

**Gaura Festival: A Cross-Border Cultural Celebration in Sudurpaschim, Nepal, and Uttarakhand, India****Pirt Bahadur Bist¹, Sita Bist²**¹Phd Scholars. Assistant Professor of Sociology
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Abstract: The Gaura Festival is a vibrant folk celebration observed in the border districts of Sudurpaschim, Nepal, and Uttarakhand, India. Celebrated in the month of Bhadra, the festival brings together communities across political boundaries, fostering social cohesion, cultural continuity, and economic activity. This study explores the practices, rituals, and socio-cultural significance of the Gaura Festival. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with key informants, and secondary sources, including books and newspapers. The festival involves a series of rituals such as soaking and washing *biruda* (five types of grains), performing worship of Gaura and Myasar, singing Athawali songs, and participating in folk dances and games like *Thado Khel*, *Dhumari*, *Dhusko* and *Deuda*. Married women play a central role by fasting and performing rituals for the well-being of their families. Gaura promotes social unity, empowers women, strengthens cross-border cultural ties, and enhances economic activities in border markets. Ultimately, the festival demonstrates how shared traditions transcend political boundaries, fostering harmony, unity, and a sense of collective identity.

Keywords: Gaura, Biruda, Athawali, empowerment, Deuda, blessings**Introduction**

Gaura festival is celebrated with great pomp and show in the month of Bhadra (fifth month of Hindu calendar) as a folk festival in the border villages of Sudurpaschim Nepal and Uttarakhand, India. In India, this festival is famous as Satum and Aathum festivals. In Sudurpaschim Nepal, it is known with different names like Gaura, Gora, etc. according to the place. Gaura festival is celebrated especially in the border districts of Pithoragarh, Gangolihat, Berinag area, Dugg, Kamasyar and Nakuri areas of Bageshwar district. Similarly, Gaura festival is also celebrated in Madlak and Gumdesh areas of Champawat district of Uttarakhand. Darchula, Baitadi, Dadeldhura and Doti districts of Nepal have been celebrating Gaura festival since ancient times. In recent times, there has been migration from the hilly regions to India and Nepal. Many people from the hills have settled in the Terai, and now the Gaura festival is celebrated in the Tanpur, Banbasa, and Khatima regions of India and in the Kailali and Kanchanpur districts of Nepal.

Since the time of human evolution, people have been developing various cultures and traditions to make their lives and those of their communities simple and easy. Sudurpaschimeli and

Kumaoni culture is a combination of charismatic traditions, harmonious tunes, ritualistic folk art and the most comforting food that portrays the beauty of Himalayas. Sudurpaschimeli and Kumaoni people jollify in a rich calendar of festival. And these festivals are tied to the agrarian cycles and the changing seasons. Some festivals are common like Holi of Kumaon and Diwali but some unique kumaoni festivals are harela, satu aathu, Bhittauli etc.(Sharma and Bhatkoti, 2025). The Gaura festival is celebrated every year in the southwest is a vivid example of this. The Khas Aryans, who follow both Vedic and nature religions, celebrate this festival with great enthusiasm and importance. The Khas, who worship nature, celebrate this festival after completing their farming work and when the fields are green. In this festival, Gauri, the symbol of Parvati, and Mayeshwar, the symbol of lord Shiva, are worshipped with *biruda*.

This festival is very important because all the family members sit together in one place and cook and eat sweet and savory dishes, each family member wears new clothes, and family members who have been away from home return home for this festival. This festival is not celebrated for just one day but for more than a week, making it the biggest festival of Sudurpaschim Province. This festival, which is celebrated once a year, has been equally important for everyone, children, youth, and the elderly. Until two decades ago, from the beginning of the New Year, people of all age groups would start counting down the days of the year, saying, "Gaura" (a type of rice cake) and counting down the days. Children would start counting down the days of the festival so that they could eat sweet and savory dishes and wear new clothes. The young people would go out of the village to earn money to run the household. The young women would get married and settle down in their own homes. Young people return home from abroad for this festival. All young people play Deuda with their friends or girlfriends and have fun. The elderly look forward to meeting and mingling with their families and relatives, in addition to continuing religious values and traditions. In this way, this great festival brings all the people of the family and community together at least once a year and exchanges love and affection with each other, ending mutual disagreements and conflicts and increasing family emotional ties. This festival works to establish social harmony and unity between individuals, families and communities in the society.

