1.58), and he delivered it to great sages (Manusmṛiti 1.1-4, 1.118). Other sages were led by sage Bhṛgu who had received the code from Manu (1.59, 1.60) (Kaundinyāyan, 2007, p. 22). Manusmṛiti came down as a principal law and Pūrva Mimāṃsā as jurisprudence in Vedic culture. Manusmṛiti is a major *Dharmaśāstra* that regulates the conduct of people. Other Smṛtis, Grihya Sūtras, and Purāṇa also have been incorporated into *Dharmaśāstra*. Pūrva Mimāṃsā by Jaimini contains philosophical aphorisms for rituals and Vedic interpretations. It indicates the environment necessary for women. The Jaimini aphorism states that holding hands of the bride by the groom during the marriage ceremony starts Veda learning and Vedic practice (Timilsina, 2016).

Vedic scholars have been interpreting the aphorism that a female can chant and worship only with her husband. However, women can perform rituals using Puranic mantras (verses) rather than the Vedic mantras known as *Smarta Karma*, whereas the mantra using Karma is *Shrauta Karma*. Chanting Vedic mantras in performing rituals can bring high returns, seen and unseen.

Shatapataha Brāhman Grantha is Veda according to the names of Veda (Veda nāma Dheyam) has determined the separate works of ritual for even Brāhman,

⁷⁴ श्रवण मनन निदिध्यासन

Kṣetrīya, and *Vaiśya* (5.1.11 & 12). *Rajsūya Yajña* can be performed only by the king (*Kṣetrīya*) but not by *Brāhman*, and *Vajpeya Yajña* can only be achieved by *Brāhman* but not by *Kṣetrīya* (Gaud, 2014, p. 182). Similarly, *Manusmṛiti* (5.155) delimits women to perform rites separately. In other words, she has no Right to independent performance of ritual work (p. 185). The *Dharmaśāstra* clarifies that she can perform the rituals (*Yajña*) through priests (*Brāhman*) (p. 184). According to Griswold (1900), the doctrine of *Brāhman* is external and objective as the hymn, aphorism, and sacred text in general. *Brāhman*'s doctrine is also internal and subjective to the holy word's religious truth, wisdom, and theology (p. 9). All four Vedas have shown the power of the *Brāhmaṇa* as he found. *Brāhmaṇa* is related to the worship of *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* of Śukla YajurVeda means "*Brāhmaṇa* of hundred ways" (Whitney, 1896, p. xvii).

The practical differences in Gurukul for boys and girls have the same subjects of worldview, spirituality, and metaphysical concepts. Modern education has been trying to make schooling equal, but the complex whole, beliefs, ethos, and habits remain almost the same because of the culture. The education system and the *Ārya Samājee* reformist movements have challenged the belief as discriminatory. However, the central office of *Ārya Samāj* Nepal has been neither active nor successful in its reformist campaign for over 150 years. "We are successful theoretically rather than practically, because laws and education give equal space to men and women, but rituals do not do so," a *Ārya Samāj* official expressed his experiences. (Personal communication, September 22, 2017) This proves that mentalism prevails more than the scientific nerve and objectivism (Geertz, 1973, p. 56) in the Gurukuls. Subjectivism will survive in society until the mindset of the division of labor between males and females is washed away. Anthropologists may theorize the roots of such discriminatory rituals in mythology. Still, there are kinds of literature connected to Vedas evidenced by continuing the ethos, norms, practices, and division of labor down to our time.

Professor Ghimire cited *Taittirīya Samhitā*'s mantra, "*Yanmanu Bajatad Bhesajam*," that says whatever is stated in *Manusmṛiti* should be taken as medicine along the tradition (Personal communication, August 23, 2017). *Taittirīya Samhitā* itself has been recognized as Veda. The substantiation followed in the Vedic society has no provision of *Upanayana* for girls, which bars them from studying Veda; consequently, they cannot perform ritual work following the *Shrauta* method, which is

the Vedic Method. But there is no bar for women to achieve ritual work using the Puranic Method, which has less priority in society.

Āhnik Sūtravali is a compilation of Vedic rituals conducted for household people in the Vedic community. Nonetheless, it also determines people's daily conduct. Dhakal (2015) refers to Vyasa Samhitā, Saubhagya Kalpadrūma, Skanda Puraṇa, Bhagavata Puraṇa, *Yājñanavalkya Smṛti*, and Bashishtha Samhitā determine the daily Rights and duties of a wife. The scriptures, including Manusmṛiti, has provision for protecting the woman by the man. It provisions that a woman is protected by her father before her marriage, after marriage by her husband, and after her husband's death by her son.

Education, Duty, and Marriage

Paradox can easily be found in contemporary society and culture, mainly in education, duties, and marriage. As to literature, for example, the UNIFEM Report (2006) incorporates only the women Rishis who perceived Veda's mantras and could debate with male sages. Gārgi was one of the famous female Rishis. However, the report (World Hindu Federation & UNIFEM, 2006) ignored that in Vedic society, performing rituals was what we mean by vocational and technical education today. It was a fertile job market but accessed only the males.

The document could not address the delimitations set for females' conduct in *Dharmaśāstra*, and it only noted the promotion of the 'change theory' of development and reformist Ārya Samājī view. It was a Paradox. Before that, Kaundinnyana (2007), Kaundinnyāyanī (2051 V.S.), and Kaundinnyāyan (2047) explored the provisions of Upanayana for girls and learning of Veda, but they could not implement their findings in their own families. Kaundinnyana (2007, p. 113) remarked that the interest in study differs from person to person based on their capacity, context, and other supporting factors. The factors of market and acceptability in society also play an essential role. Jayal (1966) highlighted Sita's performance of rituals in some exceptional circumstances. But the study did not focus on how Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa adopted the Dharmaśāstra or Manusmṛiti.

There is another paradox in a society where people need to understand the difference between Sanskrit education, Veda education, and Vedic education. Sanskrit education itself is not for the practice of ritual. For example, Mālatī did graduation in Sanskrit, but it was without routine performance practice, although she was knowledgeable about it. Likewise, Vedic education does not give training in ritual

work; hence Yamuna has no idea about it. They have ideas about Sanskrit as well as Puraṇa, Mahābhārata, and Rāmāyaṇa but do know how to perform Veda chanting and Karmakāṇḍa (ritualism). Veda education prioritizes Veda chanting practice and ritual work performance, but they do not necessarily adopt the occupation of priestly work. All three can perform the rituals if they have a passion for it, but Upanayana and Veda chanting practices certainly determine the quality of the practitioner. Contradictions on ritual can be dragged from the family practices of the scholars who advocate for ritualism by females. However, they only accept male relatives as priests, and females have not been born as qualified priests.

Historically, Dayananda Sarasvatī's Ārya Samāj campaigned for the eradication of discrimination. Similarly, Yogi Narahari Nath also campaigned for girls' Upanayana Saṁskāra 40 years ago. Besides, several girls studied at Sanskrit secondary schools, and others graduated from Indian institutions in Sanskrit and Vedic streams. Here the question arises: Why did they not perform the ritual independently? Why cannot we find women priests? Why do Puranic storytellers like Yamuna not take the lead in performing rituals in Puranic storytelling programs, instead handing to them over to the male priests?

Professor Ghimire claims that females cannot perform the ritual works (*Yajña*) as can males. He compares work with sports and asks why the world has organized separate sports for females. Why is there a women's football team instead of the mixed one? All these have been set because of biology. It applies similarly to the ritual. "They cannot perform more than two hours for Havana works (*Yajña*) while the male can go for hours continuously," he said.

Further, he says, "The ritual work is not harder for those who have achieved enlightenment. This is a procedure only. But who can be enlightened in this Kali Yuga?" Neither the mantra perceived female sages did the priestly work as an occupation, nor did Gārgi and Maitreyi. The role models had philosophical and analytical ideas to use Vedic knowledge in debates and decision-making. The philosophy (*Darśana*) and the practice of rituals are separate matters. However, there are still things that could improve these matters among various stakeholders.

Yajña, Tapas, and Dāna

While theorizing on rituals, mantras of Veda and Upaniṣad and Bhagavat Gītā substantiate the importance of *Yajña*. One, Śukla YajurVeda (9.21), stresses that

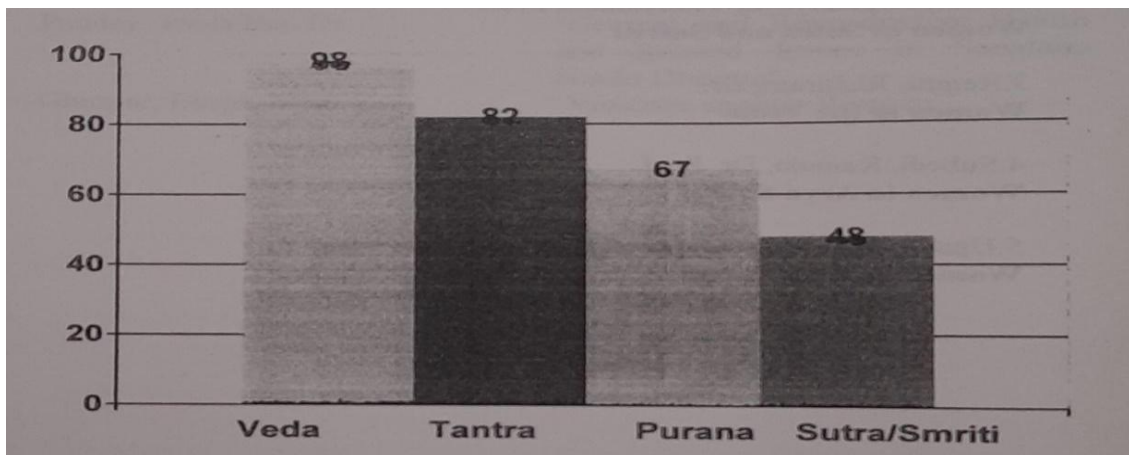
(*Yagyena kalpantam*⁷⁵) determination of life span, breathing, and strengths of eye, ear, backbone, and *Yajña* itself as well as the immortality of gods all are achieved from *Yajña* (Gaud, 2010, p. 222). Two, *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* (1.13-19) presents debates between Yama (God of death), and Naciketa depicts the importance of *Yajña*, specifically teachings on “Agni Vidyā,” that is knowing fire which is a base for the whole universe and way to longer stay in heaven (Swāmi Rāmānanda Giri, 2017, pp. 102-106).

Patanjali describes in his comprehensive commentary on grammar (*Vyakarana Mahabhashya*) that Brāhman only can be Brāhman; after all, he has these three: penances, Veda learning, and ascription (Adhikari, 2007, p. 24). Similarly, sins will be destroyed if the learner is calm and performs five *Yajñas* daily as *Smṛtis* envisioned. *Yāvalkya* says that the Veda chanting will provide the performer *Sūryalok* (space in the sun), *Chandralok* (area in the moon), and *Brahmalok* (space in great spirit Brahma) (p. 24). The five great daily Vedic *Yajñas* should be practiced to remove our debt to all existence (Frawley, 2014): 1. *Brahma Yajña* (study and teaching the Vedas or sacred teachings), 2. *Deva Yajña* (worshiping the divine and cosmic powers), 3. *Manuṣya Yajña* (helping fellow human beings, particularly caring for guests), 4. *Pitṛ Yajña* (honoring one’s ancestors, culture, and societal traditions), 5. *Bhūta Yajña* (serving living beings, making offerings to animals, plants, and the mineral kingdom), protecting the earth, her lands, and waters. Vedic *Yajñas* include outer fire offerings and internal offerings of prayer, mantra, *Prāṇāyāma*, and meditation, as Frawley summarizes.

⁷⁵ यज्ञेन कल्पन्ताम् ।

Figure 20

Order of the Ranking of the Gender Responsiveness During Various Periods of the Sanātana Dharma



(Source: UNIFEM and World Hindu Federation, 2006, p. 358)

Philosophically, Gītā (16.17) states that proud man only can do the Hippocratic *Yajña* without the procedures of *Śāstras*. *Śāstra* means *Dharmasāstra*, associated with Brahamangranhtas, Kalpa, and Manusmṛiti. Similarly, lord Krishna illustrates (Gītā, 17.28) that one should make *Yajña* (Havana), *tapa* (deep meditation), and *donation* (Dāna) with honor and due process, which provides betterment. Otherwise, as the verse states, the work will be unfruitful for this life and the life after death. In 17.24 of Gītā, lord Krishna has prescribed to chant ‘Om’ as the name of Paramatma⁷⁶ (Super being) at the beginning of Vedic mantras prescribed through the classical procedure.

Thus, proper chanting of mantras for ritual work can only be result-oriented if conducted by a faithful person through due process, as shown in *Śāstras* theoretically, philosophically, procedurally, classically, and educationally.

Gurukuls teach 6 Vedangas (ancillaries of Veda) for fundamental understanding the Vedic education, and 'Kalpa' is ancillary. The Kalpa determines the *Shrauta Yajña*⁷⁷ (Sacrifices according to Vedic mantras) and *Smarta Yajña*.⁷⁸ In other words, all rituals start from the Gurukul life. The distinction between girls' and boys' rituals from Upanayana and daily ritual practice in the Gurukul shows that the girls' future of priesthood is uncertain.

⁷⁶ परमात्मा

⁷⁷ श्रौत यज्ञ

⁷⁸ स्मार्त यज्ञ

Over the years, the community has grappled with a significant question regarding whether the roles of mantra chanting and priesthood are traditionally designated for women. Is it appropriate for females to engage in these practices? Meanwhile, my study participants, young girls, initiated priesthood activities in and around Chitwan. Their active involvement provided a clear and affirmative response to the prevailing questions.

The reasons behind the prohibition of learning Veda or Sanskrit during the menstrual period are not clearly articulated by either the Gurus or society. Joseph (2020) provides an explanation rooted in “Ancient science,” which is based on the subtle body, celestial influence, and the Ayurvedic concept of changing the condition of *tri doṣa- Vāta, Pitta, Kapha*. She advises against the recitation of the Gāyatrī mantra “for women in the reproductive age as per the ancient rules.” According to her, this mantra could lead to reproductive disorders in women and induce masculine features like excessive facial hair, deepened male voice, and infertility (Joseph, 2020, pp. 276-277). The chanting of Aum is also discouraged for women in this age group.

Joseph (2020) further explains that several temples can influence hormonal balance in women due to the *Prāṇapraṭiṣṭhā* of male deities at these temples. For instance, she cites the Sabarimala temple as being unsuitable for women as it produces male harmony and can create disorder in women. Conversely, she suggests that temples like Bhagavathi and Kāmākhyā are beneficial for balancing the menstrual cycle based on her experiences. Joseph cannot claim that she has direct access to the Vedic literature, but she relied on male Guru Amritananda Natha Sarasvatī, whose real name is Dr. Nishtala Prahlada Sastry. As a result, her interpretation is not charge-free from Brāhmanical patriarchy.

The Essence of the Chapter

Anthropologically, the rules of the ritual have world views, as do spiritualism and metaphysics in the Vedic ritual work regarding the division of labor in society. ‘Scientific nerve’ and objectivism applied through the education system could not be implemented equally since there is a traditional worldview in the mind of the implementer. Thus, there is a vast trident gap among theory, its ritual practice by females and confusion. Social acceptance in the job market for female priests, their biology, and *Dharmaśāstra's* provision has been working as obstacles to producing female priests. Time and change theory have pushed society so that it can easily feel

the Paradox between preaching and practicing. Without Paradox, we could have found female ritual performers in society decades back.

The *Brāhmaṇa Grantha*, recognized as a supplement to the *Samhitā* (mantras), *Manusmṛiti*, *Kalpa*, and *Kalpa-Sūtras*, among other texts, serves as the legal framework for Vedic society. According to these documents, females do not have independent authorization to perform priestly duties, except in the realms of *Bhakti* (prayer), philosophical debate, grammar, and other intellectual pursuits. This limitation may be attributed to biological factors, including the responsibilities related to childbirth, menstrual cycles, and the physical stamina required for potentially prolonged *Yajñas* (ritualistic ceremonies) performed by professional priests. As a result, women priests are notably absent from the priesthood domain. The paradoxical discrimination manifests in the divergent daily rituals observed by girls and boys in their respective Gurukuls, starting from their morning routines, bathing practices, and throughout their daily rituals.

CHAPTER VI

ON MENSTRUATION

In the sixth chapter, I address one of the major themes of my field information: Menstruation. This chapter is an outcome of the first part of sub-research question number 3: "In what way is menstruation a factor affecting teaching and learning processes as well as gender equality and paradoxes or gaps and challenges under the Gurukul education in Nepal?" I Found menstruation to be an affecting aspect in promoting a smooth teaching-learning process in the girl's Gurukul. I have analyzed the normative concept of *Dharmaśāstra*, linking it with the Western anthropological notion of purity and pollution and contesting ideas. In so doing, I have searched through the dignified menstruation campaign and counter-attack to the modern view. Here are the issues of the "subtle body" according to AyurVeda sciences and the "gross body" according to the current medical sciences. Finally, I have blended the ideas with the emerging practice of girls as priests and how they manage the menstrual period in pursuing the priesthood.

Ṛtu Vidyā, Menarche and Absenteeism

Fear of *Triśūl* and intention of liberation from the *Śūls* was found at every step in the field. The routine of absenteeism is seen at the Gurukul in the name of menstruation. But that was kept secret from me for months. Even modern female practitioners propagate absenteeism (leave) in the name of *Ṛtu Vidyā* (Joseph, 2020).⁷⁹ The girls' absenteeism fell since the end of 2016 in Kathmandu Girls' Gurukul (KGG) when the principal and four girls were not found at the Gurukul. The total number of students was 13 in 2014. It increased to 16 in 2016. Three girls were found absent in January 2017, and I started enquiring about the cause of absenteeism. No one gave me a clear answer since I was a male researcher at a female school/hostel. Finally, a nursery-level girl gave me a clue that the three girls were in the backside room of the Gurukul because of menstruation. "Why do they stay in the room there?" She answered: "Chhuī bhayeko"⁸⁰ (menstruated).

⁷⁹ ऋतुविद्या

⁸⁰ छुई भएको

I inquired of the senior ladies of the Gurukul about the girls' absenteeism and its effects on teaching-learning processes. Among them, Āma's (hostel warden) answer was somewhat metaphoric. "People of today say that the trees of *Cilāune* (a Nepali name for a kind of forest plant) and *Katus* (a Nepali name for a kind of forest plant) are the same, but I do not believe it. *Cilāune* is *Cilāune* and *Katus* is *Katus*. I do follow whatever my father taught me", the lady claimed. Her cognition and conviction have a fear of seen and unseen sufferings that is the *Trisūl*. And she thinks that isolating the menstrual women removes the nightmare as she takes the help of the metaphors. I will discuss the metaphoric meaning of *Cilāune* and *Katus* in the section metaphorical sub-theme.

Now, I continue with what consequences the girls' absenteeism had in their studies. They used to get barred from learning the Veda and Sanskrit and performing the daily prayers during the four days of menstruation. The rule applied to the lady principal too. As a result, the principal and the three girls remained absent at once. Such situations occurred frequently. But I was used to being told they had gone to the market, temple, or for a walk.

The Gurukul performed inclusive of caste and geography, while the community outside the Gurukul strongly performed non-inclusive of such differences. Retired professor of anthropology, Chhetri (2017) observed that strict adherence to caste/ethnic disparities and, in particular, the ideas of purity and pollution were weakening in Nepal (p. 6). However, ethnic inclusiveness could not remove the barrier of menstrual restriction. The practice was the same even in the reformist-founded girls' Gurukul.

As per Merskin (1999), the onset of menstruation for the majority of American girls occurs around the age of 13, with some starting as early as nine. Factors such as alterations in nutrition, the introduction of growth hormones in chicken and beef, and increased exposure to electricity or adequate light contribute to an earlier onset of this biological process. The biological patterns observed in American girls appear to be comparable to those of Nepali Gurukul girls. Consequently, as age increases, there is a corresponding rise in the prevalence of girls being absent from the Gurukul, ostensibly due to menstruation. The age table presents the girls' age-wise status of absenteeism:

Table 4*Age-wise Status of Absenteeism*

A Continuum on Age Wise Effects of Absenteeism

| Girls | Age | Absenteeism (per month) | Status |
|-------------|----------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Girl No.1 | 5 years | No | - |
| Girl No. 2 | 5 years | No | - |
| Girl No. 3 | 5 years | No | - |
| Girl No. 4 | 9 years | No | - |
| Girl No. 5 | 10 years | No | Drop out attempt by guardians |
| Girl No. 6 | 10 years | No | - |
| Girl No. 7 | 11 years | - | - |
| Girl No. 8 | 11 years | For 4 days | - |
| Girl No. 9 | 11 years | - | Drop out |
| Girl No. 10 | 12 years | For 4 days | - |
| Girl No. 11 | 12 years | For 4 days | - |
| Girl No. 12 | 12 years | For 4 days | Drop out |
| Girl No. 13 | 13 years | For 4 days | Fear of dropout |
| Girl No. 14 | 13 years | For 4 days | Fear of dropout |
| Girl No. 15 | 13 years | For 4 days | Fear of dropout |
| Girl No. 16 | 13 years | For 4 days | Fear of dropout |

(Source: Field Note, 2016)

I documented this table in 2016 to observe the senior girls' retention by the end of her grade 12. In 2022, I followed and discussed her as a new priest in the last section of this chapter. But first, I would like to discuss the absenteeism table. The data presented in the table were collected on 22 December 2016. However, the total number and the grades remained the same after a year (in 2017) because the vacant seats were filled by taking new admission to lower classes and natural promotion to the upper.

The data reflect the total number of students at the Gurukul studying from grades one to six in 2016. The teenagers were found deprived of the study of the Veda

and Sanskrit for four days. The girls spent 12 to 16 days in a dark, secret room during their first menstruation (menarche). Generally, women are considered untouchable for three to five days minimum during their monthly period.

The number of teachers was five females out of 10 at the Gurukul. All teachers worked only during day time except the principal and the warden (her mother/*Āma*). The Sanskrit class was stopped for at least three days if the principal followed the practice during her menstruation, for she was a teacher of Sanskrit. Sanskrit is not the Veda but a language. So, the name of her subject was “Sanskrit Bhaṣa” (Sanskrit language). Since the teacher was a female, she had to stay separate, and it was customary to stop the language class.

On the one hand, the Gurukul nullified caste discrimination and embraced the principle of inclusion. As a result, Dalit, Janajāti, *Kṣetrī*, and Brāhman girl students could join the Gurukul and study together. But, on the other hand, they stopped the classes during the teachers’ and students’ menstruation which was no less than the practice of untouchability. In my relatives’ homes, I observed the practice of isolation and untouchability taken as a regular thing. Also, when I recall the early part of my life in the rural home, the metaphoric approach reflects a paradigmatic notion of *Trisūl*. The practitioners thought, and still believe, that there is *Śul* (suffering) if they violate the tradition of menstrual isolation.

For my female family members, the menstruation period was their isolation time from male members. My mother used to sit in a separate room or on an individual mattress while on her period. The sisters were kept at a secret place for two weeks while facing the first period (menarche). Later, my elder brother married, and the sister-in-law came to my home, and she, too, faced the same situation. In such periods, the female members performed more outside household chores. They performed very few indoor tasks.

Even after my shift to Kathmandu, I see menstruation strictly as a taboo, even in educated, modern, and nuclear families. The husband cooks the food during the period, and the wife remains away from the kitchen. However, in recent days, in some educated families where women are aware that it is only a biological process, they stay far only from religious performance and places. They do not follow the “taboo” so strictly. They think going to the temple and the location of worship is an act of sin. But they are not strict about going to the kitchen and doing the cooking.

