



# नमस्कार

NOA  
FLORIDA

Chapter

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## Mha Puja - A Unique Newah Tradition

By Dr. Manoranjan N. Dhaubhadel

**M**ha puja, the worship of the inner self, is unique to Newah people. Newahs believe that one needs to understand and respect oneself



before he/she can understand others. It is purification, strengthening and understanding of oneself. The puja carries all the grandeur that a typical Newah festival or ritual possesses. It also is distinct from other Hindu or Buddhist worships in that it is the worship of oneself and not the usual worship of Gods and Goddesses or others. Mha puja exposes the relationship of a person with the surrounding nature and the cosmos. Understanding of one's role in life makes him/her more knowledgeable and unselfish. Worshipping and blessing oneself to achieve unselfishness and

generosity is unique by itself. Mha puja is also for prosperity and physical well being. No other Newah festival is solely devoted to enriching oneself both physically and spiritually. The religious and spiritual aspects of Mha puja fall perfectly in line with the socio-religious nature of Newah festivals. Incidentally, Mha puja is performed and celebrated on the New Year's Day giving it additional social flavor.

Mha puja is conducted mostly in the evening or the afternoon to make sure that Mha puja of Aagandya (the family Goddess) and Mha puja of Goddess Taleju Bhabani at the three palaces in Khwapa (Bhaktapur), Yen (Kathmandu) and Yala (Lalitpur) have been completed by the high Newah priests. These Mha puja ceremonies of the Goddesses are not accessible to the general public. It is said that at the time of Newah Kings, the king, the priests and some high ranking Newahs were able to verbally communicate with the Goddesses through tantricism and they helped perform the Mha puja.

Mha puja can be viewed as providing a definition of life. One should learn about oneself and respect one's role in the world. By understanding oneself first, a person has a better chance of understanding others. Self purification and blessings make one

stronger. Understanding of oneself as being only a part of the universe system makes one unselfish and more responsible. The social aspect of Mha puja is no less important. Celebration and associated feasting by family members with Itaa lights all around on Mandalas helps strengthen the family relationship. Unlike other occasions, Mha puja is for each and every member individually.

Newah traditions are ritual filled. Newahs are famous for the numerous festivals they celebrate and the extravagant feasts they enjoy. A lot of these involve worship of the Divine, as with other Hindu, Buddhist or other traditions. Some of the occasions are unique to Newahs. An example besides Mha puja, is the Ihin, the process of symbolic marriage of Newah girls before puberty to Lord Vishnu so that they are never widowed. These traditions unique to Newah culture are designed to suit Newah beliefs on life and the surrounding nature. The grandeur with which Newah traditions are observed can hardly be found elsewhere. Mha puja exemplifies the uniqueness of Newah traditions. Mha puja is unique amongst the various Newah traditions in that it is the only occasion when a person worships himself or herself. Because of religious and social implications and the understanding it tries to bring about oneself and the surrounding nature, Mha puja can be expected to be observed by Newahs forever.

*NOTE: Please visit [www.noa-fl.org](http://www.noa-fl.org) for complete article*



**“The beauty is in that between all this food and endless rounds of aela, science is the last thing on anyone’s mind”.**



## Newah Bhoya ... scientific ?

The Newah bhwaye is everyone's favorite but how exactly is it scientific? I have a chronic case of acid reflux or gastroesophageal reflux disease if I want to sound all technical about it. Basically, I get chest burns when I have food that's oily, spicy and made of flour among other things. Long story short, this removes many fine delicacies from my regular menu. No doughnut binges, not more than two beers on hot summer days, no naans and butter chicken – no fun. I follow this discipline more or less strictly for two reasons. One, chest burns are not fun and two, if I want to suffer, I want to do so post a worthy meal. Which brings us to the Newah bhoj or bhwaye. The Newah bhoj (feast) is a deceptively scientific feast. I say decepting because to any bystander the cuisine or the settings for the same do not seem prepared to cater to people who bother