It is believed that the Gaura festival begins on the day of Bhadra Panchami and ends on the full moon day. The Gaura festival falls in the month of Bhadra. The Gaura falling in the Shukla Paksha of the month of Bhadra is called Ujali Gaura and the Gaura falling in the Krishna Paksha is called Adheri (Anari) Gaura. From the point of view of religious importance, the Gaura falling in the Shukla Paksha is considered auspicious, fruitful and good in terms of obtaining fruits. Therefore, women who keep the fasting of Gaura for the first time wait for this Ujali Gaura. Every newlywed keeps the fasting of Gaura Devi and wears a *dubdhago*. A newly-wed woman is called *Nauli Goriya*. Married women are entitled to the *dubdhago* only after observing the fast of Gaura Devi. In Hinduism, just as wearing a jane dharan after taking the vow of a boy is mandatory, wearing a *dubdhago* is also considered mandatory for married women. The festivals of Uttarakhand and Sudurpaschim Nepal are deeply connected with nature, relationships and folk life. The Satu-Aathu festival is a wonderful confluence of devotion faith and family relationships (Bhandari, 2025). This festival is not limited to worship only but is a festival of folk songs, dance and collective joy.

Objectives and Methods of the Study

The Gaura festival is a fundamental nature worship festival celebrated in the Nepal-India border area of Uttarakhand and Sudurpaschim Nepal. This festival has worked to strengthen the bond of meeting, reconciliation, and love among the people of the border villages. How is the Gaura festival celebrated in the Sudurpaschim of Nepal and Uttarakhand India celebrated? What is

done? Whose role is it? What is the importance of this festival? To explore and analyze its social dimensions, primary data has been collected by observing the activities of Gaura from its beginning to its dissolution. The main informants, including men and women celebrating Gaura, people playing, women singing Athawali, women celebrating Gaura, women singing Sagun, teachers celebrating Gaura, were identified and data was collected through in-depth interviews with ten people and three focus group interviews. Similarly, data has been collected from previously written books and articles published in newspapers regarding the Gaura festival. The data obtained from the Gaura festival celebrated in Darchula, Baitadi and Kanchanpur as well as the Pithoragarh region of India has been interpreted and analyzed by collecting facts from knowledgeable people about the Gaura festival. Since the researcher is also a member of the Gaura festival group, it has been easy to collect facts to write this article by studying about the Gaura festival. The role played by the Gaura festival in maintaining social unity and harmony as well as social unity and brotherhood is important by asking people who have participated in the celebration of the Gaura festival, observed it for a long time and are familiar with the meaning of various symbols. It is a big but vegetarian women-dominated festival. In this festival, women celebrate their husbands, children, family members, relatives, and for the happiness and peace of society.

Results and Discussion

Gaura festival is celebrated by married women of Sudurpaschim, Nepal and Uttarakhand of Kumaon. They worship Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva as Gaura and Mayashwar. In Uttarakhand, this festival is known as *Satun-Aathu and Gaura/Gamara or gora in Sudurpaschim Nepal*. The folk festival, which intertwines human relationships with divine worship, kicked off with the ceremonial soaking five types of grains on biruda *panchami*. This festival is celebrated annually from Panchami to Ashtami in the Bhadra. Gaura festival holds special significance in Kali-Kumaon's border regions. It reflects the shared cultural heritage of India and Nepal, symbolizing the deep connection between people living on both sides of the Mahakali River. The festival re-enacts the mythological tale of goddess Parvati. According to respondent of Pithoragadh, Parvati left her marital home on saptami and returned to her parental home in Kumaon after Lord Shiva became angry at her. On Ashtami, Lord Shiva reconciled is celebrated as Satu- Aathu (Times of India, 2024).