Metaphor of Trees

The metaphor I heard at the KGG from the old lady (Āma) points out that males and females as two separate entities for different duties citing the example of two types of trees: '*Cilāune*'⁸¹ and *Katus*⁸². *Cilāune* (*Schima wallichii*) and *Katus* (Chestnut) are ever-green general trees in Nepal and the neighboring countries. The scientific name of the forest of *Cilāune* and *Katus* is Schima-Castanopsis Forest. The lady used the metaphor of the trees as men and women. The primary use of the tree product is for firewood. *Katus* is unreliable for furniture, but *Cilāune* is used for furniture without other best wood. *Katus* leaves are used as alternative grass in winter and as material for roofing during low conditions of farmhouses. Also, the leaves are used as a bed for cattle. In terms of fruits, the *Katus* tree produces nuts that are consumed in the *Tihar* festival generally. But *Cilāune* fruit-product (seed) is not edible.

Figure 21

Cilāune (Schima Wallichii) and Katus (Chestnut) Trees Respectively



Photo taken by the researcher in Chisākhola jungle in 2023

There are different scientific elements in both trees. The bark of *Cilāune* is traditionally used as a healing herb for antipyretic, antiseptic, anthelmintic, and wound. It has potent free radical scavenging properties indicating its importance in food supplements as a rich source of active flavonoid and phenolic compounds in

⁸¹ चिलाउने रुख

⁸² कटुस रुख

ethyl acetate fraction, which is responsible for its free radical scavenging as antioxidant activity (Das et al., 2012).

Another research has identified some potential endophytic *Streptomyces* species having antagonistic activity against multiple fungal phytopathogens that could be used as an effective biocontrol agent against pathogenic fungi (Passari et al., 2016). The extracted element of the *Cilāune* tree can be used for fungi control in other plants like vegetables. Similarly, Lalminghlui and Jagetia (2017) found an anticancer agent in the *Cilāune* tree. They pointed out the need for further studies to ascertain its potential as an anticancer agent in different tumor models and understand its mechanism of action.

On the other hand, *Katus* has a high content of polymeric carbohydrates, an acceptable content of lipids, and an adequate amount of minerals. This is better than other nuts regarding balanced nutrition (Korel & Balaban, 2009). The metaphor used by the old lady claims that men and women are not the same by their nature. *Katus* and *Cilāune* grow and stay in the same jungle, but the works and elements differ. In the same way, men and women remain in the same society and family, but their roles and responsibilities vary. They are not the same; she expresses this through the metaphor.

According to *Triśūl* paradigm, there is *sukha* as well as *dukkha*. Menstruated females were separated from daily teaching, learning, and doing household chores, which have different aspects. There is a *Ādhyātmika* aspect of religion and a *Ādhibhautik* part of physical separation as *Cilāune* and *Katus* and *Ādhidaivika* aspect. It is difficult to know who exactly made this rule and from when?

Dharmaśāstra, Purity, and Pollution

From a theoretical standpoint, I find it fitting to draw a connection between this section and the work of Douglas (1969), who had a significant influence on Emile Durkheim. Douglas provided interpretations of purity and pollution concepts across various cultures, whereas Durkheim (1995) focused on these concepts in relation to sacred individuals and objects deemed pure in common rituals, as well as the existence of evil and impure forces that disrupt order, lead to illness, and provoke sacrilege. Douglas's work is intricately linked to Durkheim's "elementary forms of religious life." Her attempt was to interpret the notions of purity and pollution with a focus on spatial and temporal dimensions. In analyzing her data, she noted that

"contact with menstrual blood is dangerous to a man, especially to a warrior, hence elaborate restrictions on cooking for a man during menstruation" (p. 177)

We can find empirical interpretation in Vedic *Dharmaśāstra*. Dhakal (2015) interpreted the Sanskrit verses in Nepali regarding cautions for menstruating women and men. The poetry by Dhanwantari, who is the God of AyurVeda, has issued health-based rules and predictions for menstrual women:

Menstruating women should follow celibacy, not sleep in the daytime, not produce tears from their eyes, neither exercise heavily nor laugh at high volumes, not listen to the deafening sound, not be in pollution from day one to day third and remain protected. Moreover, if sexual intercourse is done on the first day of menstruation, it will degrade the man's longevity. The embryo will die earlier than delivery if the woman becomes pregnant on the day first. If that happens on the second day, the newborn will die in the delivery room within days. Pregnancy on the third day of menstruation will cause the birth of a baby without entire organs so that the baby will have a short life span. However, pregnancy on the fourth night will give birth to a full organ baby and live long (Dhakal, 2015, pp. 628-629).

Since being the God of AyurVeda, Dhanwantari's advice suggests total rest and three-day isolation for a menstrual woman. The recommendation indicates health consequences as well as the fate of future generations if the woman faces pregnancy. Similarly, Dhanwantari suggests men:

Insemination to a menstruated woman is meaningless as any object thrown to the force of the river which is going to banks will return to the banks itself. That can reach the mainstream. Thus, females relaxing with due process during the three days should not be in intercourse. (Dhakal, 2015, p. 629)

There was no menstruation biologically during *Satya Yuga*, according to mythology. "It is surprising that not mentioning even in a source or in a mantra or concerned *Sūkta* on female's menstruation and healthy symptom of three-day 'isolation' (Para sarne⁸³) from 10 to 40 years old in great and first scripture of the world, *R̥gveda* (Dixit, 2013, p. 38)". Creator Brahma had created all things mentally as

⁸³पर सने

‘mānasprajā’ (mental people). The laws relating to menstruation were designed from *Tretā Yuga*. Dhakal (2015) states in verse on Narayaṇa in Brihannarayana, “Women have been facing blood-shedding each month from *Tretā Yuga*”. The code says that women do not have even mental sex during the four days, should not worship and greet the gods; they should take bath on the fourth day and should not see any male face except that of husband. She should look at the Sun if there is no husband.”

This advice was tallied in the field as well. The participants know mainly the concept of sin rather than the major issues of hygiene, health, and rest. But they know about purity in procreation according to Dharmaśāstra. Isolating self has seen and unseen results in the cosmology, *Triśūl*.

Happening of menstruation is for Apatyajān (posterity). This is the main purpose biologically. Impure blood of a month goes out during the three days of the menstrual cycle. Then can estimate the impregnation date.

Four, five, eight, or sixteen days have been taken for full purity, during which period the Atma of the newcomer is settled in the uterus. This has been taken as an unseen result of karma of the person, according to Śāstras." (Field note, August 24, 2017)

In this connection, Dhanwantari's⁸⁴ prescription is for the purity of the blood and the purity of the new posterity. The sheer posterity is for national progress and prosperity. Thus, *Purāṇa* and *Smṛtis* stress the need for purity of women during the menstrual period, that is, the three days. There are several examples applied to the unseen results of karma:

One: Traditional Newar families give food in bronze plates (kānsko thali) to the pregnant woman. They control their food habits, giving only the best foods during pregnancy. This is done for the best posterity. Two: in the Shah royal family, as we know, till king Birendra, the family had strictly followed purity measures during menstruation and pregnancy. Queen Aishwarya was used to hearing Puranic stories chanted daily by a priest from the third month of the pregnancy to the eighth or ninth month. These were all for the best future generation. The purity will save the nation from tyrannies as prescribed by *Purāṇa* and *Smṛtis*. It might take more than 50 years for the best leader or minister for the country and the people too. So far, in the results, it is not good

⁸⁴ धन्वन्तरी

to look at bleeding, and there are tools today to avoid this because women are compelled to go to the office/work. They have been managing. These are matters of pragmatism and legal equality. Another result is that fruits like mango and orange have been found low graded after the menstruated females climbed the tree. But they will begin giving the best quality fruits if you make them stop climbing over the trees and perform purification rites (Swasti Śanti) with Vedic chanting. These tests will bring results within three years. (Field note, August 24, 2017)

The field description is compatible with the advice of Dhanwantari: “Since women during menstruation are impure, and especially so at the first appearance of the menses, they are rigorously sequestered at that time and men must have no contact with them” (p. 413). Mead (1937) interprets it as an occupation between men and women. She did fieldwork in New Guinea and found that the men protect the women by guarding their secrets and child management during childbirth and menstruation (p. 38).

Stomach Pain, Menstrual Leave, and Celebration

In the Western world, Hippocrates, the father of medicine, first described menstruation based on reasoning interpreted similarly to that of the bloodletting of men (Coutinho, 1999). Therapeutic bloodletting was an ancient treatment system. Hippocrates interpreted menstrual blood-shedding as good for health. Medical doctor Coutinho concluded with the pioneer feminist Margaret Sanger: "No woman is completely free unless she has control over her own reproductive system." (Coutinho, p. 164)

Anthropological literature replicates interpreting the meaning of the ritual and culture and menstruation in a particular cultural system. On the other hand, other feminist and medical works were found to be motivated because the girls hated the culture. The analysis has entered the politics of menstruation in exploring menstrual management from ancient to present-day practice. Hufnagel ((2012) states the different phases of menstruation perspectives in the Western world:

Major influences impacted the culture of construction of menarche and menstruation: (1) religion was the major influence during the ancient period, (2) medicine was the major influence during the modern period, and (3) commerce was the major influence during the contemporary period. (p. 103)

Coutinho's analysis was also the result of the discrimination and hate discussed during the invention of contraceptives in 1960 to avoid the menstrual period and sanitary pads for menstrual management.

The study intends to eliminate the menstrual system biologically, but it concludes with Margaret Sanger's above quotation. Here, Hufnagel's research has focused on searching for solutions to the "girl-hating" and "girl-destroying" dominant in Western culture. Thus, menarche educational change must begin not by asking, "How can education be changed?" but by asking, "How, can culture be changed?" (p. 105).

Menstruation came to global news in July 2017 when an Indian media company offered women employees the opportunity to take the first day of their periods off. Culture Machine, which reportedly employs 75 women, is applying a new policy to be more female-friendly (Cox, 2017). The company posted a video on YouTube featuring some of its female staff talking about how they feel on the first day of their periods and has launched a petition calling on other companies across India to implement the same policy as the news item stated. The company looks result-oriented because it must feel the painful mood of females at the workplace on the first day of the menstrual period. The news does not inform about absenteeism, but it might be a cause of the leave. "It's no secret that period cramps are the worst, but over the years, women have had to show up at work and mask their pain with silly excuses," Sanghani (2017), the news has quoted the company release. According to the news, Japan, China, and Taiwan already have a menstrual leave policy. It has cited the research conducted by a professor of reproductive health at University College London and published earlier this year revealed that period pain could be as "bad as having a heart attack." (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/period-pain-can-feel-bad-heart-attack-ignored/>)

Leave and rest for menstrual women are essential, as all religious practices have been recommended. So, some of them believe in untouchability traditionally, and the Indian company urges them to leave to address the biological difficulty. Masculinity blames women's capabilities based on menstruation. For instance, during the US presidential campaign, Donald Trump blamed the famous news presenter of Fox News, Megyn Kelly. Kelly's tough question came due to her menstruation, and Trump called her: "unprofessional, talentless of having blood coming out of her

wherever" (Alexander, 2015). However, Trump won the election; nevertheless, the statement reflects the social and cultural hegemony against women.

As a male researcher, I did not immediately know the cause of hiding the girl/s in menarche from the Gurukul. I only knew about stomach aches during menstruation, as I used to see in my female family members. I remember one incident of absenteeism of a girl in grade 11 in 1999 while I was a teacher of mass communication. I searched for her in the class, but her friends informed me- it was "because of menstruation" (buyers nāayeko). Then I knew the pain. However, I never heard the phrase "girl-hating" and "girl-destroying" as found in the dominant Western culture.

Similarly, a major cause of hiding the girls is visual disturbances of vomiting, headache, and nausea (Coutinho, 1999, p. 84). After learning this, I asked my friend about her sisters. He informed me that he was well aware that his sisters showed pain symptoms before the day of the monthly period. Generally, they showed irritation in unnecessary issues too. But I did not realize it from my sisters, mother, and sister-in-law.

The Western medical-oriented literature and the field note based on Dhanwantari's advice were similar in that the first menstruation was a symptom of eligibility to give birth to a child. As a result, the parents and stakeholders were very aware and even cautious. Female members residing at the Gurukul did not tell the mystery of the girls' absenteeism easily though that might not be the first time for some. Moreover, the dropout/back of girls also might be connected to menarche. One girl from the Gorkha district was taken home by guardians abruptly, and I learned that the parent took her after the biological changes. The other two girls also dropped out from the Gurukul in 2015 and 2016. They were also about to reach the age of menarche. Parents were worried for daughters more than for sons, as was the dominant Western culture doing "girl-hating" and "girl-destroying," as Hufnagel stated. But such 'hating' and 'destroying' concepts have not been seen in Nepali society for their closeness and secrecy.

Juxtaposed, various tribal families celebrate girls' menarche as an occasion. Two contemporary American Indian tribes celebrate their daughters' first menstrual event at their homes for four days and five nights as a boost factor for women (Hufnagel, 2012). The ceremony is conducted in the belief that it will make the daughters strong, generous, kind, and proud so that they will bring forth a strong

warrior child that will protect the people, as cited in Farrer (1994). Among the tribes of central Australia, Arunta's ceremony of sacred design of paintings is forbidden for children and women (Durkheim, 1995). Some things must never be said before women and the uninitiated (p. 288). Several communities there celebrate it probably as pure fighting against the impure.

Worshipping, Farming, and Cooking

Menstruation is an obstacle to ritual work. Menstruated women themselves hesitate to be involved in worship and regular prayer. This costume is only for Brāhman, Kshetry, and Thakuri families but not for ethnic families, including Nepal's Newars (Khulimuli, 2017). There is only one hesitation among the Newar women. They only do not go to deities for praying and worship during the four days of menstruation. The household chores, including cooking and baking, are done freely. Brāhman, *Kṣetrīya*, and Thakuri females cannot go to the kitchen or worship rooms during the days. This untouchability has remained in Kathmandu's homes and rented rooms, as Khulimuli states. However, she has argued about it in her Newar community, where girls, before menstruation, are isolated for 12 days, interpreted as a sex education period in the absence of males. But the isolation is not found after they start menstruation. The first time menstruates were absent in the entire classes for more than two weeks, although they were kept at the same house where the Gurukul was running.

I talked with a female anthropologist from the West at the sideline of 'the second annual Nepal anthropology conference in 2016 (December 16-18) on the issue of menstruation and worship by Gurukul girls. She linked it to the status of women in Christianity and said that it was religious discrimination against women. In the meantime, she suggested that the girls could worship except for the '5 days' ritually.

Douglas (1969) has analyzed contagion and sacredness in the Hindu Brāhman community, the Old Testament of Christianity, and primitive cultures while exploring the pollution concept of menstruation. Neither Hindu nor other societies held menstruation as the concept of pollution cognitively, as was observed by anthropologist Margaret Mead's daughter Mary Catherine Bateson who also became an anthropologist. She also heard menstruation called "the curse" from the mouth of her stepmother (Batson, 1984, p. 91).

Concepts of purity and pollution have been connected with culture and ritual. The biological strength of women has been associated with procreation and exclusion from ritualistic duties, generating status debates.

Menarche and menstruation are biological inevitabilities for procreation, and science and the market have developed sanitary pads for use during menstruation and contraceptives for stopping birth. Now, this is only an issue of hygienic management. However, it has been identified as taboo from the developed West to the aesthetic East because it connects with religion, culture, and rituals, creating social effects. Sala (2014, p. 55) looks at anthropological analysis by anthropologists like Victor Turner and the structuralists Levi Strauss and Emile Durkheim, who mostly looked at the social effects of ritual and defined them accordingly as transformational events for the community and individuals in the community.

Rituals and spirituality have been controlling even the Gurukul founder with the notion of untouchability as she follows three-day untouchability during her monthly period. She is following the rule even though she has been destroying the caste-based untouchability making her Gurukul inclusive. The Paradox has been happening in the name of spirituality. I will be analyzing Paradoxes in the next chapter.

In several communities, women undergoing menstruation typically avoid touching fruit trees and vegetables. The founder of the Gurukul has heard anecdotes about the potential effects of the smell of menstrual blood on plants, although these accounts are not substantiated. Personally, as I learned about the scent in the field, I reflected on my own encounters with it. I distinctly remember a different aroma in the room, on the bed, and on clothes when my mother was menstruating. I've also noticed a similar scent on my wife and other women. I've been informed that women often use perfume to mask or minimize the odor. Mālatī is also well-informed about the effect of the smell on plants.

Yes, I studied the literature on the scientific effects of menstrual blood but 'further study is required' to confirm the statement. I have been following the concept of isolation for three days though my daughters do not. 'Further study required' might bring some information (Mālatī, Fieldnote, July 11, 2017).

Thus, the founder principal followed the concept of pollution during menstruation. Dhanwantari and the Dharmaśāstras do not tell the cause and effect of the menstrual period but only suggest isolation. However, Kirkes (1869, p. 725)

writes in his Handbook of Physiology that sexual desire manifests itself in the human female to a greater degree during menstruation. Parents were worried about saving their daughters from unwanted and unauthorized unions with males. They control the girls, and this affects their education. Likewise, an element of science in the field notes the effects on menstruated women. Blood becomes spontaneously acidic after being removed from the body, owing to converting its sugar to lactic acid (p. 66). Acid affects several plants and trees. This way, the unmanaged menstrual blood hampers. Clemensson-Lindel (1995) found that acid deposition produces chemical reactions, even from air pollution to the roots of trees.

I visited vegetable fields in Bhaktapur, searching for how the menstrual smell affected crops. Farmers informed that women voluntarily do not enter the vegetable fields, thinking that the menstruation blood smell disturbed the normal growth of the vegetable crops. The women farmers generally do not spend money on sanitary pads because they were rather costly.

Physical, Social, and Psychological Restrictions

Menstruation practices and hygiene: A study on Nepali adolescent girls of Assam, Indi (Baruwa, 2021) reports similar conditions in Nepali communities in India. Among the Hindu Nepalis and other religious communities, females restrict themselves from doing regular activities. "...they do not attend any religious practices and marriage ceremony, do not play, do not do any household chores, sleep separately, in fact, they are not in their bed, sometimes they sleep on the floor, and they do not attend school." There are "many more restrictions." "Entering the kitchen, eating a certain food, visiting places of worship, touching trees and plants" are restricted (Baruwa, 2021). According to her, "girls usually sleep separately and sit separately from household members during menstruation" among the Nepali population in Guwahati, Assam, India. "In Assam, whether Hindus, Muslims or Christians, they observe rituals related to menstruation which are physical, social or psychological".

The three terminologies- "Physical," "Social," and "psychological" are within a set of suffering. Such sufferings can be seen or felt anywhere as regards menstruation. The level of suffering may vary according to the situation of modernity and the capitalist market. In Baruwa's observation, "the ritual related to menstruation in Nepali society has significance according to their religion, caste, and ethnicity. (Baruwa, 2021). This variation is seen in Nepali societies according to the three

categories of religion, caste, and ethnicity. Females from Brāhman-*Kṣetrī* and ethnic groups have had slightly different practices. However, all have the same psychological perceptions of gods, trees, and plants. For example, Newar females do not follow the same restrictions in performing household chores as Brāhman females. But the former females restrict themselves to working on the farm during the four days of menstruation.

Menarche, Dropout, and Closure

The parents caused their daughter's drop out from KGG, making the age of menstruation an excuse. The school teachers and the management committee expressed that the dropout was a huge challenge for the sustainability of the Gurukul. The management had invested everything required for the Gurukul. The girls had all facilities free of cost, from tuition fees to meals. Though they were from the countryside, they were selected through the district education office based on merit. Dance, music, arts, and yoga were additional skill-oriented activities the girls learned there. The older girls had already started earning money from selling their artwork. The art teacher facilitated the process. The girls were taught from Veda to science. But as they grew in age, they faced menarche rather in an unnatural way.

Physical developments were linked with menarche in the girls and raised parents' and relatives' concerns. The parents were not so concerned before the menarche. The factor of menarche was so grave for parents that they even decided to drop out their daughters from KGG and bring them back home. The Gurukul managers repeatedly feared that the dropout condition would likely bring all their investments to sand. The girls' dropout disconnected the Gurukul education system. They were much worried about the dropout of a senior girl from Gorkha. Such dropouts were taken as a major challenge of the Gurukul. In the meantime, the founder and management committee decided to stop KGG and hand it over to an orphanage—Chitwan Girls' Āśram (CGA), which is running in Chitwan. CGA had been running for orphan girls sent to a general government school in the daytime and taught yoga and some ordinary chanting. But there was no more Veda chanting and Sanskrit-oriented education.

KGG was operated through donations from the Nepal government and individuals to document the story. Founder Mālatī and her team worked hard to generate the resources. As a result, the girls benefitted from quality food and education. The Gurukul had recruited qualified teachers. Associate professor of Nepal

Sanskrit University taught the Veda to the younger girls for the last six years. But what was the result? The girls' families abruptly dropped them out. As a result, I could not find the Gurukul when I reached there on the third of April 2017. One of the major causes of the closure of the Gurukul was the dropout, and the cause of the dropout was mainly the growing age of the girls leading to menstruation.

Nonetheless, there were other reasons as well behind the closure. The truth is that no Gurukul in Nepal teaches Veda to girls as conceived by KGG. Mālatī, the campaigner for the feminization of Veda education, is forced to drop her passion since childhood, and her UNIFEM report's recommendation is now back in the dusty drawer.

Separation, Pancagavya, and Early Marriage

I have some life experiences with menstruation. I was socialized into it from my childhood as untouchable (*nachhnehune*), *Para sarne* (being isolated), *rajaswalahune* (menstruated), and *mahinawar hune* (monthly period). My mother and six sisters kept themselves from daily/normal activities. If I—a child after *Upanayana* at six—touched them, I had to receive a sprinkle of water over my body. The women were prohibited from going to their beds or kitchen and performing other activities inside the house. If more than one female member menstruated, I was asked to cook food. After four days of their menstrual period, the females consumed a mixture of five products of a cow, i.e., *Pancagavya*. However, during the four days, they could go to the field and work on everything except touching others. They could feed animals as well.

Now I observe urban life following the rule moderately. All my relatives follow the rules till today. If they suspect, they exclude the relative from some activities and company. I have some experiences and stories. My relatives from my hometown visited me at my Kathmandu residence. Suddenly, they reduced the frequency of visiting and staying in as guests. They used to tell me that they were busy and could not come for a night's stay. Once I discovered the reason behind it and was shocked to hear it. There were doubts among relatives regarding whether my wife adhered to menstrual untouchability, as they were particularly concerned about purity and its perceived risks. This sensitivity to purity aligns with Douglas's (1966) interpretation of menstrual blood and the broader concept of sacrificed blood and saliva within and outside the body. The prevailing understanding involves a robust concept of "pollution and taboo," in accordance with Douglas's explanations. My

relatives took menstruation as polluting blood. To my memory, my sixth and last elder daughter menstruated for the first time when she was sent to another sister's house for several days. I saw her after taking a bath. That was a period of pain for the menstruated member and their parents, especially the female parent. There was a strong concept of pollution that she must marry before menstruation.

A group of women had come to my home while I had just finished my SLC examination. They proposed to my parents that they intended to marry their granddaughter to me. They wanted to consume holy water from the girl's feet following the wedding ritual⁸⁵. The early marriage of the girl had a notion of liberation. Handing the "pure" girl to an appropriate boy is *dharma* and salvation. The duty brings them to heaven, according to their conviction. My parents rejected the proposal saying that I was such a small boy. My brother's wedding was performed at 21. Such child marriage has disappeared in urban areas in recent decades. However, several rural areas have the same stories even today. Families felt the responsibility of managing menstruation for their daughters, prompting them to consider the tradition of marrying off the girl and sending her to her son-in-law's home. Dropout of KGG might be for early marriage after menarche.

Puranic Story, Period Calculation, and Ancestral Worship

Śul or *Dukha* was and is for the female who could not get the chance to learn Veda. Menstruation was a major cause. There were all three types of *Śul* or suffering. However, there is still happiness (*Sukha*) as well as suffering. The girls were happy because they got a chance to learn Veda in Gurukul. That was *Sukha*. Restriction of Veda learning during the four days of the menstrual period is a major *Dukha*. This restriction is not limited to school life; it affects professional and academic life. According to the practice, they cannot perform mantra chanting and ritual work during those four days while they return to society. They cannot go to clients' homes for ritual duty if they become priests.

