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TUSHĀ¹ HITI: THE ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAME

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Abstract:

In this article, the author examines the royal bath called Tushā Hiti located in Sūndari Chowk (Beautiful Courtyard) of Pātan Durbar Square, using six different methods of investigation. The question: What is in a name? started the ball of investigation rolling and along the way were added more supporting blocks such as history, iconography, function and purpose, notion of purity and impurity, and finally the hiti in popular culture to get a complete picture of the subject in question.

Keywords: Hiti, Dhuñge Dhārā, Sunken Bath, Pātan Durbar Square, King Siddhi Narasimha Malla, Krishna Mandir, Aṣṭa Mātrikās, Kuñdalini, Water Ablution

There is controversy about the name and purpose of the Tushā Hiti.² In this paper, I offer another lens through which to see this unique construction in yet a different light.

Tushā Hiti, located in Sundari Chowk³ of Patan Durbar (Patan Royal Palace), is a masterpiece of Newari stone water-architecture (Fig. 1).⁴ Hiti in NepalBhasa is a general term for water spout through which the water flows. However, there are different types of Hiti found all over the Kathmandu Valley.⁵ Origins of some of these Hitis go back to the Lichhavi period as early as the 5th century CE.⁶ According to one study, currently there are 118 stone spouts in Kathmandu, 103 in Bhaktapur and 48 in Patan.⁷ The stone spout through which the water moves is a conduit and hence, I may alternatively use it in this paper as a spout or a conduit.

¹ The word has been spelled variously. Some spell it Tusā, Tusa, some Tushā and one spells it as Thusā. Here I have taken the middle road by spelling it Tushā with the diacritical mark.

² I wish to thank Ian Alsop for going over the manuscript very thoroughly and making valuable suggestions.

³ The Newari word for courtyard is *chuk*. While some spell it *chok* (as has Mary Slusser herself done in her book), here I am using the generally accepted modern form “chowk.”

⁴ Please see Appendix at the end of this paper for types of Hiti used in the Valley. The information on the typology is provided by Bipin Raj Shrestha to whom I remain thankful.

⁵ See Appendix.

⁶ Ga Hiti in Thamel was damaged during the search and rescue efforts after the devastating earthquake of 2015. This Hiti has been used by the public for drinking, washing clothes and bathing. The water has been flowing without interruption for hundreds of years, but no one knows the source of it. See <https://kathmandupost.com/valley/2016/03/13/thamels-ga-hiti-stone-spout-to-be-rebuilt>

⁷ Keshab Poudel, “Drinking Water: From Stone Spouts to Bottle,” in ECS Nepal, August 2010. <http://ecs.com.np/features/drinking-water-from-stone-spouts-to-bottles>.

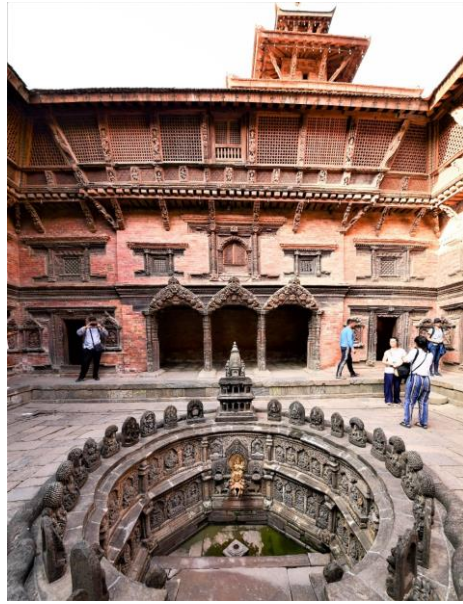


Fig. 1. Tusha Hiti in Sundari Chowk
Photo: Govind Shahi

Tushā Hiti is built in the style of step-down (sunken or pit) architecture (Fig. 1), commonly found throughout the Kathmandu Valley of Medieval Nepal. Some of these, like the ancient Roman aqueducts, are still functioning. During the Licchavi period (5th-8th centuries), however, a *dhungé dhārā* was called *kirti*, meaning merit.⁸ Since a *dhungé dhārā* was a source of water for drinking, bathing and washing clothes and even utensils for many, it was built by people of means to earn religious merit. There are many that have been constructed with the generous donations of royal patronage.⁹ However, unlike the aqueducts, Tushā Hiti is not a well; rather it is a bath. Others are indeed both—baths and the sources of drinking water. Tushā Hiti is not both and, hence, can be appropriately called the Royal Bath.