The festival is as a symbol of social and cultural unity, promoting religious, social, economic, cultural, and ecotourism ties between Nepal and India. This festival has crossed the geographical and political demarcations between India and Nepal by bringing the people of both countries together. This dimension of shared culture has promoted the political and state-level solidarity of the countries regardless of the bordering regions of both countries. Its observance has the roots to throw long past when there were no boundaries drawn of the modern political states. Before the formation of modern India and Nepal, it preexisted which led the following times of in the lives of both of the countries. Along with this commonly shared past and origin of Gaura festival, Gaura festival has helped to preserve culture and improve the economic well-being of the people on both sides (Kalauni, 2024). Now, it's not only limited to the cultural performance but also a part of economic relations and transactions.

Rituals and Practices of the Gaura Celebration

Biruda Panchami (Day One)

Biruda has special importance in the Gaura festival. On the first day of Gaura festival is biruda (pulses) Panchami. Biruda is a mixture of five types of grains. *Kalo Mas* (black pulse) wheat,

small kerau (peas), *Gahat*, *Guras*, any five grains are selected and prepared based on the availability in a particular place. They carefully sift or select so that no sixth grain falls into the five birudas. The house where the *Gaura* is kept is called *Deughar*. The *Deughar* is already purified by smearing cow dung and mud. In the afternoon, all the women of the village gather in the *Deughar* (a house built for the Goddess Gaura) wearing new, clean and pure clothes, taking copper or brass vessels on *biruda* in water. In the *Deughar*, the copper or brass vessels used for soaking the birudas. *batalu* women put cow dung dots in five places around the copper or brass vessels pot, apply or filled with *dubo*, *akshata* (rice), red *simrak*, *abir on it*, *light a diyo* (lamp and singing of auspicious songs (Bhatt, 2079). In the time of soaking biruda *batalu* women singing following types of song:

Mayashwar gusai mera binti meri suna, aaigyo loliko bart birudi khoji diya.

khoji lyaunu mayashwar gusai, kalau birudi khoji lyaunu.

Above the Gaura song reminds us of the story of parvati asking lord Shiva to find five types of biruda and bring them to her.

Shashti – Biruda Washing (Day Two)

On the second day of Gaura *parv* or the day of Shasti tithi of Hindu calendar, the women wash the Biruda soaked on the Panchami day in the main stream or stream of their village. All the women come to the *deughar* /temple, put their *Biruda* pots on their head, covers them with banana leaves, and wash the *Biruda* in the stream or stream, the main source of drinking water in the village. While washing the *Biruda*, the elderly women sing *Manglik* songs and the young and old women wash everyone's *Biruda*. The daughters and daughter in law of the village gather in groups and wash the *Biruda*.

After washing the biruda, they bring five plants from the surrounding fields, namely, *saukobot*, *paddybot*, *balakobot*, *tilkobot*, *gorefulokobot*. and made Gaura of water resources like Nwala/panyarki Gora. They cover them with a silken red or yellow cloth and make a navi or dharakhaiki, gaura, and worship them with biruda, *accheta*, *phulpati*. They offer fruits such as oranges, seasonal fruits, *chuk*, cucumber, etc. grown in the village. This helps to strengthen the feeling of working together in a group among the women, which helps in maintaining social unity. After this, they return to the *deughar* with the biruda singing *Manglik* songs. After reaching the *deughar*, they separate a few birudas for worshipping Gauradevi. The separated birudas are kept in banana and *timla* leaves, which are used to worship Goradevi on the day of Athewali.