Yamuna is a female storyteller in Nawalparāsī district. She is popular for Puranic storytelling. She is happy because she has been conducting the task. But almost all such functions have been running for fundraising for different institutions and philanthropic activities. She informed me that she visited a few homes for the personal goal of the ritual (Saptah, a seven-day storytelling program). She frankly

⁸⁵ Khutta ko jal khane (खुट्टाको जल खाने)

cleared that she did not prefer to run ancestral rescue (*Pitr Udhar*) rituals organized at a personal level. She thinks that females do not perform this.

Similarly, she assigns Sanskrit verse chanting tasks to the second Guru of the program, called *Upavachak*. In addition to this, she does not go to functions during her menstrual periods. “I calculate the period and accept the request of storytelling,” she said. She also has many *Sukha* and *Dukha* associated with her work. Many people are happy since a lady is a storyteller (*Katha Vāchak*); others are unhappy and claim that a female has no Right to perform ritual works. One of the major challenges is again the menstruation for the women. They believe that ancestors and deities become unhappy if menstrual women go to the temple and perform worship-related jobs. This is similar to Baruwa’s study (2021) in the Assamese society of India. Many societies have such restrictions, and they are isolated from ritual works. There is a combination of *Dukha* and *Sukha*. Menstruation is the main obstacle to teaching, learning, and practicing Vedic education by females as equal to males.

Rishi Panchami, an annual festival, is recognized as a day for the expiation of sins through bathing, fasting, and venerating the seven ancient sages. This ritual is believed to remove the curse associated with normal lifestyle practices during menstrual periods. Kaundinyāyan (2023) elaborates on the “Rishipanchami Vrata and Menstruation Vrata,” emphasizing the significance of fasting and worship. As per references from *Dharmaśāstra*, menstruation is undeniably a process of bodily purification. Several rules are also prescribed for this four-day period, seemingly intended for relaxation and self-care. A verse exists that advocates for the separation of husband and wife for three nights during this time.

The primary origin of menstrual isolation can be traced back to a story from the *Taittirīya Samhita* under Krishna YajurVeda. Kaundinyāyan (2023) translated this story from Sanskrit to Nepali. The narrative recounts how Indra, the King of Heaven, killed Vishwarupa, a three-headed being and son of Tvastaa. This act resulted in Indra being cursed with *Brahmahatya* (the killing of a *Brāhman*). To alleviate this curse, Indra divided it into thirds and distributed it among the earth, trees, and women, each accepting their portion in exchange for a blessing from Indra. This story is believed to explain the onset of menstruation in women and their subsequent isolation for three days (<https://rb.gy/w8y5h>).

In the postmodern era, women are questioning this tradition, asking why they should bear the penalty for *IndRishi Panchami*, an annual festival, is recognized as a

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In the postmodern era, women are questioning this tradition, asking why they should bear the penalty for Indra’s *Brahmahatya*. They argue that this is unjust. However, Joseph (2020) contends that isolation and menstrual leave are based on ancient science, asserting that femininity is more important than feminization or feminism.

***Triśūl* in Development: UN Goals, Dignity Debate, and Advocacy**

Radha Paudel, a public health nurse, has worked for “dignified menstruation” from Nepal. She advocates in different forums organized in various parts of the world. She has struggled for a decade on the issue. In recent years, the government of Nepal (ministry of women, social welfare and senior citizens) and Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM) jointly “urge everyone to mark dignified menstruation day on December 8 under the slogan “Menstrual Talk, Dignity First” (Paudel, 2077). Paudel has portrayed menstrual practices in different countries at different times. Her conclusion is menstrual stigma, taboos, and restrictions are based on patriarchal ideas. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN have not mentioned menstruation.

Paudel has been raising this issue in different forums. Menstrual discrimination violates human Rights and has not been incorporated into development agendas. She analyzed: People have been silent about menstruation or it has been assumed that everything is fine while discussing the 17 goals and 169 targets (Paudel, 2077 V.S.). She is searching for dignity throughout her life to remove different sufferings though she does not mention *Ādhyātmika*, *Ādhidaivika*, and *Ādhibhautik Śuls*. She has been campaigning to establish “dignified menstruation” as a global development agenda.

There are restrictions and discriminations which have been taken as sufferings. However, propagators and followers of the practice say men and women are different, so we are following it as tradition and Dharma; and social activists claim that such practices are taboos against girls and women. These two conflicting convictions create conflict and violence sometimes in different religious activities. India is an example of the battlefield and a place of discourse in the recent decade.

Femininity, Subtle Body, and Gross Body

Modern health professionals generally take menstrual exclusion and discrimination as a business only. They take it as a patriarchal idea. The Supreme Court of India issued a similar "Right to equality" order to permit all-age women in the temple of Sabarimala, Kerala. The public opposed the verdict, but some women entered the temple with the help of the police force. As a result, violence occurred, and it raised debates as well. Some researchers published their works on menstruation and deities' issues.

Among them, a Hindu scholar trained as a civil engineer, Nithin Sridhar, explored different aspects of restrictions on women from 10 to 50 entering the Sabarimala temple of lord Ayyappa. Sridhar has collected women's arguments about why menstrual women are treated differently in religious and spiritual activities.

Similarly, Catholic background scholar Sinu Joseph has advocated for differentials between men and women and restrictions in certain spiritual activities. Joseph has worked as women's health and menstrual health educator for over a decade. She compares modern health science to Ayurvedic tradition, Tantra, Vastu, and Śāstras, including *Shad Darśana* (six philosophical schools). Both books-'The science behind restrictions: Women and Sabarimala' (2019) and 'Rtu Vidyā: Ancient Science behind Menstrual Practices' (2020)-advocate for restrictions based on

Ayurvedic science and Tantra. The second book, 'Ṛtu Vidyā, ' denotes knowledge of menstruation.

Joseph differentiates modern science from Ayurvedic science in analyzing the human body. According to her, Allopathic science observes the human body as a "gross physical form" that is "Sthula Sharira." In contrast, Ayurvedic science treats it as a "subtle body (Sūkṣma-śarīra)" in addition to "Sthula Sharira." The illustration by Joseph (2019) visualizes *Sūkṣma-śarīra*. In this knowledge system, the human body runs according to *Cakras*, *Nāḍīs*, *Doṣas* (*kapha*, *pitta*, *bāta*), and *Tantra Śāstra*. Joseph claims that the Human body has seven major Cakras (wheels that run the person) - *Muladhāra*, *Swadhisthāna*, *Manipura*, *Anāhata*, *Vishuddhi*, *Ājñā*, and *Sahasrāra*. These are divine energies.

She describes six Cakras and Shat Cakra temples connected to Sabarimala (Ayyappa) temple. Lord Ayyappa is the sixth Cakra (Ājñā Cakra) linked temple. Joseph claims the temples are made according to the "Vastu Purusha Mandala" of Tantra Śāstra. The Vastu is an architectural science. Ājñā Cakra triggers a pituitary gland that produces the testosterone hormone. She argued that the reproductive age group women have to get a large amount of testosterone hormone that ovaries cannot convert, affecting gynaecological health. The purpose of following this menstrual order is the science of spirituality and protection of women's reproductive health, she explained.

She pointed out the Bhagavaty temple of Kerala, where Devī menstruates and pays homage to the goddess, resolving infertility and period problems. Joseph's conclusions (Joseph, 2020) are: 1. Human body has divine power through Chakra, Nāḍī, and other aspects of AyurVeda and Veda. 2. Temple structures are made according to Tantra and vāstu, linked to the human body. 3. Temples are made for different purposes with different people. 4. Menstruated women are volatile and should follow traditional rules. Finally, she claims that society should acknowledge the biological difference in menstrual health. The health is different than man physically, mentally, and biologically during the period. She demands menstrual leave for women for their "overall mental and physical wellbeing". Joseph is critical of the Western Right-based approach to gender equality.

Similarly, Sridhar (2019) contextualizes the Sabarimala temple entry dispute and advocates for the tradition of restriction to the 10 to 50 age group females. His book has two themes of special focus: impurity and Sacrality. While they are often

understood as being opposed to each other, the book examines how they are treated as two sides of the same coin regarding menstruation. This is especially true in Indic and pre-Christian polytheistic traditions like Greco-Roman, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian. Impurity and Sacrality complement each other to form a comprehensive worldview in these cultures.

The book also examines how the understanding of impurity in Abrahamic religions differs from those of polytheistic cultures. As part of examining the Sacrality attached to menstruation, a special focus has also been given to the deities of menstruation in polytheistic cultures and what AyurVeda and Yoga say about this essential function in a woman's physiology. Sridhar has taken help from Madhu Kishwar, a professor and activist, to inform people why women apply different lifestyles during the monthly cycle. She prescribes "some practices that modern women can observe during their monthly periods." According to the prescription, menstrual women think of food, sex, sleep, self-adorning, physical work, mental stress, and religious activity for better physical and mental health (Sridhar, 2019).

The substantiation given by Joseph and Sridhar and their arguments is similar to what I found during my fieldwork. The girls and the female teacher were following the same practice. Their warden, like working *āma*, thus, had told them that '*Cilāune*' and '*Katus*' trees are not the same but different. I inquired of my closest female informant and got an answer that the girls and women become irritated as "pre-menstrual disorder" (Paudel, 2077 V.S.), and it might start days before the flow starts. During the flow, she feels the heat in her body like a fever and pain in the genital organ like a wound. However, as she informed me, modern girls and women suppress such pains by consuming painkiller pills and Paracetamol for regular work. She also informed me that some women suppress and stop the monthly taking of medicines, which hampers gynecological health.

Power Theory, Own Body, and Śakti Peetha

Devīs' temples are '*Śakti peetha*'. They have different powers. In Assam of India, Kamarupa Kāmākhyā Devī is known as a menstrual goddess. Tantra power practitioners visit the temple first for their perfection. I also visited the temple in 2020. Priests are male. A priest provided me with a tiny piece of red cloth. The cloth is red because of the menstruation of the goddess Kāmākhyā Devī⁸⁶. Devotees go to

⁸⁶ कामाक्षा देवी

celebrate Ambubachi mela (the annual menstrual cycle celebration of goddess Kāmākhyā Devī) at temple premises. However, the doors of the temple are closed for four days. White clothes become red because of divine menstruation. So, devotees eagerly wait for a piece of cloth. I went there in March and received the said piece of cloth, and it is a good collection, an indicator of the family fortune.

Urban (2010) analyzed the Tantra tradition and its scriptures compared with the power theory of Foucault. Urban disagreed with Foucault's perception of the future of philosophies and went beyond European imperialism or the meeting of European and non-European ideas. Reviewing Tantrik literature and observing the activities at Kāmākhyā temple worship, Urban conforms those devotees, including Kings, to general people who come to the temple and receive bliss from the goddess to fulfill their desires. However, Urban (2010) concludes, "As such, we have much to learn from Tantric traditions in which the ultimate reality is located not in some transcendent another world, but rather, as the Yogini Tantra put it, "within the body." Our body has the power, and menstrual restrictions practiced in Sanātana culture are under Tantra. Sinu Joseph (2020)'s "Ṛtu Vidyā"⁸⁷ not only has logic behind not visiting spaces like Sabarimala temple that can harm gynecological health. She has logic for not cooking food and not touching Tulasi plants during the periods. Likewise, during this period, women need to consume antioxidant foods. My research participants found engaging with such Sanātana ideas, juxtaposed with the idea of the "dignified menstruation" campaign by Radha Paudel. She advocates for "...dignified menstruation is the state where menstrual folks can do all activities without any form of interruption just like a flying bird in spring" (Paudel, 2077 V.S., p. XIII).

All debates have issues of power. Who is powerful? Tradition? AyurVeda? Change? Modernity? Economic productivity? Finally, this is the issue of the body, too, our own body. Power is omnipresent and comes from everywhere, according to Foucault. Urban (2010) concluded that power is "within the body." The menstrual body has power, which is revitalized during the three days of menstruation. Natural menstruation is power because the menstruated are the creator of procreation.

Similarly, they become stronger by balancing the menstrual cycle, which also maintains a hormonal balance. Such balance boosts mental health, which makes them

⁸⁷ ऋतुविद्या

successful. Balancing all these phenomena and protecting the body's health for Vedic education is challenging and rare in Sanātana society.

Jñāna Śakti, Kriyā Śakti and Ichhā Śakti

Triśūl of three types of *Dukhas*—seen, seen and unseen, and unseen—are discussed above. The knowledge of *Triśūl* is "A Trident of wisdom" to Abhinava Gupta. His work *Parātrimśikāvivarana*⁸⁸ - (consisting of 30 stanzas) is translated by Singh (1989). This trident has comparatively different meanings from the one mentioned above- *Triśūl*. This is also *Triśūl*, but it analyzes success and liberation, powers that remain within a person's body. The three powers are Jñānā Śakti (knowledge power), Kriyā Śakti (actions power), and Ichhā Śakti (desire power). These are for Mokṣa or the state of Shivoham⁸⁹. Here, in the context of menstrual obstruction in the learning processes of Gurukul girls, has this *Triśūl* idea. Some girls have succeeded in the feminization of Vedic education. Desireful actions give success. The girls in Chitwan have started priesthood.

Female Priesthood, Five-day leave, and Femininity

The senior girls have completed grade 12. Among them, one has been performing rituals for clients in Chitwan. She was taken to Chitwan because KGG merged with Chitwan girls Gurukul. Another girl is studying at Nepal Sanskrit University high school in Dang. The third one has completed grade 12 at Kathmandu Sanskrit high school. Chitwan and surrounding areas are favorable for girl priests. The first one and other junior girl priests perform priesthood but do not go during the five days of the monthly menstrual cycle. Though isolated from the classroom during menstrual periods of four days monthly, some of the girls have succeeded in becoming priests.

They have neither the idea of "dignified menstruation" nor the Ayurvedic idea of Chakra, Nādi, and "subtle body." They have maintained a tradition of menstrual isolation and made progress in learning and practicing Vedic rituals according to Neo-Sanskritization. People are observing and experiencing the women's priesthood. Thus, the girls have been trying to apply the paradigm of *Triśūl* in the field.

⁸⁸ परात्रिंशिकाविवरण

⁸⁹ शिवोऽहम्

The critical insights collected in the field illustrate the goal of preservation of Vedic education. That is a state of nondualism or wholism. However, trinary positions of confusion, femininity, and feminization are presented at the same time. The KGG actors are challenging the tradition of mantra chanting by males only. However, they are unclear on touchability and untouchability during the menstrual period. The actors were found isolated from the classroom during the periods. The radical effort of feminization is tied to femininity (Joseph). In other words, males and females cannot perform equally, and ladies should take menstrual rest during the bleeding periods. The mother of the Head Teacher (HT) guided all using different metaphors of trees of Katus and Chilaune. The HT not only isolates her but also brings away her students. The

Stomach pain and effects on the plants are the main effects of the period, as women answered me. This is allied with Joseph's femininity. Isolating oneself from worshipping, farming, and cooking is the traditional idea of femininity. Issues of the subtle and gross body are also valued but vary according to the person/s. Women have full Rights over their bodies and property. They can manage according to their comfort. The Puranic storytellers met in different parts of Nepal and said they calculated and managed the five days before taking clients' assignments. Postmodern ritual clients do not ask about the status of the period, but they want female priests for priestly works to be done. Continuity of procreation is not a priority in this "techno-financial globalization" (Joseph, 2020, p. 20), and Uprety (2021) elaborates it as the "penetration of capitalism" in neo-liberalism. The confrontation of science, religion, and finance will be confronting forever. As I saw in the field, a group of ritual clients will be searching for female priests without asking about the menstrual situation. Sanitary pads, contraceptives, and tricks will be helpful for the Neo-Sanskritized priests and their clients. The multiple realities will remain forever.

Critically speaking, the metaphor of Chilaune and Katus used by the honorary warden of KGG is not created by herself, but she borrowed from her father. Even that was not from her mother, too. There is patriarchy and feudalism, too. In other words, the root of the knowledge and the rule is patriarchy, and a question arises in the ethnographic field: Who determines and interprets for whom? KGG's effort is shifting to capitalism from feudalism, but the menstrual isolative practice is a barrier to the liberal exercise of the learners.

The Essence of the Chapter

Menstrual girls are isolated from the classroom for four days in the Gurukul. This is *Sanātana* practice. Despite the isolation, the chanting and learning achievement have not been affected. Conventional anthropologists take this as the notion of ‘purity and pollution’. However, it has two different ideas. Modern activists are campaigning for “dignified menstruation” as a global agenda so that menstrual girls and women can perform works as do “flying birds in spring.” The second idea counters that *Sanātana* menstrual practice is not taboo and is required for better gynecological health. Beyond these two, the girls have been fulfilling the goal of *Trisūl* by maintaining femininity (strive).

CHAPTER VII

ON GAPS

This chapter is an anthology of reflections based on the data from chapters- chapter four, five, and six. I found some contradictions and gaps in feminizing the Vedic education in my research site. The chapter tries to address the sub-research question number three's second part —"In what way is menstruation a factor affecting teaching and learning processes as well as gender equality and paradoxes or gaps and challenges under the Gurukul education in Nepal?" In other words, this chapter is a discussion about preaching and practicing of feminization of education by its campaigners and concerned parties.

Gaps in Founders' Heart, Mind, and Body

Mālatī's heart, mind, and body were for the girls' Gurukul campaign. The rest of the others found a Trident heart, mind, and body situation. Bodily, they were showing support for Mālatī's campaign, and their minds also expressed solidarity. However, their hearts were not far from society's structural, functional state. They did not admit their kin girls to the Gurukul. This description shows the reality: *Trisūl of Sustainability: Seeking Station, Student, and Successor*.

Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul (KGG) had a shortage of girls when I arrived in 2014. Teachers and management board members searched for probable students until they handed them to Chitwan Orphanage. "Please send us the girl students if you know any. All expenses are borne by the Gurukul. So, the arrival of the girl to the Gurukul is sufficient (Lau na tapai haruko chinjanma balikaharu chhan vane pathaunu paryo, manchhe matrai āye pugchha, banki kharcha yahibata hunchha)⁹⁰" principal Rudra urged on 14th March 2016. She told me that student collection was more difficult than resource generation. Getting residential girls was difficult (*kharcha jutauna vanda vidyarthi jutauna garho. Āvasiya Vidyārthi pauna garho*)⁹¹. Food, clothes, stationery, and any other thing the students needed were all free of cost in the Gurukul.

⁹⁰ लौ न तपाइँहरूको चिनजानमा बालिकाहरू छन् भने पठाउनु पर्यो, मान्छे मात्रै आए पुग्छ । बाँकी खर्च यहींबाट हुन्छ ।

⁹¹ खर्च जुटाउनेभन्दा विद्यार्थी जुटाउन गाह्रो । आवासीय विद्यार्थी पाउन गाह्रो ।

The rule of the Gurukul had not allowed day-scholar students. "Gurukul means the student must be residential." Founder Mālatī set the rule. The reason behind this was the student's purity of mind and behavior. The founder was named 'Mālatī dijyu'⁹².

She had set the rule of not taking students only for daytime classes because the student at home can eat any food, and food affects the mind. In addition to food, the day scholar students have more attachment to home and family members than to their learning. "If this practice is not intact, the sense of Gurukul will not remain intact. So, we need residential girls. But the parents are not interested in sending their daughters residentially", the principal expressed the situation.

Time flies; it changes as does the statement of 'Mālatī dijyu' and management committee members just after a year of the Gurukul opening. There was more difficulty in collecting the girl students than in generating the fund to run the Gurukul. There were other unseen reasons that the founder and the management committee wanted to hand over the Gurukul. However, the Gurukul was running smoothly with quality standards.

I had almost completed my prolonged fieldwork on the premises. From my close observation, I was confirmed that the school was the best for my daughter. Behind the attraction to the school, I had mainly two impressions. One, the quality of the Gurukul was attractive. Girls were studying Nepali, English, Sanskrit, art, dance, Veda, yoga, and music from qualified teachers. The food was also good, and everything was free. Two, the Gurukul was searching for girls.

My daughter had recently completed her session, prompting me to transfer her to another school. I contacted Principal Rudra to discuss my decision, hoping to ensure my daughter's contentment. Earlier, she had informed me about the residential facility for girls. However, her response required further clarification as it left me perplexed. To my surprise, she conveyed that the Gurukul was relocating to Chitwan to amalgamate with a local orphanage for girls. I learned that this decision to shift and merge had been made without informing the principal and staff members, contrary to what she had previously communicated to us.

The principal, teachers, and girls were informed only a few days before leaving Chitwan. All teachers were found upset. Some teachers commented on the

⁹² मालती दिज्यू (Dijyu denotes elder sister)

decision that it was a “betrayal.” Behind such feelings, there were various reasons. Among them, almost all teachers were qualified and professional. They were already associated with reputed institutions. They were working for a pioneering cause of initiating a girls’ Gurukul in Nepal. But they were uninformed about the difficulty of running the Gurukul in the same form and the same place. In the meantime, the principal and the girls doubted whether Veda chanting would continue in the next Gurukul because here they were pioneering the cause of feminization of Veda education. They used to chant Rudrābhishek⁹³ as did the male priests. Anyway, the Gurukul had to shift to Chitwan and get merged with an orphanage Gurukul.

Merging Process and Transitional Tension

Taking children from one place to another place is challenging because of child laws. The shifting was a challenging process. So, the leadership of the two KGG and Chitwan Orphanage Gurukul (COG) prepared and signed an agreement paper. They had followed the rules of children shifting. In so doing, both leaders took a recommendation letter from the central child welfare board to send the girls from Kathmandu to the Chitwan orphanage. Following the transfer and merger, a new teaching session had to commence. Nonetheless, the education authority stipulated that school transfers or mergers should take place before mid-January each year. Consequently, the 16 girls were relocated to an orphanage, even though all 14 of them had parents, with the exception of the two orphans. All administrative processes were made, and the two organizations agreed to establish joint Gurukul from the next session of the 2018 April batch in Devghāt, Chitwan. Finally, the KGG shifted to the girls’ orphanage, and I also had to follow them there.

The merging process was assigned to the principal of a college of Nepal Sanskrit University located at Devghat, Chitwan. He was appointed as an advisor of the merged Gurukul. The team of Mālatī had provided all Rights of decisions to the advisor. I observed the transitional phase for a month in Chitwan. There was a kind of hidden stress between Āma and GuruĀma of KGG and the founder of COG. All girls from KGG were welcomed heartily in the building of COG. However, the KGG Ama and Āma were residing in a shed near the main gate of COG. The Āma taught Sanskrit Bhasha. KGG management team disappeared for that time, and the duo-females were told to wait for the advisor’s decision. Finally, the KGG founding

⁹³ रुद्राभिषेक

principal and her mother were rejected from the merged Gurukul. After two months, I met them in Kathmandu. They were rejected without any reason or any compensation. The hidden tension of the merging process could not merge the school entirely. As a result, the COG team left the home and opened a separate Gurukul for girls.

The girls were distributed between the two Gurukuls. The Veda chanting KGG-based merged Gurukul placed a greater emphasis on Sanskrit education, diverging from the focus on Veda and rituals. In contrast, the separated COG-based Gurukul retained the mantra chanting and ritual-focused pedagogy introduced by the girls from KGG. Consequently, the merging process resulted in the establishment of two distinct Gurukuls for girls in Chitwan – one focused on Sanskrit education and the other known as the mantra chanting Gurukul under COG.

Unspoken Trouble of Running the Gurukul

Shifting, merging and splitting must have the cause/s. I had to find the major cause or causes of shifting and merging the well-performing Gurukul from the national capital city out of the valley. In doing so, I had to do separate interviews with the founder and management committee members on why they decided to stop their feminization efforts of Veda education. While searching for reasons/answers, I found many contradictions and confusion among the actors and the society of Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal.

Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul could not get recognition from Kathmandu's Vedic community, the founders claimed, but they could not give a clear reason for their non-occupation. That was an implicit rejection. The logic of rejection has some reasons. It came to be known that the founders could not get support from their team members, house owners of the Gurukul, public bodies, and government agencies.

