



The Cultural Importance of Festivals and Traditions of Mithilanchal: The Perspective of Regional Identity

Dr. Subodh Kumar Ray

Post Graduate Teacher, +2 U.H.S., Shahwazpur, Darbhanga, Bihar, India

Email: kumarsubodhray@gmail.com

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.14.2.343](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.14.2.343)



Dr. Subodh Kumar Ray

Article info

Article Received: 06/05/2026
Article Accepted: 09/06/2026
Published online: 13/06/2026

Abstract

Festivals and traditions are essential modes of cultural expression. These are the means of expressing communal beliefs, customs, and identity. Some festivals and customs celebrated in the Mithila region, such as Chaurchan, Jur Seetal, Sama Chakeba, Madhu Shravani, Kojagara, and Chhath, are key creators of regional identity and familial bonds in the districts of Mithila, which is located in the northeast of Bihar. These celebrations are firmly based in nature worship, mythology, and social solidarity, and they frequently underscore the importance of rural life. Chaurchan symbolizes emotional healing, purity, and the removal of false stigmas, all of which stem from King Hemangad Thakur's historical pledge. Jur Seetal values harmony with nature and teaches ecology. It is the first day of the Maithili New Year. Sama Chakeva is a cultural expression that emphasizes the brother's protective duty through traditional songs and dances. Madhu Shravani honors a couple's union through nature worship and oral storytelling that highlights a wife's devotion. In order to desire for enduring prosperity and love, offerings like makhana and paan are shared at the Kojagara ceremony, which honors the goddess of wealth, (Lakshmi). Chhath represents appreciation for life and reverence for the natural world. This study explores the ways in which these celebrations serve as cultural markers for upholding customs, fostering interpersonal connections, and fostering a feeling of shared identity. Through qualitative analysis and a review of recent literature, it also explores their ecological, social, and symbolic components. The results show that these celebrations are dynamic cultural systems that support identity formation and continuity in the face of industrialization and globalization, rather than merely ritualistic practices.

Key words: Customs, Mythology, Social solidarity, Cultural markers, Ecological, Globalization

INTRODUCTION

A collective memory of people is embodied in its customs, songs, festivals, and rituals that have been passed down through the generations. In the Mithilanchal region, which comprises the northeastern districts of Bihar and portions of the Terai region of Nepal, festivals and customs constitute the liveliest feature of social life. They combine social ideals, agricultural rhythms, ecological awareness, and mythological legacy. For thousands of years, Maithili-speaking communities have had this characteristic.

The Mithila region, which is renowned for being the birthplace of Goddess Sita, the home of the renowned scholar Vidyapati, and the home of the philosopher-king Janaka, has a civilizational legacy that is neither static nor homogeneous. Its festivals and other cultural manifestations serve as live records of this heritage. Mithila customs, in contrast to strictly religious celebrations, intricately and profoundly intertwine spirituality, ecology, gender relations, kinship relationships, and community togetherness.

These main festivals and customs of Mithilanchal are Chaurchan, Jur Seetal, Sama Chakeba, Madhu Shravani, Kojagara, and Chhath thoroughly examined in this research article. Each of these celebrations has a unique mythological background, customs, social purposes, and symbolic significance. However, when combined, they form a cohesive cultural framework that upholds ecological knowledge, strengthens regional identity, and maintains community cohesion among various castes, genders, and generations.

Review of Literature

Scholars from a variety of fields, including anthropology, sociology, folklore studies, religion studies, and cultural geography, have expressed interest in the study of festivals as cultural occurrences. Emile Durkheim's research on collective effervescence was established. Festivals and rituals are social

mechanisms of solidarity, reinforcement of group norms, and regeneration of collective identity in addition to being religious matters (Durkheim 1912).

Scholars like A.K. Ramanujan, Veena Das, and Purushottam Agrawal have studied how regional oral traditions, folk songs, and ritualized performances construct gendered and caste identities while also providing spaces for their negotiation. In South Asia, festivals have been studied through models of caste and gender performativity (Raheja and Gold, 1994), religious nationalism (van der Veer, 1994), and more recently as a matter of intangible cultural heritage as outlined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention.

Although the literature on Mithila culture is less extensive than that of other South Asian regions, it is rich in fundamental research. Important viewpoints on Mithilanchal's unique cultural geography have been provided by Jayakanta Mishra's works on Maithili literature and culture, Subhadra Jha's ethnolinguistic research, and more recent studies on Madhubani painting as a cultural signifier. This essay aims to fill a vacuum in the literature by conducting a thorough examination of important festivals in their overlapping social, ecological, and symbolic dimensions.

This study conceptualizes festivals as active cultural practices that communities use to reproduce and renegotiate their identities rather than as passive transmissions of tradition, drawing on practice theory (Bourdieu 1977). Every festival is viewed as an area of cultural activity where social structure, ecological knowledge, historical memory, and symbolic meaning are enacted, challenged, and reinvented.

METHODOLOGY

In order to create a thorough understanding of the festivals being studied, the current study uses a qualitative research methodology and draws on a variety of sources

of information. Analysis of oral traditions and folk songs, interpretive reading of ritual activities as cultural texts, and rigorous review of anthropological and historical literature are the main methodological approaches.

The six festivals like Chaurchan, Jur Seetal, Sama Chakeba, Madhu Shrivani, Kojagara, and Chhath were chosen based on their cultural prominence in the Mithila region, their representation of various social functions and symbolic registers (nature worship, kinship, gender, community solidarity), and their importance as indicators of Maithili cultural identity as documented in the literature.