Saptami – Bhitarki Gaura (Day Three)

On the evening of the Gaura *Saptami*, women celebrate the Bhirki Gaura. The Saptami (a pure white or yellow thread with a green thread inside and tied with seven knots) and the Dubdhago (a sacred thread made of red thread to be worn around the neck) required by the women of the bhitarki Gaura are prepared in the afternoon. The women gather at the *Deughar* with fruits, *akchheta* (rice flour), *pitha* (red color), incense, ghee, oil, *bata* (a cotton cloth or thread used to light a lamp), *Saptami* and *Dubdhago*.

In the evening, the men of the village go to the fields with their musical instruments to search for Gaura. They pick up the wheat, sesame, and white flowers from the fields and put them in a basket made of reeds or reeds and arrive at the *Deughar* dancing to the musical instruments and praising the local deities, including Goddess Gaura. The worship is started by placing Gaura in the *Deughar* (temple).

There is a song that says that Gaura Devi asks her *Ija* (mother), where I sit? if I were to live in the *Bangichak* (second floor of house), then where would our guest siting place? If I were to live in the *Mujela*, then where would my brother and brother in law sleep? If I were to live in the near the kitchen, then where would my mother and father sleep? Therefore, I live in the middle place of the house in third floor (pana). The Gaura kept in the basket is made into a pot by adding fruits and soil. The Brahmin priest recites a mantra and begins the worship. Gaura Devi is offered a *shigarpatar*(*Makup*). She is tied with a silk cloth. The secrete threads (*dugdhago*) of all the women of the *bratalu* are tied around Gaura Devi. A small wooden square is covered with a cloth and considered a symbol of Mayashwar (Shiva) and kept near Gaura Devi. Gaura Devi is covered with red or yellow silk and lit. The priest chants the *mantra*. The women worship in a group. Each worshipper calls the name of the husband of the wife (*thakurani*) who is worshipping. The singers of the Saguna say, "So-and-so's wife has observed your fast Gaura Devi, 'What boon do you wish to give her?'" and then Gaura Devi replies, "Whoever has no son will be given a son, whoever has no wealth will be given wealth, whoever has no food will be given food, whoever has no cattle will be given cattle. Women pray to the goddess for the happiness, peace and prosperity of their family. The fasting of this day ends all *bartalu* women tie *Saptami dhago* (thread with seven knots) around their necks with the offering of fruits and the seventh day of fasting. From this day on, every night until Gaura is immersed (immersed), men and women come to the *Deughar* (temple) to sing hymns and have fun.

Durbastmi/Athawali (Day Four)

In the *durbastmi tithi* Gora Athawali is considered the main day of the Gaura festival. Women place Gaura Devi in the entrance of the temple (which is called Gorekhalo) from early day onwards and worship Gaura Devi with a *veer*. The songs are *Kare Uvajin Gamara Devi*, *Kare Uvjiya Maheshwar*, *Sunko Gidwa Chiri Uvajya Maheshwar*, *Tilawot*, *Sauwot Uvajin Gamara Devi*.... In between the Athawali, people play and dance *deuda* and auspicious songs. The men play musical instruments. The original musical instrument of this region is also played, the *hood*. The women dance and dance to the rhythm of the musical instruments and the melody of the auspicious songs, the goddesses dance and worship Gaura Devi. This scene is very enjoyable. Placing Gaura Devi and Mayashwar on their heads, Gaura Devi is worshipped and participants dance around the *khal*. Every Bratalu woman has a tradition of worshipping Gaura Devi by placing her head on her head.