Firstly, the Gurukul had requested the Paśupati Area Development Trust (PADT), which the Government of Nepal forms. Member secretary of the PADT (executive office bearer) was also a founder trustee and monthly levy donor to KGG. KGG had requested land to shift the Gurukul from a rented house. PADT spent Rs. 13 million per year for boys Gurukul—Nepal Veda Vidyāśram on its premises. So, the KGG family hoped to get access to the PADT area because the executive office bearer was affiliated with KGG. KGG had requested gender parity in Vedic education. But that was not possible. The PADT board rejected the request. Then, KGG requested a public house in Guhyeshwari temple. KGG had invested some cash in renovating Seto

Sattal because there was some hope of getting the favor of the official of PADT. The board meeting of PADT also rejected that. Mālatī informed:

Symbol of Lord Paśupatināth is combined with Gauri and Śankar, who is half male and half female (*Ardhanārīśvara*). Thus, we had requested land near Nepal Veda Vidyāśram with a partisan wall but that was not accepted. Then, we requested one million rupees per year as they have been spending 13 million rupees on boys. That was also rejected. We wanted a building and there are several buildings in the Area. We requested for *Seto Sattal* (a white house for pilgrimage) at *Gaurighat* but that was also rejected. (Mālatī, personal communication, July 11, 2017).

Secondly, Mālatī revealed that the conflict with the house owner of the KGG was another reason for deciding to shift the Gurukul to Chitwan. “The house owner was warned to leave the house if monthly rent was not increased to Rs. 50,000 from 20,000 per month”, a member of the KGG management committee told. The permanent income for the Gurukul was mainly from the Nepal Government’s ministry of education and Hyatt Regency Luxury Hotel. They had been supporting Rs. 0.5 million per year from each, respectively.

Similarly, some merchants were contributing Rs. 120000 per year. The amount was the overhead cost for each girl studying at the Gurukul, and such donors were requested to contribute at least one girl’s cost. The total running cost was (approximately) Rs. 150000 per month for food, stationery, and salary.

Other founder members were contributing Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10000 monthly. Other general donors were also supporting cash as well as grocery, occasionally. These were coming for the name of Mālatī because she was the first female principal at girls’ college, Padma Kanyā Campus, Kathmandu, for a long time. She was the founder and chair of Hyatt Regency Hotel. Moreover, she distributed various social and cultural rewards/ awards periodically. She had another identity as a social activist. Such identities were helping her in generating resources easily.

Thirdly, there were non-financial obstructions in feminizing Veda education. Mālatī said that establishing the girls’ Gurukul to teach Veda to girls is an anti-current and ultra-anti-current process because it was not what the society wanted. She argued, “If society had wanted, there would have been one hundred Gurukuls for girls rather than just one.” However, she felt that the Gurukul created a kind of vibration. The KGG girls had replaced Nepal Veda Vidyāśram’s boys, who had been busy for

Svastivācan chanting in auspicious ceremonies organized in Kathmandu valley. Indian President Pranav Mukharjee was surprised by the mantra chanted by girls with hand gestures in Nepal while he visited Paśupatināth Temple in November 2016. The female presentation was more attractive than the conventional one. News media also were attracted by the girls' chanting performance.

In the meantime, there were opposing voices as well. Some had opposed the girls' efforts in chanting. They thought women should not chant the mantras. A Ram Mandir chief boycotted the Rāmāyaṇa award distribution program after he witnessed Svastivācan (mantra chanting) by the girls. He was informed that the chanting was run by the girls only and that there was no Dalit girl. But later he knew that the team of chanting girls was inclusive, and there was a Dalit girl too. The event observed a female storyteller (Katha Vachak) from Nawal Parāsī. The Puranic storyteller also argued against the Veda mantra chanted by females (Narmada, Nawal Parāsī, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

The Vedic community had been criticizing the teaching of Veda to girls inclusively and without Upanayana Saṁskāra. Orthodox gurus were curious to visit and watch the reality of the practice. They used to protest verbally at the KGG. For a while, they became silent. But as they heard the name Mālatī, they exclaimed, "O! Run by her? What to tell?" They expressed such reactions because she has been known as a social activist and reformer. A top Vedic guru Vidwan Raj Ghimire recalled her history of struggle for the feminization of Vedic education:

She struggled to listen to the *Gāyatrī mantra* from her childhood, and later she tried to make *Swasti vāchan* by girls before queen mother Ratna Rajya Lakṣmī Shah at an inauguration ceremony of the girls' College building. However, the chanting item was canceled at the last minute when Professor Ambika Prasad Adhikari, who later was appointed the chief guru of King Birendra, and Professor Śiva Gopal Risal informed about their absence at the ceremony to avoid the dispute of the chanting issue. (Mālatī and Professor Bidwan Raj Ghimire, personal communications, July 11, 2017)

Cancellation has been a popular proverb in the Vedic community. The fact is that Mālatī was a Hindu feminist. She claimed that Manusmṛiti was distorted in the later editions, where women were put under men. She always thought men and women are equal, and the provision of Manusmṛiti is twisted to reflect unequally. Sala (2014, p. 620) also defines this as women were inferior according to Manusmṛiti

(Laws of Manu, IX. 18). She further states: "For women, no sacramental rite is performed with sacred texts, thus the law is settled."

Some pundits blamed she was doing so according to Christian interests (Śiva Raj Acharya, Kaundinnyāyan, personal communication, March7, 2016).

Kaundinnyāyan was in favor of twice-born castes women's *Upanayana Saṁskāra*. He had visited KGG and reacted angrily. Behind the reaction, he had two complaints: 1) teaching Veda to the girls was a proper Saṁskāra.2) The Veda chanting girls were twice-born castes as well as Dalits. So, the guru criticized Mālatī's gender efforts directly. Similarly, others were doing backbiting at Nepal Sanskrit University. The university's associate professor was teaching at KGG. So, he heard the backbiting. "Establishing inclusive girls' Gurukul for Veda teaching is against Śāstra," they commented. The Veda guru informed. However, another group of Professors advocated for Mālatī's campaign from the same university.

So, on the one hand, Mālatī's campaign for Veda teaching to girls inclusive of all castes received praise; on the other, it received hatred. Besides, Mālatī's degrading health condition was another crucial factor. In the seventh year of the KGG establishment, Mālatī was hospitalized for four months. She was well informed about the opposition voices on Veda chanting of girls as the people visited and reacted to the work. She heard the people's comment, "Gurukul can be run only during her life, but unsure after that." Her hospitalization time was hard for every member of KGG. Other members had a hard time collecting donations in her absence. Mālatī could collect hundreds of thousand even through a phone call (Treasurer of the Gurukul, personal communication, October 5, 2017).

Mālatī frequently inquired about the bank balance status of KKG. This unexpected situation created pressure to find an alternative way to sustain KGG. Mālatī had established the philosophy, passion, and vision for the institution. Both Mālatī's well-wishers and supporters of KGG were concerned about her health and the future of the institution. A management committee was searching for alternative ways to run the Gurukul. There were many contradictions. Mālatī was in power in the past, her health was intact, and she had leadership capacity with many supportive hands. Most of the team members had received her help to build up their careers. But sad to say, when Mālatī's health deteriorated, the team members began to lose interest in leading the Gurukul. The support seems to have come only because of her personality but not because of the cause of her endeavor. Though Neo-Sanskritization emerged,

Mālatī's effort is anti-current in the gendered society. Her past and present struggle will continue for her successors as well.

Well before the deterioration of her health, Mālatī looked for various alternatives except for the Paśupati Area Development Trust (PADT) fund and the premises of seto sattal. After denying PADT, she proposed to the Indian Yoga guru Ramdev. She informed me that the guru and she had known each other for years. He had run Gurukul for boys but not for girls yet. Mālatī had already commenced it. Ramdev never denied her proposal to run a girls' Gurukul in Nepal jointly. However, he neither rejected nor supported her proposal. He always showed a kind of hope, Mālatī told, over my recorder. Later, Ramdev himself started girls' Gurukul in India. Her major hopes were gone; both Ramdev and PADT officials showed disinterest in her KGG's sustained future.

Mālatī's poor health, the unsupportive decision of PADT, and the passiveness of most founder members of KGG were inviting a different way out. In the meantime, the KGG team knew there was a girls' orphanage in Chitwan. A spiritual woman had provided her house for the orphanage. Someone had proposed to merge the two girls' organizations and run with a joint identity. In the name of merging, the KGG team hurriedly handed over the Gurukul to Chitwan. But staffers were not informed about it, they told me. They told me that they knew the decision at the last moment of departure to Chitwan.

There were several contradictions and reasons behind the haste in handing over the Gurukul to Chitwan as described by the founders: 1) parents' increasing tendency to take the girls back home from KGG; 2) the aging condition of the founders (well above 60 or 70) standing as an obstacle; 3) disappointment of some Sanskrit scholar founders who were committed to handling the day-to-day management at the inception of KGG; 4) hardship in the collection of donation; 5) PADT members' rejection to KGG's request for space—land, building—and financial support; 6) Nepali Vedic community's strong opposition to the campaign of feminization of Veda education in Nepal; 7) larger Nepali society's occupation with the founders' expectation of and work towards gender equality and equity in Veda education in Nepali society; and 8) scarcity in gender-sensitive human resource to run the Gurukul including the position of vice-principal.

Interpreting Dharmaśāstra by Female: Hope, Market, and the Idol

KGG faced several challenges due to the ultra-anti-current campaign. But Mālatī was still determined to guarantee the priesthood market for females. She claimed, if hundreds of male Gurukul students can find the market, why cannot only 10 to 50 female Gurukul students find the market? One day, females will interpret the *Dharmaśāstra*. (Personal communication, June 11, 2017)

In this connection, Vedic scholar/s asked me a counter question (Timilsina, 2016), "Do you accept and invite the girls as your ritual priest?" However, the founder of KGG Armala argued that the new generation would need help understanding mantras. Mālatī had claimed that: "they want to perform rituals; the female will perform that act." This argument has started to come true in Chitwan. The KGG girls have started priesthood. Some clients search and come to invite the girl priest.

KGG had a hostel warden Āma who used the metaphor of *Cilāune* and *Katus* trees in comparing males and females. The meaning of the metaphor is: "Males are males, and females are females, they are neither the same nor equal." Whereas, Mālatī herself claimed that the statue over Śiva Linga of Lord Paśupati Nath in the Paśupati temple combines Śiva and Parvati. The statue is the form of Ardhanārīśvara. So, society should consider gender equality for Veda's education, she argued. A study report by UNIFEM and World Hindu Federation (WHF) also used an icon of half male and half-female god. According to the Śiva-Śakti philosophy, Śiva is Śiva because of the power of Śakti (Devī/Parvati). Translation of Śakti is power. Thus, devotees of Śiva and Śakti equally worship both Śiva and Śakti (Devī).

Figure 22

Combination of Śiva, Śakti and Devotee

Śiva

Śakti

Devotee (Nara)



Inseparable Combination

According to Puranic stories and *Āgama Śāstra* (Tantra), lord Śiva worships Śakti so that he remains Śiva. "Otherwise, Śiva cannot be Śiva without Śakti but Shava⁹⁴ (dead

⁹⁴ शव

body), as Professor of Tantra, Vidyā Nath Upadhyaya Bhatta explained in his working paper symposium organized by Nepal Academy in 2017. In this interpretation, Śiva and Śakti seem to look as two visually, but in performance/action, Śiva is a form of welfare, and Śakti is its inseparable performer.

Figure 23

Picture of Ardhanariśvara



(Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2drnb2zw>)

This notion connects both Śiva and Śakti with the example of Śankarācharya in his introduction to a work titled *Saundarya Lahari*⁹⁵ (Aesthetics account)⁹⁶. This

⁹⁵सौन्दर्यलहरी

⁹⁶शिवःशक्त्या युक्तो यदि भवति शक्तः प्रभवितुम् ।

verse is famous because Śakarācharya was a devotee of lord Śhankara (Śiva). In the latter part of his life, he felt the necessity of Śakti (power). So, he created Saundarya Lahari (aesthetic verses). In other words, Śiva does all five works of creation, protection, destruction, cadence, and kindness through Śakti. Therefore, Śiva and his consort are universally worshipable. Bhatta Upadhyaya determines that Śakti can only induce welfare in the world if that is imbedded by Śiva (being Śivātmaka). "Both feel as non-dualist (Adwaita) elements, seen two but are single; the major mystery of *Sādhanā* (adoration) is the combination of Śiva and Śakti, and seeing or finding world welfare in that mystery," the Professor assesses.

Śiva himself worships Śakti and vice-versa for the actual and balanced power. If we look at Śivalinga in any Śiva temple, we can see symbols of both organs of man and woman that are the same in Paśupati Nath temple. Moreover, there is Guhyakali in the northern part of the Paśupati area, named Guhyeshwari. Guhyakali or Guhyashwari refers to the goddess of secret or mystery. Kāli, Devī, and Īsvarī all have the same meaning of power cited in the coming sub-theme from Devī Sūkta of Ṛgveda. Thus, there are interconnections between Śiva and Śakti, as the followers have followed. However, there is a need for the power of Devī to establish and run the girl's Gurukul, as is assumed by WHF, UNIFEM, and the founders of Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul.

The metaphor of Śiva and Śakti has not only a form of gender equality, but also has a philosophy of *Triśūl* or Trika (Triadic philosophy). According to this, the three are- Śiva, Śakti, and Nara (person). Śiva's other name is Rudra. Rudrayamala tantra is the Śaiva tantra philosophy. Thirty-five stanzas from the *Rudrayamala* are taken and interpreted by Abhinava Gupta, a tenth-century philosopher who named it *Parātrimśikā*⁹⁷ (Gurtu, 1985). This is Non-dualist Vedic philosophy but slightly advanced from Non-dualist Vedānta Philosophy. According to Vedānta, Brāhman can be achieved or converted to Bramhan or super being- *Aham Brahmāsmi*⁹⁸ stage through the sadhana of *Śravaṇa*, *manana*, *Nididhyāsana*.

However, according to Śaiva Philosophy, the *Sadhaka* can transcend through meditation. The *sādhaka* practices- *Koham* (who am I?), *Soham* (I am that), and

न चेदेवं देवो न खलु कुशलः स्पन्दितुमपि ॥

⁹⁷ परात्रिंशिका

⁹⁸ अहं ब्रह्माऽस्मि

finally realizes *Shivoham* (I am the Śiva). There is no duality of Śiva, Śakti, or the Nara⁹⁹ (person). The *sādhaka* came to become Śiva. It has been known as Kashmiri Śaivait. There are different forms of knowledge- Para, Para Aparā, and Aparā. The forms of knowledge are forms of Devī. Abhinava Gupta, the 10th-century Philosopher of Śiva Darśana, developed this idea of triadic theory. Para Trimshikā Vivarana, the work of Abhinav Gupta (Gurtu, 1985), is translated to "A trident of wisdom" by Jaideva Singh (1989) in English. It clarifies that Śiva and Śakti have equal power but collaboration with both. Each one is seen as dependent. Their joint power is the power of knowledge of people. Thus, worshipers chant Rudrī for bliss from Śiva and recite Devī Sūkta, Devī Bhagavat of Saptaśatī Caṇḍī in prayer to Devī.

Deity Powers: Devī Sūkta, Devī Mahatmya, and Saptaśatī

The dreams had several obstacles as Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul (KKG) could only sustain up to seven years in Kathmandu. There are 11 Gurukuls for boys in Kathmandu valley. Veda or Vedic education must be associated with rituals. Hinduism is the only religion in the world where matriarchal deities are worshiped. Nepal has the biggest national festival Dashain which praises the power of goddesses. Devī Sūkta of Ṛgveda (10.25. 1-8) is the root of the Dashain festival because Devī Māhātmya (narration on Devī) of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa and a 700-verse-Caṇḍī-Saptaśatī¹⁰⁰ are recited as power practice during the ten days of Dashain¹⁰¹. Meaning of the Ṛgvedic mantras, which Ralf T. H. Griffith translated in 1896, are mostly cited and show the matriarchal power:

1. I Travel with the Rudras and the Vasus, with the Ādityas and All-Gods I wander. I hold aloft both Varuṇa and Mitra, Indra and Agni, and the Pair of Aśvins.
2. I cherish and sustain high-swelling Soma, and Tvaṣṭar I support, Pūṣan, and Bhaga. I load with wealth the zealous sacrificer who pours the juice and offers his oblation
3. I am the Queen, the gatherer-up of treasures, most thoughtful, first of those who merit worship. Thus, Gods have established me in many places with many homes to enter and abide in.

⁹⁹ नर

¹⁰⁰ चण्डी सप्तशती

¹⁰¹ दशैं (*Dashahara* in India)

4. Through me alone all eat the food that feeds them, —each man who sees, brewes, hears the word outspoken. They know it not, but yet they dwell beside me. Hear, one and all, the truth as I declare it.

5. I, verily, myself announce and utter the word that Gods and men alike shall welcome. I make the man I love exceeding mighty; make him a sage, a Ṛṣi, and a Brāhman.

6. I bend the bow for Rudra so that his arrow may strike and slay the hater of devotion. I rouse and order battle for the people, and I have penetrated Earth and Heaven.

7. On the world's summit I bring forth the Father: my home is in the waters, in the ocean. Then I extend all existing creatures and touch even yonder heaven with my forehead.

8. I breathe a strong breath like the wind and tempest, while I hold together all existence. Beyond this wide earth and the heavens I have become so mighty in my grandeur. (Devī Sūkta of Ṛgved, 10.25. 1-8)

This Devī Sūkta¹⁰² was perceived by Vak, who was the daughter of sage Āmbhrinī. The mantras' interpretive story is praying and praising the power of the deity, who is mother-Durga. There are nine names of Durga (Nava Durga) who can give all kinds of powers: knowledge, wealth, power, restraint, name, fame, and all. Nava Durga (nine Devīs) and Pañcakanyā (five girls) are taken as good fortune among Sanātana communities. KGG had started the Gurukul with nine girls interpreted as Nava Durga.

However, the prayers mentioned above are only for deities in interpreting the mantras, but not in practice. Ritually, culturally and religiously, societies hesitate to accept females as priests for life rituals. There is a division of labor in Vedic *Dharmaśāstra*. Western authors (Sala 2014, pp. 619-620) compare that this is not only in Hinduism and the Catholic Church, men are ranked above women in the sense that the priesthood is reserved for men, but this is also more or less the situation in Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism, etc.

The context of Nepali society has been running in a slightly different way from Sala's conclusion. Hindu and Buddhist combination has been worshipping the living goddess Kumari in Kathmandu Durbar Square. Devotees think she has power,

¹⁰² देवीसूक्त

and devotees expect bliss from her (Tree, 2014). Nepalis respect girls before menstruation as goddess Devī/ Lakṣmī and worship for their good luck. So, before menarche, girls are called "Kanyā." After menarche, the male addresses females as sister, aunt, mother, and so on, as a respect. This has been taught as moral education in traditional Vedic society. Such honor has been controlled by harassment connected to offenses against women. They respect girls and women as a whole. However, society cannot accept female priesthood because the people have not seen female priests for ritual works. Hence, the setback experienced by KGG in Kathmandu indicates a lack of acceptance within the local community. However, Mālatī did not characterize it as a complete rejection; instead, she diplomatically stated that the level of support received fell short of the anticipated overwhelming response.

Management, Schooling, and Pedagogical Focus

The joint venture Gurukul in Chitwan did not continue the teaching style similar to Kathmandu. Veda teaching could have been more focused. The girls practiced prayers, yoga, and meditation in the morning and evening. In the daytime, they were admitted to a local Sanskrit high school. Sanskrit was taught there in the past, and that was stopped under the pressure of Maoist insurgents in the conflict era (1996-2005). In other words, the school was a general high school, but the starting word of the name was Sanskrit. I conducted a group discussion at the school premises where the KGG girls expressed grievances about disconnecting Veda and Sanskrit that were in KGG. Sanskrit subjects had not been taught at the school for years.

I did put the girls' dissatisfaction with the merged Gurukul in Chitwan. The Chief of the joint venture Āshram or Gurukul Mātā¹⁰³ said, "As far as I know, women's duty is acting as the tradition of the society. If society approves, we will teach Veda. But where can I go to search for proof of Veda chanting Rights of girls or running the Gurukul?" (Personal communication, 23 April 2017).

The merged Gurukul had two types of girls. One type was from KGG, and the other consisted of orphan girls. Both groups were jointly performing yoga and bhajan (prayer chanting) in the morning and evening. The orphanage girls' surname has been maintained with 'Lokkalyāni' for all because their parents have not identified as the orphanage portfolio bearers repeatedly called them outsiders as 'jhyāng bata uthāyera

¹⁰³ माता

lyāyeko'¹⁰⁴ means, collected from the bush where they were thrown, and generally, police/ administration had handed them over to the orphan house. The presentation and behavior of the girls were divided into two cultures. As a result, there was a slightly uncomfortable feeling in the majority of the KGG girls, though they tried to adjust to the new environment.

I observed not only boys' and girls' Gurukuls in different districts but also spent some time in Buddhist Gumbās. Religious education—Hindu or Buddhist—seems to have attracted generally the economically needy students. However, Sherry B. Ortner (1989) found that monks and nuns had always come from the wealthier sections of Sherpa society (p. 173). The context was the 1970s and 1980s. In Hindu society, rich families could only send their sons to Vārāṇasī (India) from Nepal for education in the past. Time has changed, as I found in Gumbā education. I found that in Lo Manthang of Mustang and Tengboche of Solukhumbu. The Gumbās are the best for low-income families (Fieldnote, July 26, 2016). Brahmin and *Kṣetrī* boys were learning Buddhist education. That shows Gumbā schools are inclusive in castes where non-Buddhist students also have enrolled. Likewise, Gurukul education also is the best destination for low-income families. All expenses of Gurukul and Gumbā education are collected from donations.

In recent years, Gurukuls of Devghāt and Pokhara have created competitive examinations for enrollment. Competent boys only can join there. In addition to Vedic and Sanskrit subjects, English and computer teaching have attracted private English school students too. "If we get a quality education with English, mathematics, and computers for free, why enroll in private boarding schools?" the aspirants told me. There is a vacancy only for 30 seats, but applicants were from 100 to 300 in some prestigious Gurukuls. Economically strong parents also intended to enroll their sons in such free-of-cost Gurukuls. Otherwise, wealthier families' first choice is private/boarding school in major cities or abroad.

The parents of the KGG girls have one temptation that their daughters will be pioneers of Veda expert females. And, the girls have dreamed of 'Guru Āma jasto banne'¹⁰⁵ (I would like to be like guru āma). They had dreamed of opening girls' Gurukul in their districts while I interviewed them during KGG. Their principal used

¹⁰⁴ इयाडबाट उठाएर ल्याएको

¹⁰⁵ गुरुआमा जस्तो बन्ने

to teach Sanskrit language and verses. So, they also wanted to be like her and open girls' Gurukul in their district. That showed the eagerness for the feminization of Vedic education. However, there is still confusion about the Right of women to study Veda and ritual and their applicability. So, almost all Vedic scholars divide Vedic education into three parts and suggest catching the path of Vedic or Sanskrit education rather than Veda and rituals (*Karmakāṇḍa*). So, the girls were in a trinary position of Vedic education.

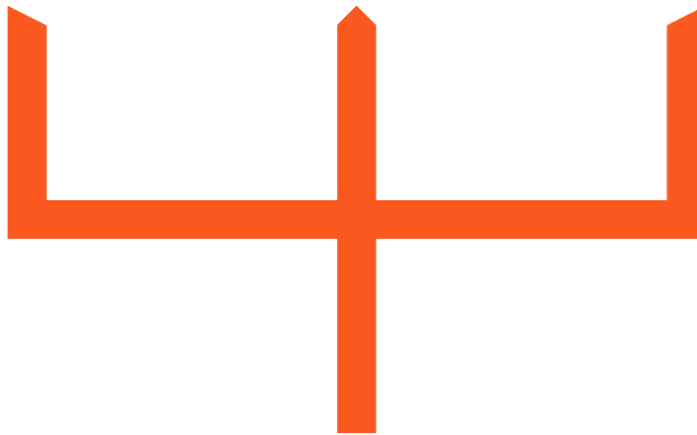
Figure 24

Streams of Gurukul

Veda Chanting

Vedic Study (Puranic)

Sanskrit Study



Triśūl of Gurukul Education

One might catch the path of Vedic study, which is not for mantra chanting and ritualistic priesthood. The Sanskrit Students can tell the stories of Purāṇa if they can apprentice with a Puranic guru.