with science meal. Molecular gastronomy it certainly is not. The best bhwaye items are often enjoyed in small, shabby roadside eateries most Nepalis know as bhattis. A cleaner and classier setting to enjoy a sumptuous bhwaye is actually free – the traditional receptions to Newah ceremonies such as marriages and the rite of passage tradition of bratabandha. Enjoyed sitting cross legged on a sukul, a narrow, long straw mat rolled out to accommodate hundreds of guests at these “parties” at one go, the bhwaye consists of numerous delicacies depending upon the occasion. Now the contents of a Newah bhwaye differ with the occasion but a generalized menu can be listed thus: baji (beaten rice), palu, woh (salty lentil cakes), kegu, chhwela (spicy buff), dyakula (buff curry), bhuttan (fried buff intestines), chhyalla, kauli (cauliflower curry), mula achar (radish pickle) and

saag (greens). For the mostly cool weather of Kathmandu (it helps that most marriages are held in the winter), the food goes really well. The feast is traditionally served in a laptey, a plate made out of wide leaves sewn together with thin strips of bamboo. The science kicks in when you need help washing it all down. There is a choice in alcoholic beverage between thhwano: or chhyannng (a sweet, muddy white, home brewed liquor made from fermented rice), and aela (clear, strong, home brewed liquor made from broken rice grains). Both are traditionally served in a salneecha, a disposable, palm size clay saucer. More science and sense are apparent with servings of mii, paun kwaah and mula (raddish), served with the intent to help you digest your food. The alkaline content of the paun kwaah helps cut the fat in the food while the dahi (sweet yogurt), mithai (milk based sweets) and fruits at the end make for a refreshing dessert. The beauty is in that between all this food and endless rounds of aela, science is the last thing on anyone's mind.

*Courtesy: ECS*

## List of Newah Festivals:

Gathan Mugah (August) .  
Gunla Dharma (August-September)  
Gunhu Punhi (August- September)  
Pancha Dan (August-September)  
Yanya Punhi (September)  
Mohani (October)

Swanti (October-November)  
Sakimila Punhi (November- December)  
Bala Chahre (December)  
Yomari Punhi (December-January)  
Ghayh Chaku Sanhlhu (January)  
Swasthani Bakhan Kanegu (January-February)

Shree Panchami (February)  
Sila Chahre (March)  
Holi Punhi (March-April)  
Pahan Chahre (April)  
Biskah Jatra (April)  
Machhendra Nath Jatra (May-June)  
Swanya Punhi (May-June)  
Sithi Nakhah (June)

## Four Pillars of Nepal Bhasa:



Siddhidas Amatya



Nisthananda Bajracharya



Jagat Sundar Malla



Yogbir Singh Kansakar

नेपाल

भाषाया

प्यंग: थां

**Four Pillars of Nepal Bhasa :** नेपाल भाषाया प्यंग: थां refers to the four leaders who spearheaded the campaign to revive the language and its literature during the repressive Rana regime, and guided its renaissance at the beginning of the 20th century. They produced literature at the risk of personal freedom and laid the foundation for the development of modern Nepal Bhasa. Their work marks the beginning of the Nepal Bhasa movement in Kathmandu, which has led to greater rights in education, the media and official recognition. The four figures honored as the four pillars of the renaissance are author Nisthananda Bajracharya, poet Siddhidas Mahaju, educationist Jagat Sundar Malla and poet Yogbir Singh Kansakar

**Siddhidas Amatya** (1867 - 1929) was at the forefront in the endeavor to revive literature in Nepal Bhasa. He has been honored with the title Great Poet. Mahaju wrote more than 44 books of poetry, epics, short stories and essays. Sajjan Hridayabharan, a book of poems on morals which came out in 1920, was the only one published during his lifetime. Mahaju composed Siddhi Ramayana, a translation of the epic Ramayana in Nepal Bhasa, in 1913.

**Jagat Sundar Malla** (1882 - 1952) was a teacher and writer who dedicated his life to the education of the common people. In 1913, Malla opened a school in his home defying government disapproval. He stressed the importance of learning English, and he wrote and published textbooks in Nepalese languages as he believed that children learn faster if they are taught in their mother tongue.

**Nisthananda Bajracharya** (1858 - 1935) marked a turning point by breaking away from the classical style and writing prose in colloquial language. In 1909, Bajracharya published Ek Bishanti Prajnaparamita, the first book in Nepal Bhasa to be printed with moveable type. Lalita Vistara, his most famous work which is an account of the Buddha's life, and Swayambhu Purana were published in 1914.