Based on the story of Maina queen in the Athawali song, this festival can be considered as a process of socialization to prepare women for their future life through the story of Gaura and Mayashwar's marriage. Getting married at a young age, puberty, its characteristics, menstruation, when menstruation occurs, what to do when menstruation is pure, how to know when pregnancy occurs, etc., are taught through the story of Maina Rani character through the Athewali *mantra*. For example, look at menstruation.. In the first menstruation became queen, fourth day went to the Ganges(River), the queen washed her body, washed her clothes, dried her clothes, she purified herself, the queen did not purify herself, the queen did not purify herself, the queen went home after cleansing herself.... Similarly, there are stories about the queen's daughter, Maina, who did penance in the river Gaura, who fell in love with the shepherd across the lake through the melody of the *Vinaiwaja*, and who got married in love. The shepherd, who was half-matri and half-poili, got married in the forest, etc. are in the Athawali song. It is seen that the function of this festival is to standardize social environment, love, sexuality, social responsibility, duty, and discipline for newly married women. After singing the Athawali song, fruits and Biruda are placed on clothes as *prasad* and thrown into the sky for the women of the *bratalu* to catch *parshad* . Finally, the women who have offered the goddess are removed and their *Dugdhago*

threads are put on. All the birudas offered to the goddess are given alms. Goddess Gaura is taken to the *deughar* and kept.

Body worship and blessings

After all the bratalu women have finished the Athewali padi, they perform *Mundo Puja*. First, they worship their husband and all the male and female members of their family with Biruda. When worshipping the head (*Mundo*), they do not only worship the head, they start from the feet of the body and worship the head and finish by applying *tika* on the forehead. In this way, they worship the head (*Mundo*) of all the family members of their family and then go from house to house to worship their relatives. When worshipped with *Pancha biruda*, one is blessed with the wish of spreading like a lotus, becoming as big as a banana, be as graceful as a garden, becoming as smart or clever as a fox, being respected as a king, being as tall as a mountain, having a coat of arms, being a servant of a king, having snow on the mountains, living for ages as long as the waters of the seven oceans touch, always being able to bring the offerings of *Panchami's biruda*, Dashain's *Joro*, *Dutya's Chiura*, and the offerings of the gods are fruitful. After this, women put five grains of *Pancha biruda* in their mouth, remove the old *dugdhago* (secrete thread) and put on a new milk thread. They worship in the name of the family members who are not at home or if they have a photo. Earlier, it was customary to send the Viruda Prasad offered by them and the Prashad after Gaura Visharjan in a letter. The remaining *biruda* kept for worship is roasted and eaten as a *prasad*. People who have biruda they give those families that do not have *biruda* them as a *prasad*. This rituals function to increase social unity, brotherhood and harmony in society.

Folk Games and Dances

From the day after Ashtami, adult men play the *Thado Khel*. In this Khel, from how nature was created to how the gods and goddesses were origin/ created and what they did, stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata are sung in local folk languages. In the small dialogue between Ram and *Salla* tree in the *Thado khel*, King Ram says, "You saw my Sita in the stream." In response, *Salla* tree says, "I was in a hurry, I did not see Sita." While playing the game of bowling, they sing the song of *Dhusko* in the style of dance and dance quickly, while the *Dhauko* song is sung slowly and with a long breath, while the *Dhasko* song is sung to the fast rhythm of *Dhusko*. In the *Dhusko* song sung in the dance of bowling of the Ramayana, *Jogi re Jogi kyu ko bhog. Jogi re Jogi vichhaiko bhogi*.

Deuda Khel is the famous in Sudurpaschim, Karnali province and Uttrakhanda India. Young men and women are interested in Deuda khel. There is a strong response to the Deuda song of male and female Deuda dancers. Skilled Deuda dancers are invited to play Deuda from the village of different place. The place where there are good deuda's is crowded with people from the surrounding villages. The Deuda games held throughout the week during the Gaura festival not only entertain people, but also provide an opportunity for the emergence of new Deuda artist talents and help in social unity and harmony. Deuda competitions held between women, men and women, as well as between men and women, make an important contribution to the social, cultural, economic and political development of individuals, communities and societies.