Otherwise, they can understand Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature like Gītā, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa, philosophy, and so on. The variance occurs on the ground of the Paradoxical notion of the power of female gods and women/girls.

Authority Question: Procedure, Pronunciation and Diversion

The feminist sense of Vedic education in Mālatī had grown with the forbidden Gāyatrī mantra and further developed while she was principal at the girls' college in Kathmandu and was in the preparation of establishing KGG. She followed about 20 year long spiritual lectures by Swāmi Rāmānanda Giri. Her core team members were also the audience to Swāmi's spiritual lectures. They were also among the donors for boys Gurukul in Devghāt, established and run by the Swāmi. The Swāmi was not positive about teaching Veda to females, but later he did not oppose so aggressively because though small numbers have been publicizing Vedic tradition and Sanskrit education, the Swāmi communicated with me.

The Swāmi's Gurukul has been running a college too. Guru Prasad Subedi was the principal of the college. Simultaneously, Subedi was also the chief advisor to the merged KGG in Chitwan. Subedi is positive for Sanskrit education for females instead of Veda and ritual education. However, he stresses the vocal requirement as a factor of eligibility for quality Sanskrit education. The interested learner must have clear and uninterrupted vocal sounds; all male learners may not have this vocal quality. I want to excerpt the comment made by Subedi because this may, in the near future, open the door to the KKG girls:

It has been very difficult to maintain every letter of the Veda created vibration and its effects on the orbit as well as effects to the society, its exact meaning and essence by us. In this context, chanting Veda by a female may not be in the real sense of the term, so far as I know. However, no one should be boycotted from gaining the knowledge of the Veda. (Personal communication, 24 April 2017)

Subedi suggests a middle path between the two. Access to Veda's authority has come through a long debate in history. Specifically, the authority of Dalits in chanting mantras has a story of dialogue between Swāmi Karapātri, a twentieth-century Vedic expert, and Dalit leader JagJeevan Ram. Subedi told the story of the dialogue.

Karapātriji Maharaj was renowned and respectable in the Indian Vedic community, who did not allow pundits to chant the Gāyatrī mantra loudly so that others could listen to it. "The mantra was not in public listening and hearing like today," Subedi recalled. In the meantime, a famous Dalit leader JagJivan Ram entered Karapātri's Brahma Sabha (Meeting of scholars) and challenged that he knew the Gāyatrī mantra. He started chanting the mantra loudly and asked whether it was the exact version. Responding to him, Karapātri claimed that the mantra he pronounced was not the true form of the Gāyatrī mantra. He presented an example of a court judge's verdict as Subedi cited the story of Swāmi:

The judge can declare the verdict of life sentence to any culprit while sitting on the judge's chair; he must cite the Article of constitution and Act and due procedures. No one can give a verdict even to the same person or any other drunkard. The verdict cannot be a verdict that is announced on the road like you (JagJivan Ram) are doing now. No one should face the life sentence though the sentence is the same. That must be under the due procedure.

Likewise, the Gāyatrī mantra you pronounced and the real mantra can be heard the same but in gaining the status of Gāyatrī mantra and achieving light, power, and competence it must be chanted by an authorized person in an authorized place. There are procedures in practicing Gāyatrī mantra in Vedic Śāstra. Even the pronunciation of OUM has a procedure to be authorized according to Manusmṛiti¹⁰⁶. AUM is Brāhman (Super Consciousness¹⁰⁷). There must be a proper sitting over a mattress of Kush grass with due posture, gesture, and closed eyes. This is an example of only chanting the AUM. So far about Gāyatrī mantra, the performer should have prior authority, Saṁskāra (Upanayana with due processes), Yagyopabita (sacred thread) wearing with the prescribed rules. Otherwise, the chanting is meaningless. (G. P. Subedi, Personal communication, 24 April 2017)

Subedi connected the discussion and the argument to Veda chanting by girls and argued they should not be prohibited. He claimed he has been advising that girls can chant/pray swasti prārthana (Svastivācan/mantra chanting). They must access the river of knowledge (Jñāna Ganga) of Veda. He adds, "Vedic mantras themselves have spoken that Vedic knowledge is for all".¹⁰⁸ The Veda is our only authority, and everyone has the Right to it (Śukla YajurVeda, 27.2). He analyzes the essence of Veda in two ways: the first one is the methods concerned with the pronunciation of Veda and allegiance, as well as performance and the second is the knowledge of Veda. Meaning of the Vedas is available in Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, and Purāṇa (Mahābhārata, 1.1¹⁰⁹). These scriptures interpret the meaning of the Vedas because the latter are their sources. This is the best way for girls. On the other hand, Subedi substantiates that there is a tough practice where the performer should bring the sound from early morning with a vibrated vocal cord from the inner part of the body (Mandūki Śikṣā, 41¹¹⁰). Creating such intonation is a much more complex practice. Women who have to face a monthly menstruation cycle cannot meet this requirement. Even men with this proper vocal quality without inner music cannot chant the mantras as required. These are natural characteristics. Subedi further narrates: "You need not

¹⁰⁶ प्राक्कुलान्परिपाशेनः पवित्रेश्चैवपावितः । प्राणायमैः स्त्रीभिपुतः ततः ओङ्कारमर्हति ।

¹⁰⁷ ब्रह्म तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः ।

¹⁰⁸ यथेमां वाचं कल्याणीमावदानि जनेभ्य । ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्यां शूद्रायचार्याय च स्वायचारणाय ॥

¹⁰⁹ इतिहासपुराणाभ्यांवेदंसमुपबृंहयेत् ।

¹¹⁰ प्रातर्वेदेन्नित्यमुरःस्थितेन स्वरेणशार्दूलरुतोपमेन । माध्यन्दिने कण्ठगतेन चैव चकाह्वसंकूजितसन्निभेन ।

say that someone is prohibiting someone. Let them all chant. But that must be according to the requirement, for the expected achievement as is done by a judge on the bench, according to the Constitution.” (Guru Prasad Subedi, Personal communication, 24 April 2017). Subedi (PhD in the philosophy of grammar) interprets a couple of aspects as:

Outer whim is one thing and microscopic destination is another. Whoever founded KKG, they had realized the pain of not learning the opportunity of Gāyatrī mantra. Mālatī herself might have the pain. She knew the mantra later. So what? What happened after all? There were letters of the mantra in the market which she read out. She thought that she knew and was overwhelmed with joy, but nothing more than that. Anyway, she started a revolution. But the revolutionist must be visionary with achieving similar knowledge herself first. Did she do that? We have a couple of examples in the modern era such as Swāmi Prapannāchārya and Yogi Narahari Nath. Prapannācharya performed as Brāhmans do and established an example that Rai-Limbus also can get the achievement. However, there is no disciple of Prapannāchārya. Similarly, Yogi Narahari Nath started the campaign for Veda learning for females. The yogi started to teach Veda to girls in Devghāt. Just starting, but not more than that. Where is the result? Continuous performance is the issue. There are several opportunities for learners from Vārāṇasī to various places. Somebody may sacrifice his/her life for learning so that the destination will be set. (Personal Communication, April 24, 2017).

There were female sages who perceived the mantras of Veda. Subedi cited the then system of Upanayana and learning in either Gurukul or at home. But there were two types of women: one for domestic life and another for lifelong learning. “However, I still do not know even the lifelong practicing ladies whether they chanted mantras of Veda with due procedure and pronunciation?” The argument by Subedi has been contested by Sala (2014) because Veda chanting and priesthood using the mantra of Veda is vastly different from other religions’ priesthood. Intonation from the inner body and its continuity for a long time is difficult for a woman.

However, the work without the mantra chanting is easier comparatively, and females have been performing Puranic storytelling in Hindu societies. Thus, Sala’s interpretation of the gender status of women does not seem exact from the religions in the context of Hindu Vedic rituals. There is no restriction to Puranic chanting where

the vocal sound need not come from deep down, like in the chanting of the Veda mantra. Similarly, there is no restriction on Tantra practice in Hindu societies. Tantra also has a mantra, but the tantric mantra used by females is widely accepted.

KGG Diverted to Sanskrit Gurukul from Veda Gurukul

There were female sages who understood the mantras of the Veda. Subedi referred to the prevailing system of Upanayana and education either in Gurukul or at home. However, two categories of women existed: those dedicated to domestic life and others committed to lifelong learning. Nevertheless, Subedi expressed uncertainty about whether even the women devoted to lifelong practice chanted Vedic mantras with the proper procedure and pronunciation. Subedi argued that the revolution started by Mālatī based only on sentiments. No, it created a wave, Subedi accepted: the wave will be continued though transformed into another form. Another form indicates Sanskrit education only. Subedi has his own story. He was searching for one such school where his daughter could learn Sanskrit. He is still confused about that. Veda-chanting females will come out, but a wave has already started for Veda-oriented education for girls. However, he recalls studying Pāṇini grammar, known as verse by great poet Kālidās (Śukla, 1981): Anena vyakaranamadhitam; enam Vedamadyapaya¹¹¹ which means: teach grammar first than Veda. Learning ancillaries is essential for learning Veda. This priority of learning will first emphasize the subjects of Dharmaśāstra, Philosophy, Puran, Itihas (History), Sanskrit literature, language, home science, and music. The girls have started to learn these subjects, and credit goes to Mālatī for the commencement, Subedi added. In his opinion, people are teaching Sanskrit in the name of Veda or Vedic education, and Sanskrit is a must for ancient studies.

The chief advisor to the merged KGG and other officials have the same view on the continuity of Veda chanting. It is clear that it has discontinued KGG's syllabus of Veda chanting, and the new orientation is toward learning Sanskrit as a major. Debating Vedic education limitations for girls, KGG-merged schools could not run jointly in Chitwan. It is split into two Gurukuls for girls. One follows the idea by Subedi because he is an advisor to it. It has a KGG legacy because the KGG management committee members are in Chitwan now. The other orphanage-origin

¹¹¹ अनेन व्याकरणमधीतं एनंवेदमध्यापय

Gurukul is running separately in a nearby location. Following the split of the once merged Gurukul, the KGG groomed girls also are divided into the two split Gurukuls.

Trinary Positions of KGG: Veda, Vedic, and Sanskrit Gurukul

Now, there are three girls Gurukuls in Devghāt area of Chitwan and Tanahun. One is KGG legacy Gurukul. The Second is the Orphanage origin Gurukul, and the third is a newly operated Gurukul for girls. The KGG legacy Gurukul has stopped teaching Veda chanting as it was in Kathmandu. It does not teach ritual (Karmakāṇḍa). In place of such priesthood-oriented subjects, it teaches Vyakaran (Sanskrit grammar), Neeti Śāstra (logic), and Sanskrit language and literature as major subjects. The vocational Karmakāṇḍa subject has been replaced by astrology (Jyotish). Now, KGG has been modified to Sanskrit Gurukul from Veda Gurukul. Subedi, the advisor of the Gurukul, said that the female sages Gārgi, Kātyayani, and Maitreyee were renowned scholars but not priests. Philosophical interpretation is different, and Veda chanting is different. Subedi argued that Veda learning and chanting is a continuous job that cannot discontinue, but menstruation and childbirth times create discontinuation of the chanting. Again, he claimed that women's vocal quality is not for Veda-mantra chanting. Thus, KGG legacy Gurukul diverted to Sanskrit language, logic, and astrology.

The girls would be taught some mantras and verses for *mangalacharan* (*Svastivācan*), and the committee would teach those ethics and astrology as substitutes for Veda and ritual (*Karmakāṇḍa*), he expected. This middle path will produce the human resource for female Puranic storytellers and astrologers for the market. This means the vision of KGG for the feminization of Veda education is diverted to Vedic education.

Another Gurukul separated from the Gurukul mentioned above was known for Puranic storytelling. It was an orphanage, and it sought to serve orphan girls. I have named Āśram Gurukul for this thesis. Now, its girls can perform the jobs of a priest. A girl in grade six in Kathmandu has now completed grade 12 from this Gurukul. In the meantime, she works as a priest for Rudrābhishek. The Āśram grew other three girls were invited for priestly work in communities. Some people search for female priests. So, they are invited to different ritual works, including weddings. This is a real picture of Veda education, where the girls chant Veda-mantra and perform the rituals.

The third girls' Gurukul is in Tanahun district. All three Gurukuls are situated within the periphery of two kilometers. The third Gurukul is an astrological girls' Gurukul which focuses on teaching and practicing astrology. It was opened in November 2020. Nepali, English, and Maths are compulsory subjects, as are in the other two previously mentioned girl Gurukuls.

Regarding other subjects, it is like those in the first one. Which means, it is not Veda Gurukul but Vedic. It focuses on astrology. Twenty-three girls have been studying at this Gurukul. Some of them have started fortune-telling and related works. Regarding mother power, the first Gurukul, KGG, was founded in Kathmandu by Mālatī; now, Devī is in the chair. The second orphan Āśram Gurukul is founded and run by a Mātā, and another Mātā also established the third astrology Gurukul. All have their social contributions. They have their network in different districts. So, they can collect girls from different parts of Nepal and can collect resources for managing their institution. Thus, women have their initiations and leadership as well. Though the Gurukuls are Veda-focused, Vedic, or Sanskrit-focused, all are components of Vedic education. The inception of sustainability efforts has led the schools to feminization. In the past, as Subedi questioned, Yogi Narahari Nath's efforts of opening girls' Gurukuls could not be sustained, even in Devghāt, where three girls' Gurukuls have been running. Times have changed, and issues of gender equality and feminization have emerged.

Now, girls go to communities to perform rituals, and their role is like that of male priests. Similarly, girls can chant *Swasti vāchan* and perform astrological works for the people. All castes girls can learn Vedic education, computers, and English. They can search for necessary information on the Internet. This is not just a Sanskritization where the so-called lower caste copies the lifestyles of the so-called upper caste. As a result, the lower caste people's social status goes up. M. N. Srinivas, champion of this idea, called it "upward mobility." It has been taken as social change. However, this is not Sanskritization but Neo-Sanskritization.

From a critical perspective, the feminization of Vedic education through KGG was largely driven by sentiment. This sentiment was sparked in Mālatī's childhood when she witnessed her brother's secretive and sacred initiation. Throughout her life, she aspired to establish KGG and assembled a team of like-minded individuals to achieve this goal. However, the journey from sentiment to realization is complex. Her advancing age and health issues posed significant

challenges, despite her confidence in the “overwhelming support” from society. Consequently, KGG transitioned to merging with Chitwan without adequate discussion among stakeholders.

Following the shift to Chitwan, Mālatī remained optimistic that between 10 to 50 female priests would secure employment in Nepal’s ritual market and those girls would be chanting mantras. She expressed her hope to me that she would hear the swastivachan chanted by girls from the ether. Her conviction was rooted in the *Ardhanārīśvara* idol of Pashupatinath, symbolizing the concept that all are multiple, yet all are one or nondual multiple realities. After the merging and splitting of the Chitwan Gurukul, she passed away. She may have observed that four of her girls were chanting Vedic mantras, while others were pursuing Vedic and Sanskrit studies in various institutions.

The journey from sentiment to commitment and implementation is multifaceted. The founders and their supporters could not sustain their overwhelming support in maintaining KGG in Kathmandu. As a result, Mālatī’s Gurukul KGG transitioned into a Sanskrit girls’ Gurukul, and a separate entity emerged as a mixed girls’ Gurukul. This evolution reflects the gaps and multiplicity inherent in Vedic education.

The Essence of the Chapter

Campaigning for gender equality in ritual education is not an easy way. Kathmandu Girls Gurukul (KGG) was seeking girls till the end of 2016. Abruptly, it moved to Chitwan to merge with an orphanage of girls to establish a new girls' Gurukul in the first week of April 2017. The background of leaving Kathmandu by KGG has various contradictions: The society accepts divine female power and worships Devī (goddesses) but does not accept female priests for ritual works. The gurus are ready to teach them Sanskrit but not Veda in Chitwan. The Gurus want to run Gurukul for others rather than for their children and relatives. They donate a certain time and money, but they need to look for equal support from the state. KGG campaign showed a trinary set of Gurukul education- Veda-focused Gurukul, Vedic Gurukul, and Sanskrit Gurukul.

CHAPTER VIII
ON NEO-SANSKRITIZATION

In this chapter, I have analyzed the status of Neo-Sanskritization in Nepali society regarding reemerging Vedic education. This chapter addresses sub-research question number 4: "How has been the status of the revival of the Sanskrit education for the girls occurred the ethnographic sites?" The upward social mobility of Sanskritization is not limited to the so-called upper caste's lifestyle imitation by so-called low castes. People from all castes and classes can be recruited for the post of Pandit by the government of Nepal. Similarly, this chapter shows examples of the feminization of Vedic education and ritual services. This is a reflection of social change from the inclusive Gurukul system. The notion has tied up with an *Ardhāarishwara* theory of gender equality.

Trinary Set of Purification: Sanskrit, Saṁskāra, and Sanskritization

Sanskrit, Saṁskāra, and Sanskritization are no more secret, and no need for copying residing in a certain territory. M. N Srinivas did an analysis in the Coorg community of South India, Prayag Raj Sharma did it in Eastern Nepal, and Ganesh Man Gurung did it in Lamjung, Western Nepal. All studies were conducted before 1990. Globalizing the economy and technological advancement have changed socialization and social mobility. Now, everyone can be a Pandit, and the post of Pandit is reserved quota for Dalits, Janajāti, and females by government agencies.

The term 'Sanskritization' was popularized by M. N. Srinivas in the 1950s. The root of the term is Sanskrit. Root of Sanskrit is *Sanskāra/Saṁskāra*. The meaning of Saṁskāra is purification, and Sanskrit means a purified state. That is a purified language as well as a purified lifestyle too. In religion, purification is most important. It is in high priority in a caste-based society. Saṁskāra and Sanskrit were used in Hindu societies from time immemorial. However, Srinivas coined and popularized it through his field research among the Coorg community. Coorg people imitate Brāhmanical daily life and abandon the consumption of liquor and pork. Socially they proceed to make upward mobility in the larger society.

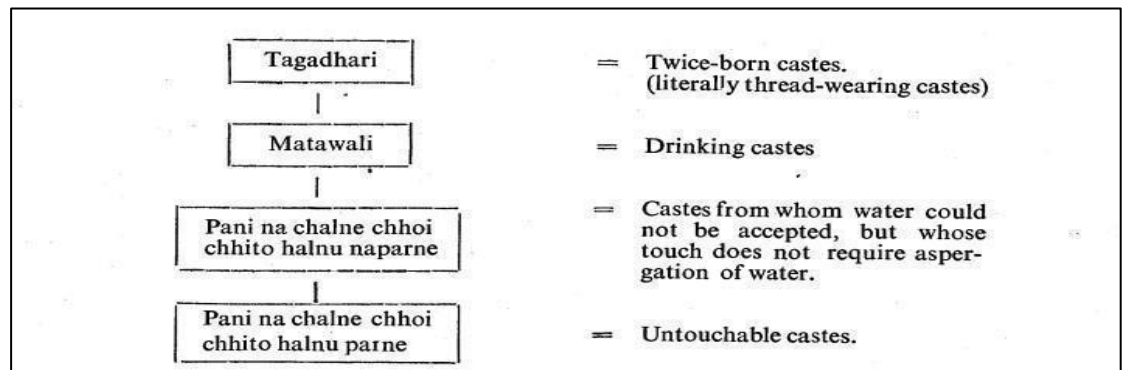
Srinivas established this idea through his D. Phil. thesis, published as a book entitled "Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India" (1952). Later, he

elaborated on it in *Caste in Modern India* and other essays in 1962. Sanskritization is not just the adoption of new customs and habits; it includes exposure to "new" ideas and values appearing in Sanskrit literature (Srinivas, 1962). According to him, Sanskritized people can commonly talk about *Karma*, *dharma*, *Pāpa*, *māyā*, *samsāra*, and *Mokṣa* because they can access Sanskrit literature.

Srinivas's idea was challenged by different "...izations" after 1960. The critics have argued that "modernization," "industrialization," "Westernization," and "Christianization" would solve the upward mobility constraints of caste-based society. However, not all "...izations" did replace the structure. After 1990, de-Sanskritization emerged in the tribal communities or the so-called lower castes. Unlike Sanskritization, the importance of "tribalization" and "ethnicization" emerged. This was observed in Sikkim (Sinha, 2006). My observation in our society here is that the door is kept open for a long "Neo-Sanskritization process." When I started fieldwork at Gurukuls, I found changes between the times of my Gurukul age and now.

After the 1990s, Sanskritization shifted to De-Sanskritization, as Sinha observed. De-Sanskritization was seen because of the 'politics of identity.' Moreover, ethnicization was promoted. However, different forms of Sanskritization are spread via new media or the internet. At the same time, neo-classicism and reemergence of Gurukul education created flickers of fusion between comprehensive modern curriculums with caste inclusion at Gurukuls. Now, no need to go to observe the "social upward mobility" to tribal or "caste hierarchical societies." In recent decades, so-called high caste people can be found imitating the previous lifestyle of the so-called lower caste.

In other words, Brāhmins have adopted the habit of drinking liquor, and other caste people are adopting the previous lifestyle of the Brāhman. Conventional media and new media have been spreading the lifestyle and making it easy to get knowledge and skills publicly. Sharma (1977) analyzed "caste, social mobility, and Sanskritization" in light of "Nepal's old legal system." After his analysis, three different constitutions have been promulgated in Nepal. Since 2006, the country has adopted an inclusive democracy, and the education system has mainstreamed classical monastic education. The current analysis needs the background of the past observation. Sharma (1977) categorized the caste hierarchy according to the old legal system as follows:

Figure 25*The old Legal System in Nepal*

(Source: Sharma, 1977, p. 282)

In contemporary Nepal, such an idea is punishable and against the constitution. Now, previously known as "Tagadhari," "Matwali," "Pani chalne," and "pani nachale," all can chant Veda and can perform rituals with the mantra. Gurukuls are not limited to Guru's home or Guru temple premises. Present-day Gurukuls teach not only Sanskrit and "Karmakāṇḍa" but also all compulsory subjects, computer, and Karmakāṇḍa. Gāyatrī's mantra is not as secret as during the troika- M. N Srinivas, Prayag Raj Sharma, and Ganesh Man Gurung.

Moreover, Gurukul has not remained only for boys, but it has become for girls as well. The Constitution of Nepal is inclusive, and as a result, a Dalit or ethnic boy and girl can recruit the post of Pandit or priest of the Nepal Army, Nepal Police, and Armed Police Force. The categories are set for reservation quota too. Legal caste hierarchy has been eradicated, but representational caste reservation is provisioned. This caste representation is set for other institutions, including Sanskrit universities. Now, learned Dalits and females can join such posts and become national agencies' Pandits. The Neo-Sanskritized Gurukuls are open to all castes. Kathmandu Girls Gurukul (KGG) is an example. KGG products have learned the subjects, and some can perform ritual work (Karmakāṇḍa), including Rudrābhishek.

The diversified caste groups can perform their ritual works by themselves, acquiring different mediums and open sources from inclusive Gurukuls. Nobody can object to it. All can remove their sufferings- *Trisūl* and acquire knowledge for liberation (Mokṣa). Lord Śiva (Trilochana) destroys three Guṇa- Sattva, Raja Tama as

well as the demon Maya's¹¹² city Tripur¹¹³ by using his weapon *Trisūl* and providing peace and liberation to the devotees (Varma, 1964).¹¹⁴

Ādhyātmika, *Ādhibhautika*, and *Ādhidaivika* are three *Śuls* or sufferings that are there at the *Trisūl*, and other *Trisūl* of Jñāna Śakti, Kriyā Śakti, and Ichhā Śakti are three Śaktis or power to remove the Śuls. This is a trident of knowledge. The Trident of Knowledge or *Trisūl* has three Śaktis (powers): Jñāna Śakti and Kriyā Śakti and Ichhā Śakti, which struck me when I studied 'Sanskritization' in M. A. in Anthropology at Tribhuvan University in 1994. The term hit me since I am in a caste-based society. Nepali and Indian societies are almost similar because religious and spiritual philosophies are the same. The caste structure and its relation to social change are debatable. I learned the idea of Sanskritization, achieved *Jñāna Śakti*, and kept searching for *Ichhā Śakti* for its implementation. I studied society through the lens of caste discrimination and its shifting waves. My *Ichhā Śakti* found both types of data of caste isolation and the inclusion of registered Gurukuls.