⁸ Riddhi Pradhan, “Dhunge Dhara: A Case Study of the Three Cities of Kathmandu Valley,” in *Ancient Nepal: Journal of the Department of Archaeology*, Nos. 116-118, February-July, 1990, pp. 11. Kirti also means glory and hence many temples and even some homes have been plastered with a *torana* having a *kirtimukha* (the face of glory) on top of the door.

⁹ A case in point: the famous *Sundhārā* of Kathmandu near Dharahara by Queen Lalit Tripura Sundari Devi in 1828.



Fig. 2. Sundari Chowk, courtyard within the royal palace. Photo: Govind Shahi

This royal bath is constructed in the fashion of a small pit—in the form of an Indian step well, about six feet deep to which water is brought from an underground aqueduct—and the water enters the receptacle through a metal spout gilded in gold, appropriately called *sundhārā* in Nepali and *Lun Hiti* in Newari.¹⁰ Because of its relatively diminutive size—an intimate size for that matter—it can be said that it was meant to be a personal bath specifically designed for the king. Such water spouts in Kathmandu, which were the main source of water in ancient times, are called *ḍhungé dhārā* in Nepali and *lohan Hiti* in NepalBhasa.¹¹ However, Tushā Hiti commissioned by King Siddhinarasimha Malla of Lalitpur (Patan) was a bath especially constructed for himself for the purpose of ritual bathing and offering water to the deities within the pit. There are 72¹² stone images of deities within the pit to which the king, as customary in Hindu tradition, offered water, on a daily basis while and after . Riddhi Pradhan states, “Nepalese people are the God-faring [sic] people and hence, offering of water to God is as the great meritorious act.”¹³ While Nepali historian D.R. Regmi remains silent about the date, Mary S. Slusser assigns

¹⁰ Sukra Sagar Shrestha, *Tusā Hiti in Ancient Nepal*, 1996, 139: 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.* However, properly speaking, the correct way of writing it is *lvaham hiti*. This spelling was provided by Ian Alsop whom I wish to thank.

¹² With regard to number 72 a comparison must be made here. In the Borobudur Stupa in Java, Indonesia, there are 72 statues of the Buddha on top three circles of the stupa where the symbolism of those numbers is of theological significance.

¹³ Riddhi Pradhan, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

1647¹⁴ for the construction of Tushā Hiti. The same king was also responsible for constructing the famous stone temple of Krishna in front of the palace (Fig. 3). Modeled after a Shikhara style commonly seen in North and West India, the temple was built in 1637 after he had a dream of Radha and Krishna standing together in front of his palace.¹⁵



Fig. 3. Krishna Mandir built in octagonal shape
Photo: Author, 2013

Why bring up Krishna Mandir here when the subject is Tushā Hiti? The reason is simple. There is a small replica of this temple at the west end of the Sundari Chowk where Tushā Hiti was constructed. That assures us of the dates of Tushā Hiti and Krishna Mandir. The small replica of the temple would have been built only after the main temple was constructed in 1637.¹⁶ It is logical then that king, who had the main temple built after he had a dream, would have wanted to bring the

¹⁴ Mary S. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, VI. 1. Princeton University Press, Princeton: New Jersey, 1982, p. 200.

Historian Daniel Wright also concurs with this date and so does Sukra Sagar Shrestha, see, op. cit. p. 3.

¹⁵ Deepak Shimkhada, "The Sunken Bath of Siddhinarasimha Malla in Patan" in *Orientalism*, Vol. 13, No.7, 1983.