Gaura Visarjan (Final Day)

Gaura festival is biggest festival of Sudurpaschim Province of Nepal. There is a religious belief that the Gaura festival, which begins on Bhadra Panchami, should be completed by the day before Purnima. On the day of Gauradevi's *sela*, Gauradevi and Mayasar are brought out of the Deughar and placed in the middle of the *Gorekhala* (place of Gaura playing). Women worship her with Akshata and biruda. In the time of playing or dance, one woman worships Gauradevi

and the other with Maheshwar on her head. They sing the *Kelaghori* song with the Hallori flute and dance while breaking their waists and singing auspicious songs accompanied by drums. To worship Gauradevi, women go to the river bank or to a place with sacred trees such as Pipal and Bad, depending on the place, and after reaching there, they dance and sing and have fun. Finally, Gaura is taken from the basket and placed at the Pipal tree or other pure place. The leaves made from Gaura are spread as prashad and given to all the members of the family as Gauradevi's *Prasad* and Gaura festival is ends.

Socio-cultural dimension

Gora Festival as a Regional Identity and Cultural Boundary Marker

Gaura Festival is a great festival of the border region of Far Western Nepal and Uttarakhand, India. The Gora Festival is a symbol of the folk literature and folk life of this region. Also known as Manas Khand and Devbhumi, the common folk festival of this region is Gora. The rituals, local songs and dances of this festival act as cultural identities of this Kali and Kumaon region, which mark membership in the common regional heritage. The continuity of the Dhamaigoli since historical times, settlement, folk religion tradition, settlement across the Kali River, brotherhood, marriage and kinship relations, etc. have made Gora Festival a strong identity of this region. The Gora Festival, which is celebrated annually, has done the work of preserving the language, oral folk tales, songs, stories, and every aspect of socio-economic life of this region. This festival, celebrated as Satu Aathu in Uttarakhand and Gora in Nepal, creates a cultural boundary of this region. The hooded band played by the drummer in Gora, the statue of various plants symbolizing Gora, the wooden square symbolizing Shiva, and the five grains are the unique identities of Uttarakhand and the Far West. This festival, celebrated together by women, is a festival of mother power and symbols. Sometimes men celebrate together with Deuda and Dhusko Chachari, which also symbolizes a distinct identity. This festival is a festival of nature worship and non-violence. This festival, which was previously celebrated as a symbol, has become a public display of the Gaura Uts Sudurpaschim identity in urban diasporic gatherings in Nepal including Kathmandu and other cities. This festival, associated with the marriage and worship of Lord Shiva in this region, is particularly important for borderline identities where political boundaries blur in historically connected communities.

Gender Roles

A key feature of the Gaura festival is the central role of women. In the main rituals celebrated in Gaura (soaking the seeds, washing the seeds, leading devotional songs and dances), married women and elderly female ritualists fast and gather in groups in devotional spirit, socially uniting and performing the rituals in social cooperation. The collective presence of women within the family, such as searching for Biruda, preparing Biruda, soaking it, taking it to a spring for drinking water and washing it, searching for the necessary plants for making Gora, making Gora, worshipping, singing Manglik songs, worshipping the head with Biruda offerings, singing Deuda, and organizing community gatherings, produces social networks, mutual support and status within kinship groups. In fact, Gora Parva gives more priority to women's power. Gora Parva is celebrated by women and Gora Devi is given more priority. This festival also gives the message that women are capable of performing any ritual or task.

Women's socialization and empowerment

In terms of culture, Gaura Parva is a festival for married women. Gaura Parva is a great festival celebrated by women by fasting and gathering together. In the past, it was customary for women to get married at the age of child. Gaura Parva is a festival that empowers married women

through socialization of life and the world. The folk literature sung during Gaura Parva, especially the Athawali song, plays a very important role. Married women are given knowledge about human life through the story of Maina Rani by observing the fast of Gaura. There are descriptions in folk literature about the birth of a human being, childhood, youth, its characteristics, menstruation, and menstrual purity. For example, look at menstruation. when first menstruation four days stay of separate, Maina queen went to the Ganga's (river), After going to the Ganga's, Maina queen washed her body, clothes, dried her clothes and purified herself. After purifying herself, Maina queen returned home....