I found a process of modernization taking place in the Gurukul education system. The first important feature was the girl's Gurukul ran caste-inclusive, and the second important feature was the re-emergence of Vedic education. It has attracted government policy bodies driven by the foreign donor community. The policy program was the School Sector Reform Plan-SSRP (Government of Nepal, 2009), which addressed Gurukul/*Āśram* as traditional/ religious schools and aimed to mainstream them. Such Gurukuls were not registered in the past. They taught students in Nepal, and their assessment was made by Indian institutions running in Vārāṇasī, Ayodhya, and other places. The child's birth was registered, but the national figures did not show education. So, the students were 'out-of-school children in the educational data of Nepal. Such changes created me, *Ichhā Śakti*, for this study, and this thesis is an outcome. I have analyzed this trident of knowledge with my research participants also. First, I intend to state a path leading from Sanskritization to Neo-Sanskritization.

¹¹²असुर मय

¹¹³त्रिपुर

¹¹⁴शान्तिवैराग्यबोधाख्यैस्त्रिभिरप्रैस्तरस्त्रिभिः ।

त्रिगुणं त्रिपुरं हन्ति त्रिशूलेन त्रिलोचनः ॥

Neo-Sanskritization: Constitution, Classicism and New Gurukuls

This *Trisūl* is a way forward to wisdom, solution, and shifting, which has a trinary position of *Jñāna Śakti*, *Ichhā Śakti*, and *Ichhā Śakti*. Similarly, Neo-Sanskritization also has a trinary set of social change perspectives in caste-based Nepali society, which occurs by the country's constitution, reemerging Gurukul education and neoclassicism. I look at it chronologically with three phases of constantly changing social psychology. Neo-Sanskritization was obtained in the Vedic education system in Nepal in terms of a revisited Gurukul system. A revisit to the Gurukul education system in Nepal around 2000 A.D. was when the process of Sanskritization yielded space to the process of Neo-Sanskritization. Then the new Gurukuls registered themselves with the government, as did the boarding schools. The trend took the shape of social change after 2010, when nearly 150 Gurukuls were registered. Also, there were several non-registered Gurukuls as well. Traditionally, a Gurukul is the home of a Guru and not an object to be registered to the government structure. Nonetheless, the registered Gurukuls had started modifying the conventional teaching style of limited subjects and "the Guru's pedagogy." They were going beyond the ancient diameter of Gurukul.

The Gurukuls are not meant only for Brāhmins. Similarly, it may now go beyond ancient days' natural settings. There are diversities. Some are running only for Brahmins. Some others are running inclusive, while others are running inclusive but only for girls. Among them, a few operate and are equipped with sophisticated facilities. But many others operate either with moderate facilities or with very few facilities. Public donation is their major income source. I was surprised to see the educational data at the education department, and the educational activities run in the different parts of Nepal in 2010.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007, was one of the main causes of Neo-Sanskritization, which introduced identity politics and a reservation system in public institutions. The country was breathing in peace after a decade-long Maoist insurgency. Nepali society was searching for its traditional subject of Sanskrit that removed the pressure of the insurgency. According to the demand, the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) incorporated a provision for mainstreaming conventional schools. The registration, recognition, and regulation system started.

The third ground was the neoclassical attraction in society. Mixture presentations of past and present, traditional and modern, and natural and technical

sets have become popular. This is neoclassicism. The neo-state demanded classical education and cultural activities, which helped shift Sanskritization to Neo-Sanskritization. This struck me. I also decided to follow the emerging social change in Sanskrit education and caste system. I had been following some inclusive Gurukuls. Though some failed to sustain, others were getting established. However, the problem was of keeping consistency for many Gurukuls. Thus, the three aspects- the reemergence of Vedic education, Constitutional provisions of reservation, and socio-psyche of neoclassicism have developed the state of Neo-Sanskritization.

In the meantime, the Sociological/Anthropological society of Nepal (SASON) called for papers for an international conference being organized in 2013. I sent my accepted paper and presented it at the conference. There were senior professors of sociology and anthropology too. They eagerly listened to it, and I defended my argument by responding to some scholars there. Finally, my paper was published in the conference proceedings published by Adroit India in 2018.

I was constantly interviewing many Dalit leaders and professionals about the possibilities of upward mobility in the Dalit community. I had been observing their lifestyle and problems. I was comparing my neighbor's youth, who was my friend in school education, but I went up for higher education, and he is in the machine of "cultural reproduction," as Pierre Bourdieu analyzes. I would repeatedly ask, 'How am I here and why not my neighbor boy?' In search of the answer, one day, I met Dalit leader Padam Singh Bishwakarma who was a former chairman of the National Dalit Commission, Nepal. He knew Sanskrit and Śāstras. I talked with him again and again for several days. Finally, I synthesized his input with other interviews and the changing context of Gurukul's education. That made my paper for the SASON international conference. The paper's topic was "Neo-Sanskritization for inclusive development through comprehensive education." This idea is an inseparable journey of this thesis.

The re-emergence of the (modernized) Gurukul system has been a major tool for social change in the paper. In such Gurukul, all caste boys can study together residentially to learn from each other. Girls can do the same. This is a school system where the students can learn from Vedic subjects to modern subjects, including information technology. They can learn spirituality, morality, character building, and science and technology together. My claim is that the comprehensive education system would remove education and caste hierarchy discrimination and fulfill upward

mobility from Sanskritization to Neo-Sanskritization. Feminization is an outcome of Neo-Sanskritization.

Feminizing Priesthood: Purohit, Pūja, and Yajamāna

Recently, firstly, certain clients want only the female priest. It is another trend of Neo-Sanskritization. Some of my research participants, the girls, started priesthood, and the *Yajamāna* (clients) hired the girls for ritual works, including Rudrī. Second, are astrologers. A group of curious people goes to a female astrologer. To fulfill the requirement, more than 20 female astrologers are coming to the market soon from a Gurukul of Tanahun, Devghāt. Thirdly, another 20 can perform Vedānta lectures. Puranic storytelling by females is not new.

The tendency shows that Dalits and Janajātis also will come to lamplight in such rituals. Neoclassicism has been promoting Neo-Sanskritization. Mental stress will be the world's largest problem daily, and people will not sleep without having pills. Natural tranquilizer is in the Śāstras. The ancestors experienced such tranquilizers for peace of mind through ritual. Paradigm *Trisūl* is a major worldview for Neo-classical and Neo-Sanskritized societies. Macaulay and Wood's pedagogy tried eradicating such traditional systems, but they are reviving them. There was *Trisūl*, which is now and will be forever with a bundle of meanings.

Linking with the paradigm to Neo-Sanskritization, some of my research participants can now perform priesthood. They have also learned English, Nepali, Sanskrit, and computers. They are not only priests but girl priests of the 21st century who know multilingualism and technology. They conduct both Puranic storytelling and ritualistic services like Vedic rituals, including Rudrābhishek. However, girls' Rights have been repeatedly questioned by Gurus in conventional Gurukuls. Some persons in Devghāt are curious and ask their Gurus of boys' Gurukul: whether women could give service of Karmakāṇḍa (ritual)—mahilale Karmakāṇḍa garauna hunchha?¹¹⁵ The Guru answered: gari nai sake, garna hunchha ki hunna bhanne prashnai bhayena¹¹⁶ (have already made the performance, no question of Right or wrong). This is the major proof of my exploration of the changing society.

Some people propose to the same Guru to make his famous Gurukul rather than a co-educational Gurukul. However, the Guru answers: "there are girls' Gurukuls

¹¹⁵ महिलाले कर्मकाण्ड गराउन हुन्छ?

¹¹⁶ गराई नै सके, गर्न हुन्छ कि हुन्न भन्ने प्रश्न नै रहेन ।

already running to produce the female priest, why do we have to do this?" I can read the changing psychology of the Gurus, that they have gradually accepted the feminization of Vedic education and ritual services. On the contrary, up until 2020, the Guru adamantly dismissed the possibility, despite my repeated inquiries about the variance in years of fieldwork. However, in 2022, the Guru came across a news story in the media featuring the priest from the girls' Gurukul conducting a ritual service for a wedding ceremony in the Chitwan region. After the girls' activities, the reactions are found to be modified among many Gurus. Their sense is- let them do.

Want of Ethnic Priests with Vedamantra

Not only the girls but Dalits are demanding Vedic education in the Gurukuls. They want to produce their priests in fulfilling the requirements for their rituals. For this reason, they went to Jagat Guru Āśram, Lalitpur. But the parents could not enroll their boys. They say the donors have provided donations only for certain boys. As a result, enrolling such boys is impossible. Retaining is crucial if they enroll because the Gurukul lifestyle is harder than other schools. Padam Lal Bishwakarma, former chair of National Dalit Ayog, told me his conviction that all castes should learn in the same modern Gurukul, which is the real practice of "Sahanābunatu Sahana Bhunaktu..."¹¹⁷ as stated in Vedānta. The Upaniṣadic mantra means coexistence during learning and eating, which maintains sustainable peace.

During this learning, I have spent much time in a famous religious/spiritual bookhouse and libraries in Kathmandu, where we could sit and read for hours, days, and months. I have experienced that many young people from the Janajāti ethnic group come to search for learning centers for Sanskrit and Tantra. This is awareness of Neo-classicism, and its destination is Neo-Sanskritization. Some Janajātis learn in different places in Kathmandu valley but want to keep the venues private. They want to chant Vedamantra like Brāhman priests.

Anxiety and mental disorders are increasing, and people are searching for ways for peace of mind. They go to religion, ritual, yoga, meditation, and Tantra for this. Nepal has 81.2 percent of the population is Hindu. Urbanization and postmodern lifestyle demand postmodern ritualistic styles. In so doing, many people go to

ॐ सहनाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहे ।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहे । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ Sahanābabatu.

Sahanaubhunaktu. SahabiryamKarababhai. Tejaswi nāvadheetamastu mā vibvishabhai. Om Shantihi, Shantihi, Shantihi.

Chitwan to take ritual service from the girl priests. Many others demand the girls. Some feminists also prefer the girl priest. It seems that it goes beyond gender. Dalits and ethnic communities may also prefer their priest like Brāhman.

Vedic Gender *Ardhanārīśvara*¹¹⁸: Śiva, Śakti, and Nara

According to Trika Siddhanta of Kashmir Shaivism, Śiva only can not produce success, and Śakti or Devī is essential. At the same time, there is Nara, who does sādhana of Śiva and Śakti. With the sādhana, the person can achieve the *Triśūl* or trident of knowledge. The knowledge is achieved by gaining a trinary set of *Jñāna Śakti*, *Kriyā Śakti*, and *Ichhā Śakti* (Singh, 1989). Here, in my study, KGG founder Mālatī is a sādhak who prayed to the *Ardhanārīśvara* idol of Paśupatināth temple. The idol is north facing in the temple. She propagated *Ardhanārīśvara* theory of gender perspective for girl-centric Gurukul education. As a prayer, she has a conviction that KGG girls will be chanting Vedic mantras, and females will interpret *Dharmaśāstra*. This notion of a gender perspective is also an outcome of Neo-Sanskritization.

In other words, Neo-Sanskritization has not been limited to chances of all caste-Pandit-production and recruitment but also has brought gender theory as well. The girls who chant Veda-mantra and provide ritual services are revolutionary in learning and performance. They have been following Vedic gender perspectives. There is a distinct joint statue of lord Śiva and Parvati in Paśupatināth Śiva Linga. The image is seen from the northern gate of the temple. The joint form of half god and half goddess has been called "*Ardhanārīśvara*". Lord Śiva and Parvati have several forms, but they are integrated.

They are combined with *Śiva* and *Śakti* (power). Śiva acquires powers from *Śakti* (Parvati), and Parvati prays to Śiva. Several verses include Tantra as the result of the interaction between the two. Parvati asks queries, and Śiva delivers answers. They are complete with half of each other. The devotee is the third character who knows gender equality and non-dualism. It is the state of "Advaita." Thus, this is the *Ardhanārīśvara* theory of gender equality. This is the Vedic theory of gender.

So far, the issue of menstruation, the *Ardhanārīśvara* status of Śiva and Parvati, does not manifest in the menstrual period. It is said that there was no menstrual physiology during *Satya Yuga*. People were created mentally and told as "manas putra/putri." However, the girls in my study area have been following the

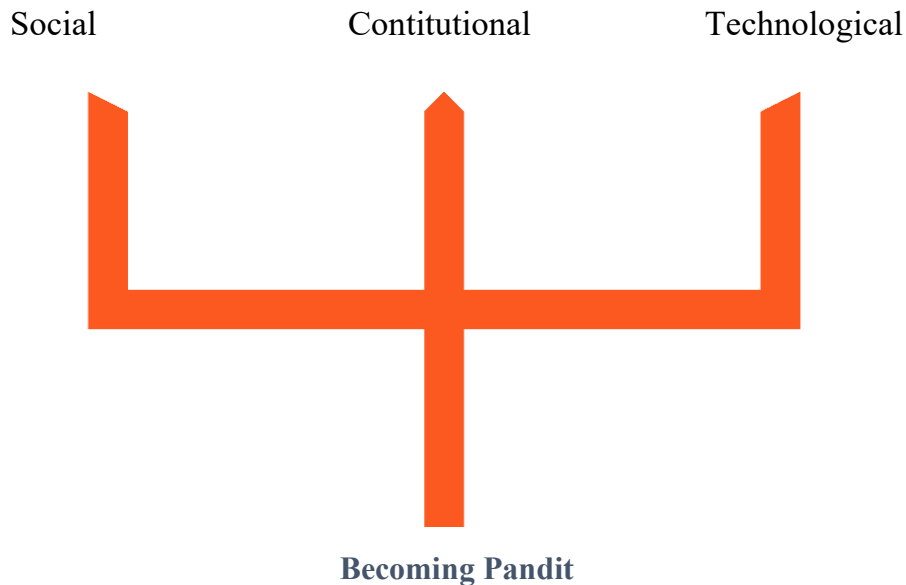
¹¹⁸अर्धनारीश्वर

rules and regulations of Hindu society on menstrual isolation. They go for ritual services for five days. Likewise, they are cautious about ancestral ritual service. Still, they hesitate to perform Shraddha¹¹⁹, an ancestral praying ritual. Thinking paradigmatically, they have a strong "trident of knowledge" where they have been using *Jñāna Śakti*, *Kriyā Śakti*, and *Ichhā Śakti*.

At the same time, they are on the other side of the *Trisūl* paradigm. The paradigm depicts seen, seen and unseen, and unseen sufferings, which are *Ādhyātmika*, *Ādhidaivika*, and *Ādhibhautik*. The girls have a fear of *Trisūl*. As a result, the act they have been performing is not a revolutionary women/gender movement; it is only a path leading to Vedic gender. In other words, the girl priests have maintained community cohesion for smooth gender roles. The sanitary pad has become a solution instead of isolation. No one knows about the period. Though they could have taken painkiller pills to suppress the menstrual pain, they can not perform their job. Joseph (2019, 2020) called that this is femininity, and they need to rest at that time. However, the competitive age of gender equality does not want to show weak conditions. The trend shows that they take a pill and suppress the pain. Then they look for equal opportunities in the market. Why not in ritual works if they can suppress in military service, judiciary, and sports? I have seen that some female journalists do not go for reporting in the Paśupatināth area during the four days, citing different causes than menstruation. The male reporter goes and brings the news.

Similarly, all Pandits can not go to all places to perform rituals, and they send substitutes. If so, why does the female priest not send a substitute girl priest when she cannot be presented at the venue? The reservation quota and means of inclusion have the idea of substitute because the provisions have indicated that female priests can be recruited for the job. The *Trisūl* diagram shows the trident of becoming Pandit by everyone:

¹¹⁹ श्राद्ध

Figure 26*Proofs of Neo-Sanskritization*

The insights of the pace of social change in Nepal and India will be examined after Srinivas's work. He studied the caste-based Indian society during his times by influencing the structural-functional concept of Radcliff Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski. The Sanskritization stage has shifted from De-Sanskritization to Neo-Sanskritization. There is no single reality of only one lifestyle copying of the upper caste by the lower caste. Legal, technological, and economic changes have also brought advanced social changes. Forms of thoughts, perspectives, and worldviews have been changed. Teaching-learning processes have changed. There is no bounded Vedic knowledge within the Brāhmans. All castes and genders have access to Brāhmanical learning. Constitution and laws have guaranteed the Rights. Social and cultural restrictions are liberated. Most Brāhmans are no longer Brāhmans according to their conduct as provisioned in the Dharmaśāstra. Non-Brāhmans are becoming Brāhmans because of their knowledge gaining.

A large number of people in the world have been attracted to Neoclassicism. Searching for classical knowledge and learning the traditional aptitudes is a subject of attraction. Sanskritization also shifted to the Neo stage. "Multi-reality," or the Existence of multiplicity, has emerged far beyond the then-social structure. Multi-relational and multi-dimensional connections have been extended. The liberal economy has shifted to a neoliberal state. According to Uprety (2021), "pre-capitalist caste-stratified" villages have moved to cash transactions instead of the traditional barter system. People have been searching for different alternative ways of cash

income. It is no exception that Gurukul education is a lucrative vocational training. Females, Dalits, and Janajatis have started going to Gurukul. The modernized and inclusive Gurukuls are not traditional Gurukul. They are a mix of traditional and modern settings. They do not only learn Brāhmanical texts but also learn computer, English, and modern subjects with mixed classes. They exchange their knowledge and background at the Gurukul. Still, the students need science subjects so that the Gurukul products become priests, language experts, teachers, doctors, and engineers. Finally, Gurukuls bring emancipation for removing all kinds of *Śuls* from the *Triśūl* with extended realities of unity in diversity.

The Essence of the Chapter

Behind the shift from Sanskritization to Neo-Sanskritization has been a set of different components, including the law against casteism, technological development, and globalization. Historical Āryāvarta is expanded because of migration. Vedic knowledge has been spread to every corner of the globe with migration. Acculturation and diffusionism are obvious. People of different classes and castes want to be active in the ancient education system for several reasons, including making a profession in ritual service in their community. Feminization is growing in every sector, and cultural and ritual fields cannot be ignored. It has greatly helped the girls move towards feminizing Vedic education and ritual services. Social change is underway through the Gurukuls in the caste-based Nepali society. Birth only cannot determine learning Vedic education and performing the priestly ritual services. If the client demands and accepts, there is no caste and gender restriction to the girls' ritual performance.

CHAPTER IX

REFLECTION AND CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter reflects a trinary set of gaining, confusing, and locating me during the research work. I have reflected a *Trisūl* of reality, knowledge, and value, which are ontological, epistemological, and axiological experiences. Likewise, it deals with the other *Trisūl* of research questions in meeting the answers, its theoretical blending, and the paradigmatic frame. Lastly, I have concluded and have suggested some implications of this thesis.

Ontological Impression

Ontology is a state of being or reality. Whatever I have written here, the state of being is mainly an outcome of a trident that combines "Time Theory"- I am the time boon of Goddess Sarasvatī and the *Trisūl* paradigm.

To begin, I would like to initiate this discussion by delving into the concept of Time Theory. Prior to embarking on this thesis, my theoretical framework adhered to structural functionalism. However, I eventually transitioned to Neo-Sanskritization, adopting a critical perspective within a caste-based patriarchal society. This shift can be attributed to the influence of Time Theory. Social and cultural thinking of social actors is changing as time has changed in different eras. In other words, my time has seen the spontaneous renaissance of the Gurukul system, mainstreaming the reemerged education system through government plans/programs and girls chanting mantras for ritual work as priests. I have documented the times of social change and the mobility from pre-Vedic to post-Vedic concerning female status under educational anthropology.

Furthermore, my perception of Goddess Sarasvatī's bliss and the socio-psychological landscape underwent a transformation over time. This sense of bliss enveloped me as the first chapter unfolded, marked by a trinary relationship among three elements: knowledge, the goddess herself, and the one who chants. As a chanter, I had started chanting the verse to complete this thesis to gain knowledge, and I am happy that I have acquired something from her bliss.

Thirdly, being multiple realists, I tried to open a bundle of *Trisūl* paradigm. I am convinced that I am also affected by the *Trisūl* of *Adhayatmik*, *Ādhidaivika*, and

ĀdhiBhautik sufferings. So, I was searching for the ideas of another bundle of *Trisūl*—*Jñāna Śakti*, *Kriyā Śakti*, and *Ichhā Śakti*. Within this paradigmatic context, I am reflecting on the realities as an ontological reflection. "Reflection, whether it consists of thought directed to oneself, discussed with another, or privately written, is the act of pondering various components of the research project to make sense of and gain a personal understanding of their meanings" (Saldana, 2015, p. 8). Combining *Dukha (Śul)* and knowledge removes the *Dukha* and brings *Sukha*.

I had chosen this topic with the problem statement of why my female relatives had no Right to study Veda and why the girls have Right now. That was not only my question but the problem statement of many curious people.

Throughout the entire process of working on this thesis, I frequently encountered a recurring question that originated during the proposal phase: "Is it appropriate for a female to study the Vedas?" "Should they learn and chant it?" How can they survive after completing Gurukul's education? Do they get a job as a Pandit?" "Will society accept them?"

Now, as a student of Gurukul, I present the answers to this question. My attraction to this topic stems from a threefold perspective: the spontaneous revival of the Gurukul system, global interest in integrating traditional education through school sector reform programs, and the societal transformation of Sanskritization into its neo-state within the era of Neo-Hinduism. In this context, I have put forth several purposes of the study:

- A. Exploring the emergence of girls' Vedic education in the modern context in Nepal.
- B. Describing the gender condition of Vedic mantra recitation for girls in the country.
- C. Analyzing the reemergence of Vedic education in Nepal.
- D. Examining girls' position in the Neo-Sanskritization process, finding out the genderization under Vedic education, and finding out recent trends of the Neo-Sanskritization process in Nepal.

Considering the objectives, I had triadic responsibilities as a student, a Sanskritization researcher, and a news editor/presenter on national television. This was a *Trisūl* embedded with *Dukha* and *Sukha* and confusion within the trident, but I had to explore *Sukha*. I had to compromise on major benefits for suitable work shifts in the station that helped me to complete coursework. Class assignments,

presentations, group works, fieldwork, paper writing, and publishing were challenging. However, the hardship pushed me into academic activities as my first paper was accepted for an international conference organized by Nepal's sociological/anthropological society (SASON) in 2013. The chair of the session, anthropology professor Laya Prasad Uprety, encouraged me to engage in anthropology after reading my full paper on Neo-Sanskritization. I was asking for input to improve the paper. But he told me: you were missing out, now you come to fraternity, and you will be immortal for this paper. Thus, the paper writing and presentation journey continued yearly at international and national conferences.

These all-academic steps had the background of PhD requirements of Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED). The professors pushed me to write short and long papers for classwork. Two qualifying papers—one thematic and another methodological were compulsory. In addition, a paper presentation at two national or international conferences and a couple of paper publications in peer-reviewed journals were a must. The requirements created an addiction to paper writing and presentation among the community of practice.

Doing my PhD was a real training where I worked as a teaching assistant in 2013 for MPhil/PhD classes on Foundations of Education (FOE) and teacher for Communications for Sustainable Development in masters' classes in 2016. I collected different experiences in the field of teaching activities.

Despite having limited proficiency in English, I had prior experience in writing theses for several master's degrees. My English language skills saw gradual improvement through actively participating in class discussions and presenting before professors and classmates. Consequently, I gained the ability to engage in academic activities at international scholarly gatherings. It boosted me in reaching sources of knowledge in my works and academics. The foundation classes for my PhD changed me, so I developed my first research work for a national media research conference published in SASON Journal in the 2013 issue. Then, I developed a new proposal and shifted to this topic.