¹⁶ D.R. Regmi gives the date in Nepal Samvat 757 which corresponds to 1636 CE. See *Medieval Nepal: A History of the Three Kingdoms 1520 AD. To 1768 A.D., Part II*. Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966, p. 268.

temple inside his residence so as to incorporate it within the iconographical plan envisioned by him which I will discuss shortly.

Inscriptional and literary evidence abound about the life of King Siddhinarasimha Malla. According to the evidence compiled by Regmi, the King was a very religious man.¹⁷ Deeply devoted to God Krishna and Narayana,¹⁸ he lived a very modest life in spite of being a king. He shunned the use of gold for himself and to the extent that he forbade his own wife to use any gold ornaments.¹⁹ Instead, he offered 400 *palas* of gold daily to the *Koṭyāhuti Yajña* ceremony for the grand inauguration of Krishna Mandir.²⁰ He would rather give gold to religious rites than wear it himself.

From this it appears that the temple was opened with much pomp, raising it to the scale of *Rājasuya Yajña*. It can be asserted that the temple was one of a kind in the entire valley and Siddhinarasimha was very pleased with his accomplishment and he might have wanted to keep a replica of the temple close to him in his palace courtyard where he took a ritual bath every morning. This way, he could offer the water oblation and also do a *parikramā* (circumambulation) after taking the bath to the temple without having to go outside of the palace compound. Because a replica is usually made after monument itself has been built, the miniature size temple right above the bath would not have been built before 1637. Furthermore, the replica is perfectly aligned to the same axis of the main temple outside. It seems there was a conscious effort to connect the two as though the two are one and the same.

There are three chowks (courtyards) within the huge royal palace complex of Patan, and Tushā Hiti is located in Sundari Chowk (beautiful courtyard). Among the three courtyards, this is undeniably the most beautiful one befitting the name. Looking straight down into the courtyard from the balcony of the palace (Fig. 4), it becomes immediately obvious to a student or a scholar of Hinduism that the bath (the *kunḍa*) as well as the water spout (*dhārā*) are designed in the shape of a *yoni*, the female genital invariably associated with a Śivalinga (Fig. 5).

¹⁷ Regmi, D.R., Op. Cit. p. 272. Also see section on Siddhinarasimha Malla, pp.268-282.

¹⁸ Regmi, D.R., Op. Cit., p. 727.

¹⁹ Regmi, Op.Cit., p. 276.

²⁰ Regmi, Op. Cit, p. 282.



Fig. 4. View of the bath from east. Photo: Wikimedia

A Śivalinga is always attached to a *yoni* without which the vertical shaft cannot remain standing (Fig. 5). Hence, Śiva's existence is predicated upon a female *yoni* because without it he is like a *shava* (corpse). In other words, he has no existence without the *shakti* (regenerative energy or power). Because a śivalinga is composed of male and female human reproductive organs, it is a symbol of life often used in a Tantric context. Given its symbolic representation, it is associated with water, the source of life viewed especially from the creative perspective of a female. The amniotic fluid of a woman which gives life to a child is the creative power that is considered sacred and hence venerated in the form of the goddess. Taking a bath in that water is therefore a rebirth or regeneration, especially if it is coming out of a woman's *yoni* (vulva). Tushā Hiti can, therefore, be taken symbolically as rebirth or return to the sacred womb.²¹

²¹ Deepak Shimkhada and Michael Reading, "Return to the Womb: Feminine Creative Energy of Arghya in Tantric Ritual" in *International Journal of Dharma Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 12, 2015.