There are stories about Maina Rani becoming pregnant, the identity of her pregnancy, pregnancy, the birth of her daughter Gaura, her growth and development, her penance on the river bank, her love for the shepherd across the pond through the melody of *Vinaiwaja*, and their love marriage. There are stories in the Athawali song about the shepherds being half-*maiti*, half-*poili* and getting married in the forest. The main function of this festival is to socialize newly married women in the social environment, love, sexuality, social responsibility, duty, and discipline. The Gaura festival, which integrates folk life and worldview through folk literature, is a very important festival in terms of culture and sociology.

Gaura festival and economic activities on border markets

There is a historical relationship between Sudurpaschim Nepal and Kumaon of Uttarakhand, India. The borders of the states used to move here and there. People used to migrate. Wherever they went, they continued their culture. The first major kingdom of this region was Katyur, followed by Doti. Later, the Khas Empire ruled. Nepal also ruled for a few years. After the development of the road network during the British rule, Brahmadev became the shopping market of the Sudurpaschim region of Nepal, followed by Pithoragarh and Jhulaghat. For a long time, the markets of Sudurpaschim Nepal. The Kumaiyas were traders in Julaghat. Since the people of Kumaon and Doti have the same religious tradition, they have the same culture. Since there are big festivals of the Gaura Pahari community, the shopping centers were also Julaghat and Pithoragarh. Gradually, with the development of roads, markets expanded to Joljivi and Dharchula. Nepalese shop for their needs from various border markets in Uttarakhand of India. The custom of wearing only one piece of clothing for Gaura was prevalent in the Sudurpaschim. The custom of selling ghee made by raising cows and buffaloes throughout the year in the border Indian market and buying necessary clothes for the family was prevalent in Nepal. In the year when there was no income, they would buy clothes on credit and celebrate Gaura festival. In the next year's Gaura, they would pay off the old debt and take out a new loan.

During the Gaura festival, people used to crowd the markets on the Nepal-India border to buy goods and cloths. Even today, during festivals, there is a rush of shopping in the markets on the Nepal and Indian sides. Economic activities increase on the border. A lot of trade takes place during Gaura, Dashain and Tihar. Indian citizens come to the border Nepali markets to buy goods from Nepal and foreign countries. Nepalese, who have gone to various parts of India for employment, when they return home for the Gaura festival, buy goods from the Indian markets across the border. Economic activities increase during the festival season in the markets along the borders of Nepal and India.

Social Unity and Harmony

Gaura festival celebrated in Sudurpaschim Nepal and Uttarakhand have religious, social, cultural and political importance. While many castes in Nepal have established their own identity and geographical relationship, the Khas of the vast Khas Empire have also linked their identity to the

Khasan land. This region, which has been left behind by the Nepalese state, is still far from the infrastructure of development such as education, health services, hydropower, roads, and drinking water. Present Uttrakhand, Sudurpaschim Karnali, which were famous as the Khas Kingdom until the 14th century, have gone through a complete colonization phase with the unification campaign of the Nepalese state and has reached its present state. Among the fundamental identities of the Khash, who have different languages, literature and cultures, the Gaura festival and Deuda have succeeded in establishing national and international identity today. The Gaura festival and Deuda have worked to connect all the Khas castes. Deuda and its Khash folk culture have connected any village in Darchula and Achham, Kumau or Baitadi and Jumla. To know how much the Gaura festival and Deuda culture have united the Khash residents of Kumau, Mahakali, Seti Bheri and Karanali, and what their identity is, one does not need to go to Mahakali and Karanali. It is enough to see the Gaura festival celebrated Tudikhel, Kathmandu by the Khash Aaryans living in the capital temporarily or permanently. Nowadays, our brothers and sisters from the Sudurpaschim living in Europe and America are also organizing Gaura and Deuda programs. This has internationalized our culture. May our culture continue to spread like this? May it continue to flourish?