This pivotal moment began with the Department of Education (DoE) of the government of Nepal. I visited the DoE to collect data for a take-home assignment on the Economics of KUSOED in 2013. According to the data, the Government of Nepal terminated the Sanskrit curriculum from school education in 1999. The general people started Gurukuls from a non-governmental level. That was a spontaneous initiation by

the general public. Likewise, girls were also enrolled in the Gurukuls though some were for part-time learning. The feminization of Veda education resulted from the influence of the re-emergence of Gurukul education. The opening initiation of girls Gurukuls was influenced by the gender motive of "why girls cannot learn if boys can do it?" Some taught Sanskrit only, some taught Puranic education, and Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul (KGG) was Veda-centric. In other words, that was spontaneous feminization.

The voluntary campaign of opening Gurukul knocked policy makers and donor agencies. As a result, the national sectoral plan of education (School Sector Reform Plan- SSRP, 2008-2013) mentioned such educational streams. The plan adopted a provision of 'main streaming traditional schools' where Gurukul/Āśram, Gumbā (Bihar), and Madarsha, too. With the plan's provision, DoE started distributing lump sum grants yearly for such schools. Thus, the government came as a helping hand with donors' money that linked the Gurukuls to global connection.

The Feminization of Vedic education was not started under any context. But there were different backgrounds for this change. One was the re-emergence of Vedic education through registering Gurukul in government bodies in 1995. Swāmi Rāmānanda Giri had started Mahesh Sanskrit Gurukul in Devghāt. After a few years, other Gurukuls were also registered and modified institutionally. This trend made them feel needed by different actors in their community Gurukul. Inclusive Gurukuls were also opened.

Second, some boys' Gurukul managers started separate sections for girls. For example, Swāmi Kamala NayanAcharya ran Muktinath Kanyā Gurukulam specializing in Puraṇa and Sanskrit (Timilsina, 2016). The Gurukul had sent two batches of girls to Ayodhya (India) for examination of Matrix. (After two batches, the Gurukuls stopped girls' education and focused only on boys). Founders of Muktinath Kanyā Gurukulam and other Gurukuls have seen the paradigm of *Trisūl*, where concerned persons want welfare and, finally, liberation. All have the trident of *Jñāna*, *Kriyā*, and *Ichhā Skakti* for doing and stopping the efforts. Similarly, they are all guided by another facet of *Trisūl*- *Ādhyatmika*, *Ādhidaivika*, and *Ādhibhautika* Dukha.

The third reason was an international recommendation. The United Nations Organization's woman agency UNIFEM studied the status of women in the Hindu tradition in collaboration with the World Hindu Federation in 2005. The study

confirmed that women in the Vedic society were in a higher position but suffered when they were deprived of Gurukul education.

The primary recommendation in the UNIFEM report was the initiation of Gurukuls for girls. The research report focused on the idea of fostering a liberated self through education. As per the report, it suggested the establishment of at least one girls' Gurukul in each district. In response to the report, a member of the same study committee took the initiative to establish the Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul in Kathmandu, marking a significant turning point in the feminization of Vedic education. I believe that goddess Sarasvatī showed me *Triśūl*'s idea of analysis and sent me to different places for inquiry for almost a decade, though I had defended the thesis proposal in 2016. In 2013, the almighty assigned me to reflect on social change through educational and technological changes.

I saw multiple realities in the field. That is consolidated with multiple realities of a *Triśūl*. Uma Chakravarti's "Brāhmanical patriarchy" is dominant as a spear of the trident. This contests Manusmṛiti as well as Kaundinnyana's Vedic education to dvija females. The second spear of the *Triśūl* has Judith Butler's "Performativity," which criticizes "prohibition and taboo" against women. Third, I saw a spear with Ardhanārīśvara theory and Sinu Joseph's "femininity." In Ardhanārīśvara's gender equality, males and females are inseparable. Likewise, "femininity" distinguishes men and women on the grounds of reproductive health differences only. These multiple notions of ideas can find in the ground where I visited.

Experiencing and realizing the ontological contexts, I presented my fieldwork and concurrent data before my fraternity of social sciences in collecting the feedback. In doing so, publications and conference papers made me a runner between Gurukuls and academic circles. I visited various types of boys' and girls' Gurukuls and looked at them comparatively. I saw a trident of caste, class, and gender going together there in the field and tried to present it before the scholarly gatherings. In doing so, I wrote papers on different associated issues, and simultaneously I presented the recent changing trends in Sanskritization at the conferences.

Firstly, I want to mention some of my write-ups for journals that I prepared soon after my fieldwork. I visited different Gurukuls and loved to publish my observations of the issues in question. At this juncture, I found that the 'Sandhyopāsan' ritual is taught in all Gurukuls as a compulsory subject. It comprises yoga, meditation, and mantra. The duration of this ritual performance is 27 minutes. I

observed the practice in Gurukuls, reviewed the textbooks, and analyzed it. The title "Sandhyopāsan: The Hindu ritual as a foundation of Vedic education" was published in the Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology in 2015. The paper gave me insight into different practices between boys' and girls' Gurukuls. This indicated that the syllabus was not gender friendly, but the girls were learning everything except its partial practice, unlike the boys.

In addition, in 2016, I authored an article titled "Gender Perspective on Vedic Education: Current Practices in Nepal," which was subsequently published in the same journal. The article reflects the on-the-ground observations, highlighting two prevailing perspectives on imparting Vedic education to girls. One approach involves teaching the Vedas to girls like boys, while the alternative perspective involves teaching subjects such as Vedic studies, Puranic literature, and Sanskrit to girls, excluding direct.

Thirdly, in 2017, I wrote for *Gurukul Sandesh*, a yearly publication of the Nepal Government's Gurukul management council. My topic in Nepali was "Vaidik Śikṣā ko Swasphurta Punarjagan¹²⁰ (Spontaneous renaissance of Gurukul education in Nepal)". The write-ups focused on how people are donating pennies from their pockets to establish and run the Gurukuls.

Fourthly, in 2019, I saw the geopolitics of education in the emergence of neo-Hinduism and Neo-Sanskritization. So, I wrote an analysis for Shrutī Prabha Journal in Nepali entitled "Nawa-Hinduvad, Nawa-Sanskritikaran ra Nepali Śikṣāko Bhu-Rajniti¹²¹ (Neo-Hinduism, Neo-Sanskritization and geopolitics of Nepali education). In addition to the publications, paper submission, acceptance, and presentation, face-to-face feedback collection was vital for me. So, I presented papers in different academic forums in Nepal and Shillong, India. In so doing, two were major conferences where I collected insightful input; they helped improve my notion. Conferences organized in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2020 were the best places for feedback collection conceptually over the 2013 proposition of Neo-Sanskritization. In 2016, I presented at the first international conference on transformative educational research and sustainable development—TERSD jointly organized by Kathmandu

¹²⁰ वैदिक शिक्षाको स्वस्फूर्त पुनर्जागरण

¹²¹ नवहिन्दूवाद, नवसंस्कृतीकरण र नेपाली शिक्षाको भूराजनीति

University and Murdoch University (Australia) at Dhulikhel, Kavre. My topic was Modernizing Vedic Schools: Satya yug to Kali Yug.

The second was the 'Kathmandu Annual conference, 2017' organized by Social Science Baha. I presented on Reemergence of Gurukul in Nepal: Deconstructing Vedic tradition for girls. I discussed different "...izations" and changing Nepali society, especially in Vedic education. Similarly, in 2018, I presented a paper at a national seminar on "anthropology of Nepal: Issues, trends and discourses" organized by the Department of Anthropology, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara. My paper's topic was Beyond Sanskritization. The anthropologists suggested I coined "Neo-Sanskritization" rather than the presented topic. I coined "Neo-Sanskritization" in the 2013 SASON conference in-depth interviews with Pandits and Dalits. After several days of in-depth interviews with Padam Singh Biśwakarma, the first chairman of the National Dalit Commission, Nepal, and the term mused me.

In 2020, just before the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, I attended an "international seminar on Earth Ethics" organized by Lady Kane College, Shillong, India. My topic was Philosophy of Veda for a Sustainable Universe: A Śantipath Prayers Perspective. I presented on the reemergence of Vedic education in Nepal and its inclusiveness. That was focused on earth ethics through Veda-mantra chanting, called Śanti Pāth (Peace praying).

The engagements mentioned above have immersed me in Sanskritization and Neo-Sanskritization through interviews with scholars, Vedic experts, Sanskritists, Dalit leaders, social activists, and Gurukul managers, as well as the girls and boys. So far as the issue of girls' Gurukul is concerned, I have been studying it since 2013. In 2023, the girls started their ritual services as priests in the Karmakāṇḍa (ritual) market. They provide ritual services to individual homes and public spaces in Chitwan, Nawal Parāsī, and Tanahu districts. They also run rituals at wedding ceremonies.

Ultimately, from an ontological standpoint, I gathered various mindsets representing diverse realities. I presented a spectrum of *Trisūl* realities alongside fraternities and integrated the data once more. I refrain from adhering strictly to "restrictions and taboos" and aim to advocate for the recognition of the manifold states within society. Currently, I am also consolidating the situation from an epistemological perspective.

Epistemological Impression

The Crux of the research problem was why Vedic education is reemerging with separate girls Gurukul than in the past. I found one such Gurukul in Kathmandu. Then I took Kathmandu Kanyā Gurukul (KGG) as my research site. The founders of KGG had started it as a model school that tried to raise awareness on the trinary position of ideas on 'violence against women (VAW)" to show an equal status of females and *Ardhanārīśvara* philosophy of gender perspective (World Hindu Federation & UNIFEM, 2006).

Epistemologically, I used the meaning-making process from the Vedānta method of knowing. The *Trīsūl* of *Śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *Nididhyāsana*¹²² is a must method. *Śravaṇa* denotes listening to the Guru. Whoever I met during this course of research I took as Guru and listened carefully. Then I contemplated the information as done by *manana*. Finally, *Nididhyāsana* is the outcome of *Śravaṇa* and *manana*. *Manana* is a condition known. I have used these non-dual methods because I found all worldviews as only one result of the time. The time showed the changing practice of Veda education to the females. Time concretizes all notions of ideas in a particular era. This is the era of Neo-Sanskritization. So, all paradigms, including positivism, post-positivism, structural-functionalism, modernism, postmodernism, non-positivism, and criticalism, have been concretized to Neo-Sanskritization via the *Trīsūl* framework for this study.

Traveling to the field with the framework, I felt the information blizzard situation after completing the field note. I was about to select the classroom culture of the girls' Gurukul, but I remembered my professors' teaching at the classes that 'go-to idea rather than content.' I linked the professor's instruction with initial analytical work, which helped me derive themes (Saldana, 2015) from a holistic review of information collected from boys' and girls' Gurukuls. I compared the Gurukuls and discussed with Vedic experts/ scholars and the actors of the Gurukuls intensively, which helped me think holistically.

The girls adhered to the pedagogy, extracurricular activities, and school culture established by the Gurukul. However, they found themselves in a trinary position regarding their destination: one, 'to be a prestigious person' (*Thulo manchhe banne*); two, 'to become like guruāma' (*Guruāma jasto banne*); three, Jilla ma Kanyā

¹²² श्रवण मनन निदिध्यासन

Gurukul kholne (to open girls' Gurukul in own district). Such aims were gathered from prolonged, frequent visits, interviews, and discussions. However, I was feeling a kind of trouble with idea-making.

In the meantime, I watched my classmates' presentations at KUSOED and discussed developing the themes. I went to compare the girls' Gurukul with other Gurukuls holistically. 'Thus, I reached the trinary positions of the functions, which are recitation, ritual, and menstruation.

Moreover, another trident set encountered paradoxes or gaps, a mixture of Vedic and Western classical performances and sensitization on the feminization of Veda education. I could separate the Gurukul education from three angles- Veda, Vedic (puranic), and Sanskrit in Vedic tradition and their destination. In doing so, I tested the current situation of Sanskritization, and it reflects that the mobility has shifted to Neo-Sanskritization.

Similarly, I reached to Vedic gender perspective. That is a set of *Trisūl* arising from *Ardhanārīśvara* gender theory. In this theory, the idol of *Ardhanārīśvara* has both males and females, as well as their devotees. There is a coexistence between the two and the devotee. I took *Ardhanārīśvara* as gender equality, and the devotee can be taken as the society accepting the equal coexistence of males and females.

In distinguishing the three types of Vedic education, my background also helped. My pre-school education was Gurukul education at my father's Gurukul. Later, I was sent to Sanskrit education in school life in Pokhara, which generally taught Sanskrit literature, grammar, and ritual (Karmakāṇḍa), but there was no practical laboratory in the field of puja. That was a kind of general school specializing in Sanskrit. On the other hand, there was the pedagogy of Nepal Veda Vidyāśram in Kathmandu, where students were full-time learners of Veda and rituals. The products of the Veda Vidyā Āśram can go to all three ways of Veda, Vedic, and Sanskrit. The current Gurukuls run from the public sphere have adopted the same pedagogy of Nepal Veda Vidyāśram for Veda, Vedic, and Sanskrit.

Continuing Sanskrit education, there are 69 Sanskrit secondary schools in Nepal as data was gathered from the office of the controller of examinations under the National Examination Board. These are modified forms of Pathshala schools of the past. These are for Sanskrit, and half the number of the schools converted to general schools, but the name is the same 'Sanskrit Madhyamik Vidyālaya.' Sanskrit schools are also in an identity crisis; some have started Āśram-style Gurukul. For instance, in

recent years, the Sanskrit school of Pokhara and a similar Sanskrit school of Tanahun have run residential Gurukul for Veda education-focused pedagogy. The schools' products now prepare for all three Veda, Vedic, and Sanskrit streams. They can go beyond the three streams like me because there are compulsory general subjects, including English. This pedagogy helps with Neo-Sanskritization.

On the one hand, in this Neo-Sanskritization context, opening girls' Gurukul has a kind of competitive spirit of feminization in founders like Mālatī: the spontaneous public interest in opening the boys' Gurukuls. Mālatī saw a top Gurukul run by Swāmi Ramanda Giri and thought, why not for girls? She informed me. Government policy (SSRP) consolidated such schools as conventional schools.

Caste-inclusive Gurukuls also opened. The girls' and boys' inclusive Gurukuls have been running with a mixture of traditional ideas with modern techniques and technology. This is a consequence of the "Time theory (Main Samaya hun)"¹²³ of the Mahābhārata serial. The time has changed the social concept of caste, and gender taboos have been challenged though still there are prevailing concepts of "Brāhmanical patriarchy" as interpreted by Uma Chakravarti, "Veda education to Dvija female" by Kaundinnayāyan, "Performativity" by Judith Butler and "Femininity" of Sinu Joseph in the same time. Need not say that there is an idea of *Ardhanārīśvara* for time immemorial but has been questioned whether it's in practice.

On the other hand, there is high sensitization against caste, gender, and discrimination. Certainly, people want to be equal. As a result, all want to practice equal rituals and Sanskritized activities. So-called higher caste, who runs many Gurukuls do not want to take the so-called lower caste students. But this intention is not explicit because of the legal punishment of discrimination. So, they show different causes for rejecting the pupils. Other types of Gurukuls are inclusive, where all castes pupils have been studying in the same place. The third type is gender-sensitive, which has also seen three streams- Veda, Vedic, and Sanskrit. At the Veda Gurukul, the girls can chant mantras and perform ritual work similar to male priests. The second, Vedic schools are Puranic and Sanskrit. The third types of girls' Gurukul are Sanskrit and astrology.

Whatever types of the Gurukuls are run, all have the status of *Trisūl* or three types of sufferings, and they intend to remove such sufferings using another type of

¹²³ में समय हूँ

Trisūl of knowledge. Thus, there is not only the changing situation of feminization of Vedic education and Sanskritization but also a state of Neo-Sanskritization.

Axiological Impression

Axiology is a set of ethics, aesthetics, and morality. This trinary set is a virtue of Gurukul education. Sarasvatī Vandana (praying to the goddess of wisdom) is committed to one's ethical behavior throughout life. Discrimination between castes and gender is voiced, and as a result, other types of Gurukuls have been established. The problematization section of this thesis reflects the struggle for liberation from all kinds of suffering, discrimination, and humiliation. *Ardhanārīśwara* is a gender theory that has prevailed from civilization. Similarly, other theories and philosophies are out loud on the issues.

Likewise, the storyteller "The Time" has witnessed the struggle between truth and false. The time is a spectator of disputes over equal Rights in history, culture, and ritual. There is no doubt that there are sufferings, and the *Trisūl* paradigm mirrors the sufferings from seen, unseen or both seen and unseen. In addition, *Trisūl* is the same paradigm that can remove the sufferings from the knowledge. I made this conviction after completing the fieldwork and almost completing this write-up. In this stage, I am reflecting on the virtue ethics aspects of this journey.

Male researchers should face some sensitive issues while researching in a female field. It was a crucial situation for me. I could not stay nights after nine o'clock in the evening for observation at KGG, but that was optional for my data collection. Focusing on ethical considerations, my methodology helped me with smooth fieldwork. In collecting data, I could get help from three family members: wife Archana, son Ārabdha and daughter Sāmbi. I could observe Gurukul's class culture, educational atmosphere, and management aspects without obstacles. I respected the privacy of the participants where required. In this course, I have not mentioned the name of the girls and used their indicative numbers only.

Adhering to ethical considerations, I conducted interviews for my study with the participants' consent. It's worth noting that names like Mālatī and others are pseudonyms, as explicitly mentioned in my methodology chapter. I did participatory praying programs with the girls, tried to share my knowledge on concerned topics, and talked to teachers. In the same way, I occasionally visited boys' Gurukuls in different parts of the country. I followed the same ways in the Gurukuls I visited. Similarly, I mentioned secrecy, privacy, and respect while talking with different

persons to triangulate the information. Finally, these all are done for equal access to all the arenas of knowledge.

Meeting the Research Questions

Research endeavors commence with the formulation of research questions and culminate in their fulfillment. As I embarked on writing this thesis, I felt a sense of bliss from the goddess Sarasvatī, and I have successfully delved into and discovered the answers to the research questions. "Girls should not study Veda" is a traditional proverb in the gendered society. Similar discrimination can be observed among the castes too. However, my study site has been challenging the proverb. I could substantiate the answer by applying the paradigm of *Trisūl*. This is the answer to the overarching research question- "How has the process of the emergence of girls' Vedic education in the context of Nepal? Under the overarching questions, I also set four subsidiary research questions. The research questions were addressed in different data chapters of the thesis.

The first sub-research question was "what is the Vedic educational condition of Vedic mantra recitation for girls in Nepal?" Chapter four addressed the first research question. I bring a gist of the answer here. The girls have been chanting mantras similar to the boys. They have applied the popular quote: "practice makes a person perfect. I recorded the vocal and rhythmic chanting of randomly selected boys and girls reciting the Vedic mantra in the Chitwan district. An equal number of boys were chosen for comparison. The girls exhibited superior performance, as evaluated by a senior Guru, given that his home library served as the recording studio. This output was seen because of the best Veda Guru of Nepal Sanskrit University. The bliss of the goddess got the girls.

However, after shifting to Chitwan from Kathmandu, KGG was deprived of such Gurus. Despite the shifting, the first batch of girls who completed grade 12 could teach the juniors at least Rudrī because of their strong foundation of learning by the Guru. Rudrī is taken as a foundation for ritual mantras. However, such equal practice is challenged by traditional Gurus, "Dvija," only theorists and money-making minds. Many sorts of societies are not accepting equal learning. However, the girls get love from another section of society and become a celebrity for *Svastivācan* in various formal public functions.

The second sub-research question was: "2. How have the Nepali girl's Gurukul students experienced ritual performance in response to the reemergence of Vedic

education?" Chapter five set the answer to the question. In responding to this question, I found mainly trident states- pedagogy, daily ritual, and the market.

One, the pedagogy of Gurukul education is made for boys. The government-issued curriculum lacks any mention or consideration for girls. Both the curriculum and instructional and assessment components are exclusively designed for boys. The concept of menarche, the menstrual cycle, and related disturbances, as advocated by menstrual science educator Sinu Joseph for feminine health, is entirely absent. This means females are separated only for their reproductive health, and the pedagogy does not consider that. However, in 2022, the government published a criteria guideline for traditional educational institutions where free sanitary pad provision is stated. The words "sanitary pad" might be copied from general schools' guidelines. This is only one policy document that indicates for the first time that girls are in conventional schools (Gurukul/Āśram, Gumbā, and Madrasā).

Two, the Gurukul itself is not found gender-conscious in terms of the daily ritual of the students. Students are equal in respect of pedagogy and daily practice or daily culture. However, a disparity was found in the girls' Gurukul. In the boys' Gurukul, the student is compelled to perform the daily ritual of *Sandhyopāsan*, which is a foundation of Vedic education (Timilsina, 2015). The girls study *Sandhyopāsan* as prescribed in the textbook by the government but do separate prayers to Sarasvatī and different deities. This is discrimination. If they can chant similarly to boys, why not they cannot perform the same daily ritual? I encountered this question time and again during this study.

The third sub-research question emerged during fieldwork when the principal disappeared with multiple girls for four days. The question is: "In what way is menstruation a factor affecting teaching and learning processes as well as gender equality and paradoxes or gaps and challenges under the Gurukul education in Nepal?" Chapter six addressed the first part of the question, and chapter seven addressed the rest. In search of the answers, I visited two other girls' Gurukul and KGG. All have the same situation. Whoever becomes menstruated is absent for the days in the classroom. The eldest lady of KGG used the metaphor of the trees of *Katus* (Chestnut) and *Cilāune* (*Schima wallichii*). This means males and females are different, as taught by her father. It clearly shows the Brāhmanical patriarchy of Uma Chakravarti.

On the other hand, absentees for four days are femininity, as described by Sinu Joseph. Joseph claims this is a retrospective time for women about their health. Professional females use the sanitary pad and suppress their menstrual pain using pills and fulfill their duty wherever they are in the military or judiciary. Joseph disagrees with the practice, and the Gurukul practice is found according to Joseph's *Rtu Vidyā* (2020).

Preaching and doing are found in humans from several walks of life. That is found in this feminization campaign too. On the one hand, the academic female became the founder of KGG. On the other hand, they disappeared from the crises of sustaining the organization. They were donating cash, but fewer people were coming to the field to retain KGG in Kathmandu. Most founders disappeared when the main founder Mālatī became seriously ill and was hospitalized for months. On the other hand, in a government that may be communist or non-communist, no one provided land for KGG in Kathmandu.

Paśupatināth has an icon of *Ardhanārīśvara* that is half male and half female, and this reflects the Vedic theory of gender equality. However, the Paśupati Area Development Trust (PADT) rejected the proposal submitted by KGG, where a key person was also a founder of KGG. PADT has been investing in boys' Gurukul, and KGG has demanded equality for girls too. Juxtaposed, the demand was rejected time and again.

Similarly, society has paradoxes, and this thesis considers it a set of gaps in preaching, practicing, and advocating. A section of society highly praised the initiation of feminization of Veda education. The section invited the girls to chant mantras (*Svastivācan*) in various functions organized in Kathmandu. The girls performed the chanting even at functions where the President of Nepal and Prime Ministers were also present as chief guests. However, some people criticized teaching girls Veda. Vedic scholars who visited the classes also criticized the act, saying it was against *Dharmaśāstra*. The third group of society remained silent or neutral.

Likewise, among the campaigners, I found a gap. The Gurukul campaigners and founders motivate others to collect students for the Gurukul and publicize its importance. However, I saw that they were sending their child to a private English medium school.

Thus, there is a vast variance between preaching, practicing, and advocating the movement of Gurukul education. When they reach middle age, people are willing

to contribute to the ancestral knowledge system and donate to the campaign. Retirees, the elderly, and philanthropist people found eager to promote the traditional knowledge and skills for an ethical society. Likewise, the female founders advocated for female priests, but no one found inviting such priests to their ritual works organized at their respective homes. Boys are invited at an early age, but girls are found deprived of such money-making skills from an early age. I could not see such priesthood preparation from the very beginning.