Fig. 5. Stone Śivalinga

Photo: Wikimedia

Siddhinarasimha Malla, the ruler of Patan, was a devout Hindu who adopted Viṣṇu as his tutelary deity.²² For a devout Hindu king, taking a ritual bath every morning was important. Let us imagine a scenario. After getting up in the morning and finishing his biological duties, the king would descend the steps of the Tushā Hiti for a bath. After washing himself and offering oblations of water to the deities along the walls of the yoni pit while reciting mantras to all the deities, he would come out of the Hiti. His attendants would be standing by, holding warm towels with which to dry his body. He would likely be shivering at this point because the water would be cold.²³ Hence, wiping himself with a warm towel would be a very nice feeling for the king.²⁴

The walls of the *yoni* pit are ornately decorated with the images of *aṣṭa mātṛikās* (eight mother goddesses) and *aṣṭa bhairavas* (eight angry manifestations of Śiva). Additionally, the periphery of the bath (the *yoni kuṇḍa*) is protected by two *nāgas* (snakes)—one on each side. The *Hiti* or the *dhārā* (the stone spout out of which the water flows) is topped by the image of Lakshmi-Narayana riding on Garuda [Fig. 6].²⁵

²² In the section of Patan, David Reed wrongly identifies the divine pair that appear on top of the *dhārā* as Śiva and Pārvaṭi. See *The Rough Guide to Nepal*, 1996, p. 140. Readers unfamiliar with Hinduism might wonder why the king, the devotee of Viṣṇu, is surrounded by *Aṣṭa Bhairavas* (angry manifestations of Śiva) and takes bath inside a yoni-shaped *hiti* (*dhārā*, water spout). Fundamentally, there is no difference between any of the major Hindu gods because after all they are the manifestation of one ultimate reality called Brahman.

²³ Desmond Doig postulates that the water that fell from the spout was “hot and perfumed suitable for a monarch’s pleasure.” See Desmond Doig, “No water in the royal bath—Nepali Times.” *Nepali Times*, 2020.

²⁴ This scenario is also described in *Vamsāvali* as reported by Desmond Doig, op. cit.

²⁵ The golden image of Lakshmi-Narayana (gilt-copper) was stolen and later replaced by a replica. The stolen image has now been recovered and is now on display at the National Museum, Chauni. However, in the replica, the makara is missing. Please see <https://www.facebook.com/lostartsofnepal/posts/2967143723606080>. I am indebted to Ian Alsop for bringing that information to my attention.

It is natural to have them gilded. After all, the king was a devotee of Vishnu and he could afford to install an image of the God covered in gold (gilt copper).



Fig. 6. Closeup of the gilded spout with Lakshmi-Nārāyaṇa riding on Garuda. Photo: Wikimedia

Now comes the water spout itself. Most water spouts in the Kathmandu Valley are made in the shape of a *makara*, an aquatic character of mythical origin.²⁶ However, this is not the case in Tushā Hiti.²⁷ For the first time in the history of Nepali water architecture, we see a water spout in the shape of a yoni. Gautam Vajracharya, on the other hand, sees the head of a calf (*thusā* in Newari).²⁸ Although admittedly there is some resemblance with the bovine character, the water spout looks more like an *arghyapātra* than a cow's head. Given the tantric nature of the royal bath because it is surrounded by *aṣṭa Mātrikās* and *aṣṭa Bhairavas*, I am inclined to believe that the water spout was intended to be an *arghyapātra*.

Let us for a moment believe that the water spout is shaped like a cow's mouth (*gaumukha* or *gomukha*). What's the evidence for and the religious significance of this? Muktinath, the temple situated high in Nepal's Himalayas, is dedicated to God Vishnu and as the name suggests, he gives *mukti* liberation from the cycles of rebirths to the believers who make the arduous pilgrimage to the shrine. In front of the temple there are 108 *dhārās* (stone water spouts extended from the wall carved in the shape of a cow (*gaumukha*) (Fig. 7).

²⁶ For an excellent study of makara, please see Niels Gutschow, *The Sky Face: Kirtimukha and Related Hybrid Creatures in the Architecture of Nepal, South and Southeast Asia*, Kathmandu: Vajra Books, 2019.

²⁷ Historian Regmi also identifies the spout as that of a Makara. It is obvious that the historian saw the original piece with a makara before it was stolen. See *Medieval Nepal: A History of the Three Kingdoms 1520 A.D. To 1768 A.D., Part II*. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966, p. 917.