**Yogbir Singh Kansakar** (alternative name: Jogbir Singh Kansakar) (1885 - 1942) was a poet and social reformer who worked to develop his mother tongue and promote Buddhism. In 1929, Kansakar headed a committee which petitioned the prime minister to be allowed to open a library for which he was arrested and fined. He has also been publicly flogged for his reformist activities.[9] An anthology of Kansakar's poems entitled Yog-Sudha was published by Nepal Bhasa Parishad in 1951 .

*Courtesy: Wikipedia*

**Nepal Sambat:** Nepal's original Era Nepal Sambat was started by Sankhadhar Sakhwah in Malla period when Raghav Dev was ruling Kantipur and Anand Malla was ruling Bhaktapur. It was started on Thursday, October 20, 879. It is a lunar calendar and it begins on the new moon day of Kartik (Kachhala). Till now, most of the festivals Nepalese people celebrate such as Dashain, Tihar, Chaite Dasain, Teej, Shivaratri, Gaijatra, Chhath etc. are based on lunar calendar of Nepal era. Nepal era was the official era of Nepal during the Malla period and Bikram Era was made official only during Rana period by Chandra Shamsher. There are 12 months (and 13 in every three years) according to this calendar. New month starts from the day after new moon day i.e. Paru (Pratipada). From Paru to full moon day it is called 'Tho' then up to new moon day it is called 'Ga'. So a month is divided into 2 parts 'Tho' and 'Ga' such as Kachhala Tho Kachhhalaga Ga and so on. *Courtesy: Jwojalapa.com*



**Mission:** To provide a democratic forum for the Newah community in order to freely express their thoughts and ideas, to organize, promote and advance their ideals, aspiration, history, culture, language, literature, socio-economical and techno-scientific development for the well being and betterment of the community and its future generation.

To advance the Newah community into the mainstream of American life, for mutual exchange of social, cultural and historical understandings and good-will along with educational and technological ties on one hand, and to foster close and strong ties with compatriots in our homeland Nepal on the other.

To honor the ideals of just and fair democratic values and provide able and effective leadership for the community by enhancing and developing the historical-cultural, socio-economical, educational and techno-scientific bases of the community.

### Ad hoc Committee 2012

Raju Tamrakar	Wellington
Sundar Joshi	West Palm Beach
Rajendra Shrestha	Orlando
Ashma Bajracharya	Riviera Beach
Shrihari Shrestha	Green Acres
Sanjay Bajracharya	Boca Raton
Siwali Shakya	Orlando

### Contact Us:

Newah Organization of America  
Florida Chapter  
8155 Laborie Lane  
Wellington, FL 33414

noafloridachapter@gmail.com  
www.noa-fl.org  
www.facebook.com/Florida.Newah

## Program Schedule

- ◆ 5:00- Registration
- ◆ 6:00-7:00 Socialization
- MC *Siwali Shakya* and *Ameena Shrestha*
- ◆ 7:00-7:10 Welcome Speech – *Sanjay Bajracharya*
- ◆ 7:10-7:15 NOA President opening with Twa dewa lighting
- ◆ 7:15-7:20 Nepal Sambat and Mha puja – *Siwali Sakya*
- ◆ 7:20-7:25 NOA President's message, introduction NOA and chapters – *Season Shrestha*
- ◆ 7:25-7:30 Introduction Samaybaji dinner- *Raju Tamrakar*
- ◆ 7:30-8:30 Samaybaji Dinner



- ◆ 8:30-10:00 Cultural show
  - \* Yagya Man Introduction
  - \* Manju Shree dance - *Yagya Man*
  - \* Kumari Dance - *Lochan Tara*
  - \* Dance Siriri Fasan - *Shreeja Tamrakar*
  - \* Dance Rajamati - *Junu Thapa*
  - \* Dhimmey Dance - *Yagya Man*
  - \* Modern Newah dance - *Lochan Tara*
  - \* Newah Song - *Rajendra Shrestha*
  - \* Lakhey Dance - *Yagya Man*
- ◆ 10:00-10:05 Thank you note - *Rajendra Shrestha*