The final sub-research question was set: "How has the status of the revival of Sanskrit education for girls occurred in the ethnographic sites?" Chapter eight addressed the sub-research question. The re-emergence of Vedic education is not only for certain castes or groups, but it has been reemerging with modern practice. Modern technology and traditional pedagogies have been combined for the child. The new practice is a process of Neo-Sanskritization.

Finally, research questions meet the answers in both ways: from the structural-functional angle of Manusmṛiti and from a feminist perspective. Addressing from the first perspective finds two goals for depriving females of Veda learning, daily practicing, and priesthood. Firstly, the distinct division of labor for males and females was determined by *Dharmaśāstra*. Secondly, females were protected for continuity of procreation because continuity of lineage had high value as perceiving a major resource of production, power, and civilization.

Conclusions

Opening and managing the *Gurukuls* for girls has a trinary correlation with global capitalism, the agenda of gender parity, and the declining state of the peasantry system of Nepal under neo-liberal capitalism. UNIFEM-funded research report prepared by the World Hindu Federation (WHF) convinced that power, *Paisa* (Money), and prestige within the society remained in the priesthood who is male, but females have traditionally been assigned other roles than the priesthood (WHF & UNIFEM, 2006). The research participant girls' socio-economic background is that of the traditional subsistence peasant economy, but of late, the peasant family members are gradually shifting to other cash-earning professions, as narrated by Uprety (2021). The girls joined Kathmandu Girls' *Gurukul* (KGG), aspiring to be like their *GuruĀmā*-Principal (*GuruĀmā jasto banne*), who was getting a monthly salary. *Mantra* chanting is a tough form of skill in Veda education,

which makes the student at least a strong priest because the rote learner chanter can learn many more Veda/Sanskrit disciplines.

Teaching Veda to girls with caste representation cannot remain without controversy in a caste-stratified politico-economically transforming society where a moderate group of people welcomes, an orthodox group opposes, and the third group remains silent/skeptic/neutral. Determining the eligibility of prospective students is the prerogative of *Guru* in Veda tradition. A professor from Nepal Sanskrit University taught the girls as his obedient pupils, where he showed that the girls have sufficient *mantra* recitation skills as prescribed by *Yājñavalkya Śikṣā*. The girls were found to be more talented than the same grader randomly selected boys of a *Gurukul* of Devghat while recording the same *Svastivācan mantra*. Even the boys forgot the words of the *mantras*. Despite sufficient learning achievement of the girls, Pashupati Area Development Trust (PADT) refused to support KGG as it is running a *Gurukul* for boys—a manifestation of the high level of gender discrimination with a deep-seated patriarchal attitude. The government officials could not directly oppose the efforts of feminization of Veda education, but they were unwilling to run parallel *Gurukul* for girls. Despite the challenges, the girls who learned the skills of chanting with hand signs can perform ritual work for their clients in the Chitwan and Nawalparasi districts. Goddess *Sarasvatī* has given bliss to the Neo-Sanskritized chanters of the *mantras*. A decade-long study of Neo-Sanskritization proved how girls could learn and become priests like males and earn where girls, with the completion of grade 12, are reciting *Rudrī* for their clients.

Public policy does not provide gender-sensitive pedagogy for Veda/*Gurukul* education, though Neo-Sanskritization-oriented inclusive *Gurukuls* are registered. Whole aspects of pedagogy- curriculum, instruction, and assessment system have been designed exclusively for boys embedded to produce priests and Sanskrit experts. The pedagogy needs to consider that there are girls, and they also learn in residential *Gurukuls* and can perform their rituals. The girls learn the boys' *Sandhyopāsan* daily ritual, but they do not perform in day-to-day practice. However, they are taught separate verses for prayer, the *Gāyatrī mantra*. Sinu Joseph's "femininity" or "Stritva" prevailed in the field. According to her "Ancient Science," recitation of the *Gāyatrī mantra* by women in the reproductive age causes reproductive disorders in women and triggers the development of masculine features like excessive facial hair, deepened male voice, and infertility (Joseph, 2020, pp. 276-

277). Aum is also prohibited in the age group female. The same notion is found in the field of KGG, though the *Gurukul* is established for gender equality.

Providing equal opportunities in a patriarchal society allows girls and women to showcase their skills in chanting mantras and performing ritual tasks for clients, just as boys and men do. Pedagogy designed for boys presents a challenging opportunity for talented learners. Girls can effectively cater to the ritual market of their clients by engaging in priesthood. This emerging trend responds to a segment of the ritual market that is actively seeking the feminization of ritual work. Caste, gender, and *Upanayana Saṁskāra* are eligibility criteria for learning Veda. However, a bundle of *Trisūl* paradigm manifests that the way of success is grounded on *Jñāna Śakti*, *Kriyā Śakti*, and *Ichhā Śakti*. This bundle removes another bundle of *Trisūl* of sufferings. Discrimination is challengeable; it might be "Brāhmanical Patriarchy," structural functionalism, or other restrictions. There is not only one boundary of worldview in the present-day knowledge sphere. This sphere cannot be limited to any form, like post-structuralism, feminism, or criticism.

Politically, Vedic education towards feminization is a by-product of political-economic transformation, which is shifting from a traditional subsistence peasant economy to a market-oriented liberal political capitalist economy through the initiation and practice of cash-earning agricultural activities and switching to salaried job opportunities available in the job market including the ritual ones under the Hindu religious ideology (Uprety, 2021). The KGG girls' socio-economic background is the former, and they are struggling to transform into the latter. However, their attempts were not found up to the early 1990s due to feudality and Brāhmanical Patriarchy (Chakrabarti, 1993), but they began to be manifested gradually thereafter under "femininity" (Joseph, 2020). Menarche and Menstruation become a curse or an isolative by prohibiting KGG girls from attending classes during the days of the flow. The girls are taught that males and females are not like the trees of *Chilau* and *Katus*. Such differentiation was taught by the honorary warden of KGG, citing her father. Joseph learned such "femininity" from her male *Guru*, Nityananda Natha Sarasvatī. It is tough to find the root of female normative mentor/s. Thus, menstruation is an affecting factor in teaching and learning processes in the age of sanitary pads.

Feminizing Vedic education is a radical attempt in the "Brāhmanical Patriarchical society." So, there are contradictions, confusion, and gaps in fulfilling KGG's aim or producing Vedic female experts. Community feedback of criticism on

teaching Veda to all castes' girls, resource scarcity, managerial problems, and chief founders' health condition could not continue the KGG alone for the feminization of Veda education. As a result, the founders had a compromising point of merging KGG with Chitwan Orphanage. The merger split the following year, and the girls were divided into two Gurukuls. Between the two, KGG rooted diverted to Veda/Sanskrit education, and the other is for Veda chanting and the mixed. The later *Gurukul's* girls perform rituals, including *Rudrī* and *Nawāha*, for their clients.

The re-emergence of Veda education in Nepal is the modernization of the *Gurukul* system as a form of Neo-Sanskritization with a tripod of neo-classicism, neoliberalism, and neo-Hinduism. The salient feature of the revival of the Gurukuls is inclusion as found Brāhman to Dalits in KGG. The pedagogy was also found to be broader and comprehensive. No need to be limited to rote learning of *mantras*, verses, and aphorisms but to go to English, mathematics, and computer. Now, it needs science, too, that is, Neo-Sanskritization, for inclusive development through comprehensive education (Timilsina, 2013). Neo-Sanskritization is a manifestation of multiple realities, and *Trisūl* of *Ichhā*, *Kriyā*, and *Jñāna* removes all kinds of *Dukhas* of the respective learners.

Implications

The study has instilled a faculty of transformative learning in the researcher's mind, serving as an eye-opener to the contemporary norms of conventional, patriarchal, and caste-hierarchical societies. Breaking through the barriers of structuralism/functionalism, ritualism, and *Dharmasāstra* proved to be a formidable challenge before reaching the final phase of the study. It is evident that the field has predominantly embraced a masculine approach, as outlined by Harding and Hintikka (2003), along with Brāhmanical patriarchy, positioning females in a subordinate role in accordance with the notion of pativrata dharma (Chakravarti, 2006). Most couples in Sanātana Hindu society still stick to monogamy throughout the life of *Pativrata* and *Patnivrata*. However, the law is a major force for Neo-Sanskritization, which has destroyed the idea of conventional pativrata dharma. There are provisions for divorce, separation, and single life. Women have the Right to their bodies according to the laws though patriarchy has prevailed in the society.

The Gurukul campaigners have shown tremendous product from the Gurukuls. Such changing status has contributed to developing the idea of 'Neo-Sanskritization' as law and market are other forces. In other words, in Neo-Sanskritization, lower

castes do not imitate the lifestyle of upper castes for upward social mobility, as Srinivas has analyzed as Sanskritization in his study era. This is the time of capitalism, and the castes have been taken as a major component of upward economic mobility, equality, and power. Eventually, law, technology, and capitalism introduced Neo-Sanskritization.

Pedagogical implication for Neo-Sanskritized Gurukul has philosophy, plan, methods, and activities. The philosophy has three mottos- Bringing to truths from the untruth¹²⁴, Bringing from darkness to lamplight from the dark,¹²⁵ Bringing from death to immortality¹²⁶. The plan of the Gurukul is Samasti,¹²⁷ or assimilation of diversity and inclusion regarding students and the subjects. This means the Gurukul is a comprehensive, inclusive finishing school. Pedagogy must be universal, whether the Gurukul is for boys or girls. *Trisūl* methodology has three goals of the teachings: - The Guru designs on-the-spot pedagogy according to the student's requirement under universal pedagogy. The student keeps in mind the "Guru Devo Bhava" or "my Guru is my god" perspective. The Guru's Conduct is more vital than the speech. So, the Guru is trained by a Neo-Sanskritization educationist. Guru and curriculum consider the student's interest and instruction and assessment are applied according to the student's future destination. Personal conduct and companion will be monitored because companion determines the characterology of the learner¹²⁸. The method of teaching is repetition because repetition is key to success. Lecture, technology-based delivery, group work, individual work, and game methods are applied. Senior or talented students teach others as peer learning. The repetition¹²⁹ demonstrates through action, chanting, project, writing, and field visits. The Gurukul model of home-schooling is an optimal format for fostering strong companionship and preserving cultural values. Within communities, individuals with education can contribute by serving as Gurus in home schools for the education of their relatives' children.

¹²⁴ असतोमा सद्गमय

¹²⁵ तमसोमा ज्योतिर्गमय

¹²⁶ मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय

¹²⁷ समष्टि

¹²⁸ सद्गतो जायते फलम्

¹²⁹ पुनरावृत्ति व्याख्यानम् प्रवचनम्

Thus, this study implies a new analysis of Sanskritization. The ethnography is the first documentation of educational history that has collected social perception over school practice for Veda education for girls. It provides experiential, historical information to those campaigning for Gurukul education with an inclusive atmosphere. This thesis will be a reference for pedagogical analysis in Vedic education so that gender issues can be addressed. Moreover, it might be helpful for policy analysis for educational agencies in the inclusive world. Development partners of Nepal also can observe the findings of the groundbreaking collection of data (information) while analyzing the reform policies in the education sector in the country.

My paradigm of *Trisūl* went through the worldviews. However, according to my research topic and the changing social context of caste-based Nepali society with one of the latest constitutions of the world, all views have been consolidated with Neo-Sanskritization. In this notion of Neo-Sanskritization, the actors can function within the existing structure and be critical for gaining equal knowledge. In other words, Neo-Sanskritization is neither structural-post-structural nor critical, but it is a combination of neoclassicism, neo-Hinduism, and ultra-modernism.

People want mental tranquility without having pills. Spiritualism, ritualism, and yoga are the way out. As a result, many people are becoming neo-classical. They intend to be ultra-modern as well as ceremonial and spiritual. Such aspirants must not be restricted in the name of any issues. No knowledge is hidden in this diGītāl era. Technology and a constitutional or legal provisions punish any form of discrimination. As mentioned above, the diversity and their fusion are in the same frame. Society has similar diversity. For example, my data showed that some devotees went to Chitwan from Kathmandu to perform ritual work by the girl priests. Rudrī and Nawaha *Yajña* were conducted for them by my research participant girls. Many others intend to hire other different caste representational priests.

So far, the issue of feminization and its obstruction of menstruation, the fusion of menstrual health products, and the market's necessity are vital. Sanitary pads have tremendous results in overcoming the obstacle of the period. Perfume removes all-possible smells as well. My colleagues informed me that they use perfume to control the smell in public places. Similarly, they eat painkiller pills (Paracetamol is used in Nepal) to remove headaches or backaches and to perform equally. Co-workers are not informed about the period at the workplace because of separate toilets, sanitary pads,

and pills. So, no job is abandoned in the name of the menstrual period in this era. No one is restricted in the name of the condition. A similar condition cannot be an exception here in the priesthood.

A segment of the ritual market is demanding the feminization of ritual works. Isolating herself during the four days is her decision but not that of others. Nobody knows her body condition in this time of 3T: technology, tablets, and tricks. If we look at the market of male priests, technology will connect the ritual service provider and the client. Mobile application (App) has been introduced in the App Store of Smartphone and computer. The App will be popularized in the ritual market as is the case with the App currently in use in vehicle service as “ridesharing.” The client supposedly downloads the “Priest App” and searches for different types of priests-Brāhman, others, or females. If someone demands only female/ girls, s/he orders her. They meet at the worship place and conduct ritual works. Who cares what her body condition is. If the person can provide the service perfectly, her qualification as the priest is publicized and registered at the App, and she will certainly be hired by the clients. I observed the female priests’ demand in the Chitwan district.

One day, the community, society, or nation can establish a ritual council like a medical council, bar council, or nursing, which maintains the quality of the human resources on ground of skills and qualifications of priests. Most people do not care about caste and gender in ultra-modern, mediated, urban life. The App manages everything, at least in the metropolitan areas. If we go to current practices in the government sector, the priest has become a representative post according to the law. Nepal Army, Nepal police, and Armed Police Force (APF) have the post of Pandit, and they are compelled to make it inclusive while they recruit the workforce. There is no caste or gender restriction. The girls can also join the job in universities, teaching institutions, and government agencies using the reservation quota. They can join government jobs if competent because of constitutional guarantees of proportional inclusive democracy.

So, gender, menstruation, and castes are no restrictions in the modern world. People can perform via a new media platform before their followers, audience, and clients. Thus, the barriers are removed through *Trisūl*, the trident of knowledge. I am confident that the feminization of Vedic education has a huge scope, but an equal educational environment that is co-ed Gurukul must be considered.

Concluding the research, I admit my unsuccessful attempt at the positivistic study on two scientific issues. The first issue was related to the miscarriage of Veda chanting woman. It has a background in *Jhapa*, where Yogi Narahari Nath had run a Gurukul. At that Gurukul, several girls had practiced chanting Vedamantra. However, I learned that Veda chanting females had faced the miscarriage problem. The issue was an informal discussion in the district education office, Jhapa. This is a gynecological issue and whether the vibrated chanting affects the ovaries. Sinu Joseph's claim of Chakra related to ovaries is discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis. I tried acquiring knowledge and talked with some gynecologists too. However, I could not find the answer. So, further study is needed on the correlation between female mantra chanting and miscarriage. Another issue to be fixed is the frequency level differentiation between male and female chanting. It is said that the vibrated voice of the mantra chanting can influence the universe. Orthodox pundits claim that female vocalists cannot create such vibrated sounds. If so, why not check the frequency level of both? I tried it through recording. I arranged the recording in Professor Guru Prasad Subedi's library at Chitwan. I had invited four girls from KGG and the same number of boys from one Devghāt Gurukul. For recording, I had taken help from Subedi and my wife, Archana. We recorded *Svastivācan* mantras from both sides personally. However, KGG-trained girls were found to have performed better, but the audio level and its comparative vibration could not be tested. The recording and frequency level testing was much time consuming and more technical. This required both boys and girls from the same schooling background so that the pitch, intonation, and frequency could match for the test.

Thinking spiritually, Joseph (2010) has warned about women's monthly period and its connection to reproductive health, excessive bleeding, and hormonal problems. Future researchers can objectively test her claim on "subtle body" and "gross body" and their effects on ritualism.

Last but not the least, the KGG product and the similar learned girls will be running Neo-Sanskritized ultra-modern Gurukul, where all caste students will be interpreting *Dharmaśāstra*, doing rituals and chanting for peace, equality, and coexistence regularly as Upaniṣadic mantras like this:

ॐ सहनाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

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APPENDIX I

APPENDIX 1

Chronological Table of Dharmaśāstra

4000 B.C.- 1000 B.C.

The period of the Vedic Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas and Upanisads; some hymns of Ṛgved, of AtharvaVeda and verses in the taittirīya Samhitā and Brāhmaṇas may possibly go back to a period even earlier than 4000 B.C. and some Upanisads (even from among those that are regarded by most scholars as the earliest ones) may be later than 1000 B.C.

800 B.C.- 500 B.C. The Nirukta of Yaska

800 B.C.- 400 B.C.

The principal Srauta Sūtras (such as those of Apastamba, Āshwalayana, Baudhayana, Katyayana, Satyashābha and others) and some of the Grihya Sūtras (such as those of Apastamba and Āshwalayana).

600 B.C.- 300 B.C.

The dharmaSūtras of Gautama, Apastamba, Baudhayana and Vasishtha and the GrihyaSūtras of Paraskara and few others.

600 B.C.- 300 B.C. Pāṇini.

500 B.C.- 200 B.C. Jaimini'sPūrvamimāmsāSūtra

300 B.C. VararuchiKātyāyana, author of Vartikās on Pāṇini.

300 B.C.- 100 A. D. Arthashāstra of Kautilya.

150 B.C. The Mahabhāshya of Patanjali.

300 B.C.- 100 A. D. ArthaŚāstra of Kautilya (rather nearer the former date than the latter).

200 B.C.- 100 A. D. The Manusmṛiti.

100 A. D.- 300 A. D. *Yājñavalkya* smṛti and the ViṣṇudharmaSūtra.

100 A. D.- 400 A. D. Naradasmṛti.

200 A. D.- 500 A. D. Shabara, commentary of Jaimini.

250 A. D.- 325 A. D. Shānkhyakārika of Ishvarakrishna.

- 300 A. D.- 500 A. D. Brihaspatismṛti on Vyavahara and other topics (not yet found).
- 300 A. D.- 600 A. D. Some of the extant Purāṇa such as Vāyu, Viṣṇu, Markandeya, Matsya, Kūrma.
- 400 A. D.- 600 A. D. Kātyāyanasmṛti on Vyavahāra.
- 400 A. D.- 600 A. D. Kāmandakiyanitisāra.
- 505 A. D.- 587 A. D. Varāha-mihira, author of Brihatsamhitā, Brihtjātaka, Panchasiddhantikā and other works.
- 600 A. D.- 650 A. D. Bāna, author of Kādambari and Harshacharṭa.
- 650 A. D.- 700 Kumarilabhata, author of Shlokavārtika, Tantravārtika, Tuptikā.
- 600 A. D.- 900 A. D. Most of the metrical smṛtis and some of the Purāṇa.
- 788 A. D.- 820 A. D. Shankarācharya, the great Advaita philosopher.
- 800 A. D.- 850 A. D. Viswarūpa, commentary of Yājñavalkya smṛti.
- 900 A. D. Medhatithi, commentary of Manusmṛiti.
- 900 A. D.- 1100 A. D. Pārthasārathimishra, author of Śāstradeepikā, Tantraratna, Nyāyaratnākar.
- 966 A. D. Utpala, commentary of BrihatSamhitā and Brihājātaka.
- 1000 A. D.- 1055 A. D. Dhāreswara (Bhoja).
- 1070 A. D.- 1100 A. D. ViJñānaeshwara, the author of the Mitākshyara commentary on Yājñavalkya.
- 1080 A. D.- 1140 A. D. Govindarāja, author of commentary on Manusmṛiti.
- 1100 A. D.- 1150 A. D. Lakṣmīdhara, author of large digest called Kritya-Kalpataru or simply Kalpataru.
- 1100 A. D.- 1150 A. D. JeeMootavāhana, author of Dāyabhāga, Kālaviveka and Vyavahāramātrikā.
- 1114 A. D.- 1183 A. D. Bhāskarācharya, author of Siddhantashiromani, of which Leelavati is a part.
- 1125 A. D. Apararka, author of a commentary on Yājñavalkyasmṛti.
- 1127 A. D.- 1138 A. D. Mānasollāsa or Abhilāsītārthachintamani of Someshwaradeva.
- 1150 A. D.- 1160 A. D. Rājtarangini of Kalhana.

- 1150 A. D.- 1200 A. D. Smrityrthasāra of Shridhara.
- 1200 A. D.-1225 A. D. Smṛtichandrika of Devannabhata.
- 1150 A. D.-1300 A. D. Haradatta, commentary on Gautamadharmasūtra and Āpastambadharmasūtra.
- 1150 A. D.-1300 A. D. Kulluka, commentary of Manusmṛiti.
- 1200 A. D.- 1300 A. D. Vyavahāranirnaya of Varadarāj.
- 1260 A. D.-1270 A. D. Chaturvargachintamani of Hemadri.
- 1290 A. D.-1370 A. D. Chandesvara, author of the Rājanotoratnakara, Vivādaratnakara and Grhiastharatnakara and other works.
- 1300 A. D -1380 A. D. MadhavAcharya, author of Parāsara- Madhaviya.
- 1360 A. D.-1390 A. D. Madanapārijata, compiled under king Madanapāla.
- 1375 A. D.- 1460 A. D. Shūlapāni, author of Deepakalika, commentary on *Yājñavalkya*.
- 1400 A. D.-1500 A. D. Nyāyasudhā of Someshwara, commentary on Tantravārtika.
- 1400 A. D.- 1450 A. D. Vivādchandra of Misarumisra.
- 1425 A. D.- 1450 A. D. Madanaratna of Madanasimha.
- 1490 A. D.- 1512 A. D. The Vyavahārasāra of Dalapati, a part of Nrisimhaprasād.
- 1500 A. D.-1525 A. D. The Sarasvatīvilasa compiled under king Pratāprudradeva.
- 1500 A. D.-1550 A. D. Vartdhamāna, author of Dandaviveka.
- 1500 A. D.-1550 A. D. Vāchaspatimishra, author of Vivādchintamani and several other works.
- 1520 A. D.- 1575 A. D. Raghunandana, author of Dāyatatwa, Divyatattwa, Vyavahāratattwa and other Tattwas.
- 1560 A. D.- 1620 A. D. Shankarbhatta, author of Dwaitanirnaya or Dharmadwaitanirnaya.
- 1590 A. D.- 1630 A. D. Nandapandita, author of the Dattakāmimāmsā and Vaijayanti, commentary on Viṣṇudharmasūtra.
- 1610 A. D.-1640 A. D. Kamalakarabhatta, author of Nirnayasinhu and Vivādatāndava, Sūdrakamalakara, and other works.

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|------------------------|---|
| 1615 A. D.-1645 A. D. | Neelakantha, author Neetimayūkha, Vyavahāramayūkha and other Mayūkhās. |
| 1615 A. D.- 1645 A. D. | Mitra Misra, author of Veeramitrodaya, divided it Rajneetiprakashānd other prakāshās. |
| 1650 A. D.-1680 A. D. | Anantadeva, author of Rajdharmakaustubha. |
| 1750 A. D.-1820 A. D. | Bālabhāta, author of Bālabhāta, commentary on Mitakshyārā. |
| 1790 A. D. | Dharmasindhu of Kashinātha. |

Note: Chronological Table of Dharmasāstra. From Kane, P. V. (1973, Vol. III, Second Edition, pp. XI-XII) from History of Dharmasāstra. (Ancient and medieval religious and civil law) published from Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pūna.

APPENDIX II

FIELD SCHEDULE**Daily Observation: Interview Schedule 1**

Get up time

Morning routine

Day Routine

Evening Routine

Weekend and holiday routine

Subjects, ECA, CCA, Tour

Resources: Human, Financial, environment

Opportunities and Challenges

Learning achievement

Major donors

Stakeholders and their participation

Community response

Sustainability

Career of the girls

Schedule for Gurus/ Experts

Difference between boys and girls

Learning achievement

Challenges