²⁸ In a private conversation with him.



Fig. 7. 108 stone waterspouts (*dhungē dhārās*) in Muktinath. Photo: Wikimedia

The water coming out of the cow's mouth refers to the source of the River Ganges (*Gaṅgā*), the sacred river of the Hindus.²⁹ Hence, in theory, taking a shower from the water that flows directly from the mouth of a cow, albeit a stone image, is like taking a dip in the holy waters of the River Ganges. That might be the intention here in Tushā Hiti if indeed the water spout was intended to represent a cow's mouth (*thusā*) as Gautam Vajracharya, a Nepali scholar, has suggested.³⁰ If the name was indeed a corruption of *Thusā*, why three other *Hitis*—located in Bhaktapur (Thanthu Durbar Hiti also called Sundhārā, Fig. 8), and two in Kathmandu (Nārāyaṇa Hiti, Fig. 9) and Sundhārā near Dharahara (Fig. 10)—were not named *Thusā* is a moot question.

²⁹ According to Hindu *Purāṇas* and the epic *Mahabharata*, King Bhagiratha was responsible for bringing Ganga (River Ganges) from heaven. Appropriately, either right beneath the water spout or somewhere in the vicinity of the *dhārā*, a relief of Bhagiratha is carved to show his connection with the River Ganges. Having a relief of him there, therefore, is to make a statement that the water flowing from the spout is indeed akin to the waters coming from the source of the River Ganges. The source of the River Ganges up in the Himalayas is called *gomukha* (cow's mouth).

³⁰ In a private correspondence.



Fig. 8. Sun Dhārā, Nāg Pokhari, Bhaktapur. Photo: Wikimedia



Fig. 9. Sun Dhārā, Nārāyaṇa Hiti, Kathmandu. Photo: Wikimedia



Fig. 10. Close up of Sundhārā near Dharaharā, Kathmandu. Under the waterspout is the carving of Bhagiratha, the king who caused to bring River Gangā to earth. Photo: Wikimedia

Furthermore, a calf in Newari is called *thusā*.³¹ It is probable that the name over the centuries may have been changed to become Tushā. Dhanavajra Vajracharya thinks otherwise. According to him, it was named Tushā Hiti because the water that came from the spout tasted like sugarcane juice. In NepalBhasa *tu* means sugarcane and *sha* means taste.³² Another historian argues that the hiti's water source might have been a well. According to him, *tun* in Newari means well and *tunsala* is the water brought from a well. In the course of time it became known as Tushā Hiti.³³ This explanation does not seem probable because the author does not explain the process by which the water was channeled to the higher ground thus allowing it to drop from a gilded spout.

It may seem surprising that this little bath has caught the imagination of many scholars, visitors and even a Hollywood movie

³¹ See *A Dictionary of Classical Newari Compiled from Manuscript Sources*, p. 205. Cwasa Pasa: Kathmandu, 2000. I thank Professor Miroj Shakya of the University of the West for loaning me a copy of this dictionary. Additionally, in a private conversation with Professor Gautam Vajracharya who is of the opinion that the name should be Thusā not Tushā.

³² Shrestha, Op. Cit.

³³ Ibid.

producer.³⁴ Undoubtedly, it is a beautifully carved *Hiti* with intricate water and vegetative motifs, aquatic creatures, vines and tendrils. A pair of elephants with their raised trunks ready to squirt water are often seen with the image of Lakshmi (*gajalakshmi*). Their mere presence symbolizes water and so do a pair of fish and a pair of *nāga* as well as a wild boar and a ram. While the boar may allude to Vishnu's *varāha avatār* (boar incarnation) when he dove down to the earth's abyss to rescue Mother Earth (*bhudevi*) from the clutches of an ocean demon, the reason for the ram's presence remains uncertain. It is true that a white ram is the *vāhāna* (carrier or vehicle) of the Hindu fire god *Agni*, but its connection here is not understood by me (Fig. 6, close up of Lakshmi-Narayana).