Nowadays, the month of Bhadra is celebrated in all the villages of the Far West, whether Hos or cities. Deuda competitions are held everywhere in the village and city. Deuda players are often reluctant to participate in these competitions. In Dhangarhi and Mahendranagar in the Tarai, various organizations have organized programs to play Deuda games in three or four places in the city after three or four o'clock in the afternoon. Similarly, in the villages and cities of the Tarai including Kanchanpur and Kailali in the mountains, the colors of Gaura and Deuda can be seen in the month of Bhadau. In Gaura, the Biruda worships the head and the Deuda game has strengthened social harmony and unity and established the identity of Sudurpaschim Nepal.

Cross-Cultural Connections

The Gaura Festival serves as a vibrant cultural bridge between Nepal and India, particularly linking the hill Kash-Aarya communities of Sudurpaschim with those of Kumaon in Uttarakhand. Though separated by political borders, these regions remain deeply connected through shared languages, Festival, religious beliefs, culture, and folk traditions. The Mahakali River, rather than acting as a boundary, has long been a corridor for trade, kinship, and cultural exchange. Cross-border marriages, seasonal migrations, and everyday interactions further enrich the festival, as families celebrate together, exchange gifts, and join in rituals that reinforce ties beyond nationality. In this way, Gaura becomes more than a religious occasion, it stands as a living reminder of shared ancestry, mutual respect, and enduring unity.

Celebrated in the month of Bhadra Panchami to Astami tithi, the festival is known as *Gaura Parva* in Sudurpaschim Nepal and *satu-Aathu* in Uttarakhand India. Its roots lie in the story of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, symbolizing devotion, harmony, and family well-being. Women play a central role by performing sacred rituals, preparing offerings, and singing traditional songs that preserve cultural values across generations. The participation of the entire community—through collective worship, folk dances, and music—highlights the festival's role in strengthening social solidarity and sustaining cultural traditions on both sides of the border.

Despite political boundaries, the people of Nepal's far west and India's Uttarakhand remain united through Gaura. It represents not only a religious festival but also a symbol of shared identity and brotherhood. Common practices in attire, language, songs, and customs reflect the intertwined heritage of the two regions. Ultimately, Gaura demonstrates how culture transcends borders, fostering a spirit of togetherness that no political line can divide. It stands as a shining

example of cross-cultural continuity, emotional bonding, and the enduring friendship between Nepal and India.

Conclusion

The Gaura Festival is a vital cultural and religious celebration that unites communities across Far West Nepal and Uttarakhand, India. Historically rooted in the Katyur and Doti kingdoms, the festival transcends modern political boundaries, reflecting shared caste, religion, language, and cultural traditions. It serves as a bridge that strengthens social cohesion, family bonds, and cross-border ties. Central to Gaura Parva is the worship of Gaura *Mayashwar*, symbolizing Shiva and Parvati, and the active participation of women, who observe fasting and perform rituals using natural elements like seeds, grass, and rice husks. Through these practices, the festival conveys environmental respect and reinforces social and cultural knowledge, including women's roles, reproductive health, marital responsibilities, and communal values.

Gaura also fosters economic activity in border markets, promoting trade and interaction between Nepal and India. Folk songs, dances, and games, including Deuda, Dhamari, Dhusko, and Thado Khel, not only entertain but also transmit cultural heritage, encourage teamwork, and strengthen social harmony. Overall, Gaura Parva is more than a religious festival. It is a medium for cultural preservation, women's empowerment, community bonding, and cross-cultural unity. By bridging geographical and political divides, it embodies the enduring friendship, shared identity, and collective heritage of the people on both country India and Nepal

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