Objections to calling the Tushā Hiti a royal bath are few. However, those that are offered are rather subjective in nature.³⁵ For instance, one author stated "It is impossible to use a bath without splashing the images of gods with the polluted water from the human body."³⁶ This was based on the assumption that Siddhinarasimha Malla was an ascetic king who would not have used the bath because he refused to offend the gods with an "impure act." Other historians have also asserted that it was not made to be used for bathing, but for "aqua-oblations" to gods. That last assertion does not seem logical because aqua-oblation occurs only after taking a bath or purifying one's body with water. To offer water oblations, which every Hindu did in the hoary past, one had to take a quick shower under a *dhārā* or *hiti* as I did when I was a boy growing up in Kathmandu. Even in most public *hitis* there were several images of gods on the walls of the bathing place. I distinctly remember, following the example of the elders, offering oblations of water to the deities plastered against the immediate vicinity of the water spout. While bending down or sitting down under the spout to wash my body, the water would splatter everywhere. That was natural and no one minded it and yet they offered the water later as atonement. The king might have done the same thing.

Another writer says, "According to legend, the king [after taking a shower] meditated for hours on the raised stone slab in the courtyard just in front of the bath. After the shower, his attendants provided him with towels and wraps, while the queen and others watched from the carved wooden windows above. Apparently, then the king would lie on a stone bed and be massaged with oils."³⁷

³⁴ The bath was featured in a Hollywood movie *Arabian Nights* which was shot in the courtyard of Sundari Chowk in 1974. However, the Sundari Chowk in which Tushā Hiti is located is misidentified by the movie reviewer who states, [.....] "Sundari Chowk, a courtyard also in Hanuman Dhoka." See <https://www.movie-locations.com/movies/a/Arabian-Nights-1974.php>

³⁵ It has been brought to my attention by Bipin Raj Shrestha that Saraswoti Shrestha, director of Patan Museum, is in the opinion that the king took bath in the Bhandarkhal hiti at the other part of the palace complex and came to Sundari Chowk to offer ablutions. However, I have not been provided any archeological or textual evidence to support her claim.

³⁶ Shrestha, Op. Cit.

³⁷ Desmond Doig, Op. Cit.

Theologically it would make sense that the water would come out of the mouth of a cow rather than just an opening of an unidentified object. But in its present form the spout looks more like a *yoni* than the head of a cow—although in an abstract way it has some semblance to a cow. However, its shape has greater resemblance to an *arghyapātra* than to a cow. It is a known fact that the shape of an *arghyapātra* is modeled after *the yoni* and its ritualistic implications are secretive, i.e. tantric in nature³⁸ (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Copper *arghyapātra* (water oblation utensil). Photo: Author

The king went to great lengths in constructing a bath that met the requirements of a pious Hindu who wished to purify himself with the potent water that was imbued with creative force. The purpose was to transport him during his daily oblations and prayers to the higher plane of consciousness of the *aṣṭa mātrikās* and *aṣṭa bhairavas* in an area in which he was securely protected by the mighty *nāgas* with their heads raised to strike intruders or non-believers (Fig. 11). Julia Hegewald, writing about Nepali *ḍhungé dhārās* in the Kathmandu Valley, remarks that the images carved in and around these water *dhārās* “..... connote abundance and fertility.”³⁹

³⁸ Shimkhada and Reading, Op. Cit.

³⁹ Julia A.B. Hegewald. “Living Traditions: Aquatic Architecture and Imagery in the Kathmandu Valley” in *Nepal: Nostalgia and Modernity* edited by Deepak Shimkhada, p. 38. Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2001.

The Ritual Bath

Ritual bathing is an important aspect of Hinduism. Water is an agent that purifies both one's body and mind. Even the images of gods (*pratimā*) must go through the process of ritual purification on a daily basis, which is called *abhisheka*. For the process, water or other liquid substances can be used—such as milk, honey, and yogurt—depending on the deity and the occasion. These other substances, of course, are used with the more elaborate processes to honor and please a deity. However, for a more simple daily act of worship, water is all one requires to cleanse and purify the worshipper's body and that of the deity. After all, water is the life-giving substance that has made life possible and now the worshipper makes a connection with the divine through water when, after taking a daily bath, the life-giving liquid is offered to the deity of one's choice in the form of *arghya* (ablution).

Among the five primal elements (*pañcha mahatattva*)—air, water, fire, earth and ether—water plays an important role in Hindu rituals, for it is an agent of purification. Water as a life-giving force and as a purifying agent has become a mainstay of major religions. It is more so with Hinduism because Hindus are obsessed with the notion of purity and pollution. Purification is one of the sixteen *samskāras* mentioned in many Hindu texts from *Dharmasāstra* to *Manusmṛti*. A devout Hindu purifies himself or herself by taking a bath called *snāna* before taking on one's daily chores.

In Hinduism, human secretion of fluids and hair are the major sources of pollution that need to be cleansed.⁴⁰ Along the same lines, Mary Douglas notes, “We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its specifically vulnerable points.”⁴¹ The *dharmasāstras* refer to ritual cleanliness as *sauca*, which is a fundamental virtue of the soul (*ātmagunas*). Without going into detail about the types of *sauca*, suffice it to say here that bodily cleanliness through bathing (*snāna*) is vital and water is that element which keeps the body clean. Additionally, water is also valued as a *pāpamochana* (remover of sin). When looking at the elaborate construction of the Tusa Hiti step-down bath, the king's motive becomes quite obvious and his purpose in using that ritual is to remain free from all *pāpa* that he might have committed as a ruler while rendering judgments to his subjects or enemies.

While there is some resemblance between the step-down wells of Gujarat and the Nepali *dhārās* found in the Kathmandu Valley, their purpose is quite different. The step wells of India, elaborate though they may be—especially those in Gujarat and in Rajasthan—are constructed for drinking, not for bathing. The stepped *dhārās* of the Kathmandu Valley are for both these and other purposes as already alluded to.

⁴⁰ Innes, William C., Jr., *Religious Hair Display and Its Meanings*. Springer: 2021.

⁴¹ Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts on Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge, 1966, p. 21.

Because of these divergent usages of the water spaces, I will not compare them here.

Because water ablution is necessary for propitiating gods, the deities carved around the Tusa Hiti pit receive the water from the bather's cupped hands. What better way to show one's devotion to the deity than offering water while one takes a bath in the morning? A *dhārā* is the place where a person acts out his daily ritual-dance by standing and then bending down to receive the water that is falling from the spout and washing over his head and the entire body. To provide an opportunity for the king to act out his *jala kridā* (water sport) as well as to engage in the ritual ablution, Tusa Hiti was built—a bath fit for a king.

The word for water in Sanskrit is *apah*, or 'that which pervades'. As the nature of God is all pervasive, water's association with the multitude of gods—both male and female—is not surprising. The Vedas, Purāṇas and Epics are full of stories that depict water as a vivifying force.

The pit's tantric symbolism as alluded to earlier is not difficult to understand when we take the principle of male and female (*puruṣa and prakṛti*) dynamism a little further. On one hand, there is the expression of union between *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti* through the symbol of a deep pit in the form of a *yonī*. On the other hand, there is the symbolism of water as primordial sap that takes us back to the beginning of creation. Water therefore stands for not only for sexual fluid, the basis of life, but it also stands for the wholeness that connects everything in the universe. While the male and female symbolism coupled with the primordial *nāga* ubiquitously present in the structure provide a strong aspect of Shaivite tantrism, King Siddhinarasimha Malla was a devout follower of Vaisnavism. Because of the syncretic nature of Nepali religion, there is a significant blending of the two—Vaisnavism and Śaivism. Many kings while following one particular sect (*sampradāya*) gave equal patronage to all religions, including Buddhism. This is the unique aspect of the Nepali religious fervor of the time, a tradition that continues to the present day.



Fig. 11. Close up of the entrance guarded by the nāgas. Photo: Akriti Kharel

The Tushā Hiti was just such a *dhārā* that was built for the use of the king and no one else. After a morning bath—his *kuṇḍalini* fully awakened as symbolized by the risen heads of the *nāgas*—the king emerged from the earth's womb (in the form of a yoni/uterus), transformed into an invigorated man ready to take on the challenges of the day.



Fig. 12. Another view of Tushā Hiti. Photo: Bipin Raj Shrestha

Appendix

Hiti – The water spout

Hiti Type Names		
1.	Lohan Hiti	
2.	LoonHiti	
3.	Thaswo: Hiti	
4.	Phashwo: Hiti	
5.	Gaa Hiti **	

** Almost every Water Spouts are Gaa Hiti (as they are built below Ground Level)

Materials used/Type

	Hiti Name	Particulars
1.	Lohan Hiti	Uses Hard Stone
2.	Gaa Hiti	Water spout at the " Pit (Gaa) " below the Ground Level
3.	Loon Hiti	<p>At many places, Covered Externally with "Gold plated Copper sheets"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Called "Loon Hiti" (Golden water spout) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Loon = नर = Gold • To provide water with gold elements to the "general public" • Water with Gold element is believed to cure many diseases • Use of gold basically intended towards Public Health than to Show-off ones Wealth and Prosperity
4.	Thaswo: Hiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spouts looking upward (to the sky) • Buried on the Ground WITHOUT any Water Source • Are basically "Dry spouts" • Supposed to be dedicated for the deceased ones (<i>need citation</i>) (for their betterment in the afterworld)

5.	Phashwo: Hiti	<p>Water spout with its head turned backward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only one at "Narayan Hiti" area • According to the Legend, this spout <u>turned back the face</u> "not to see" person <i>severing</i> own father - Killed one = supposed to be the Lichhavi King Vikramjit (Vikramaditya) - Killer = supposed to be his son
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NOTES

1. Hiti primarily made at the entry point to the City Area (Main settlements)
2. They pair with "Rest Houses" (Inns = Paati = Falcha in Nepal Bhasa)
3. Combination of Hiti + Falcha allow public in general and City visitors
 - To have a rest/nap
 - Rinch or Wash their Face and Feet (get Fresh)
 - Make themselves Cleaned before entering the main settlements
 - Intended to avoid any chances of External Contamination (like COVID)

Some Hiti with Special Features

Patan

1.	Tapa Hiti	Established with ones "TENACITY"
2.	Alok Hiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water spout of the "Another World (Alok)" - Its Stone-covered walls hide various Naags and are Restricted to be Removed (as mentioned on the Inscription there)
3.	Manga: Hiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Believed to be Coated with Radium during <i>Lichhavi heyday</i> - <i>Yet to be confirmed independently</i>
4.	Guita Bahi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Had 9 water spouts, 9 vihars, 9 ponds etc. <i>Lichhavis used 9 x 9 formats (natural number system)</i> <i>Mallas used 8 x 8 formats (Fibonacci series)</i>

Kathmandu		
1.	Thawn Hiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the upper-most part of historical Kathmandu (called Thathoo Puiny' k'O+) - Covered with Gold (believed to flow water-soluble gold)
2.	Maru Hiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the central part of historical Kathmandu - Most popular one (near Kathmandu Durbar square) - Mentioned in the Legendary Song "Rajamati" composed probably during Rana period Nepal - <i>Rajamati was the first-ever song played as National Anthem of Nepal during the Official visit of JangaBahadur Rana in London, UK</i>
3.	Kwo Hiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the lower-most part of historical Kathmandu (South) - Here, the main settlement of "Dachin Koliagram" ends
4.	Yangaa Hiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dates back to Lichhavi Era - People helped to move colossal Budhanilkantha Statue and thus allowed to build this Spout - Has Lichhavi stone inscription

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