Academic monographs, regional histories, ethnographic narratives, government cultural records, and the extensive body of Maithili folk literature, which includes Vidyapati's works, are among the secondary materials that were consulted. Using a thematic approach, the analysis arranges the results according to the dimensions of ecological symbolism, ritual practice, mythical roots, social function, and modern alterations.

The study's limitations include its reliance on secondary sources and the intrinsic differences in ritual practices among Mithilanchal's many clans, castes, and locales.

Historical and Geographical Context

Another name for Mithilanchal is Mithila. The districts of Darbhanga, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur, Begusarai, Bhagalpur, and portions of bordering Nepal's Tarai belt comprise its cultural and geographical region. The language (Maithili), culture, customs, festivals, and a common historical awareness derived from one of the oldest surviving civilizations in the world characterize the area more so than administrative borders.

Mithila was the seat of the Videha Kingdom in Indian mythology and history, and it is associated with the philosopher-king Janaka and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad's tales of intellectual disputes. Goddess Sita, Janaka's

daughter and Rama's consort, is revered as the region's chief cultural deity. This narrative from the Ramayana pervades almost every aspect of Maithili cultural expression. Madhubani murals cover the walls of rural homes, while folk melodies are played at weddings and festivals. Madhubani art has gained international recognition for its trade.

This region has an agrarian economy based on rice production in the lush alluvial plains of the Koshi, Gandak, Bagmati, and Kamla rivers, which has greatly influenced its cultural calendar. Many key events are timed to coincide with agricultural cycles such as planting season, harvest, and monsoon season, demonstrating the community's close connection to the land's natural rhythms. This ecological connection distinguishes Mithilanchal's festivities from many metropolitan celebrations, giving them a unique flavor that combines nature worship and social ritual.

ANALYSIS

Chaurchan

On the fourth day of the light fortnight (chauth) in the month of Bhadra (August-September), people celebrate the Chaurchan festival. One of Mithilanchal's most culturally unique celebrations is this one. The celebration, which revolves around moon worship, is connected to a potent mythical story that has its roots in the King Hemangad Thakur mythology.

According to Hindu mythology, King Hemangad Thakur vowed never to wrongly accuse anyone of dishonesty. The festival's significance stems from this pledge of moral rectitude and the social implications of breaching such a promise. In one version of the myth, the monarch's grandson is accused of theft; in keeping with his vow of honesty, the king takes the stigma of dishonor rather than making a false allegation. The moon god eventually steps in to defend the innocent and restore the family's honor.

The Chaurchan ceremony consists of worshipping the moon on this precise night, narrating the Hemangad narrative, and praying for the eradication of false stigmas and emotional wounds. Women have an important role in the festival's commemoration, gathering to perform lunar worship and exchange the Hemangad narrative orally, a technique that strengthens both mythical memory and the principles of truth and fairness enshrined in it.

From the standpoint of cultural analysis, Chaurchan serves a number of significant societal purposes. First, it presents a moral framework that takes social stigma, false accusations, and communal reputation seriously as community issues. The festival offers a symbolic means of healing the hurt caused by false accusations and reiterating the community's dedication to the truth in a society where honor and reputation are vital social capital. Second, it reinforces the ecological and spiritual worldview that defines Mithilanchal's cultural orientation by positioning the moon, a key deity in Maithili mythology, as a witness and protector of moral order.

Jur Seetal

The fourteenth and fifteenth days of Baisakh (April–May) are designated as Jur Seetal. One of the most happy and environmentally significant celebrations in the area, it ushers in the Maithili New Year (Maithili Panchang). The name itself evokes the idea of revitalizing and chilling the ground, the body, and the spirit at the start of the new agricultural year: "Jur" means "to satisfy," and "Seetal" means "cool" or "cold." Ultimately, this coolness and refreshing satisfy us.

Festivals and customs use water as a symbol of cooling, rejuvenation, and purification. On the eve of Jur Seetal, also known as Pahil Seetal or Sattuan Parba, families prepare and consume cold delicacies, particularly Sattu (roasted gram flour) combined with water, raw mango, and jaggery, which are thought to cool the body and prepare

it for the hot Bihari summer. The next day, the New Year is commemorated by the customary sprinkling of water on elders, neighbors, and visitors as a welcome and blessing.

Jur Seetal's ecological elements are especially crucial for Mithila culture. It teaches not only about saving the earth and the environment, but also about removing summer heat for the people of Mithila and India, and it could be called an indigenous ecological ethic: the importance of maintaining harmony with the natural environment, not depleting water sources, and treating the earth as a living entity worthy of respect and care. Jur Seetal, which fell at the conclusion of the harvest season and the start of hot weather, served as a cultural reminder of Mithilanchal's reliance on water, monsoons, and soil for sustenance.

Jur Seetal is also a festival celebrating social rejuvenation. It is usually a time for settling conflicts, restoring relationships, and strengthening familial and neighborhood links. The customary greeting with water has undertones of forgiveness and reconciliation, making the celebration both a vehicle for social harmony and an ecological reminder. The provision of Sattu and other cooling meals to neighbors, relatives, and those in need enhances the social aspect of festivities.

Jur Seetal has grown to be a significant symbol of Maithili identity in modern times, especially for diaspora populations who can use the celebration to reestablish ties to their cultural heritage. Community organizations host Jur Seetal festivals in cities throughout India and among the Maithili diaspora abroad. These celebrations replicate the customs of preparing Sattu, sprinkling water, and feasting together in modified ways. In conversations on indigenous sustainability methods, the festival has also drawn attention as an illustration of traditional ecological knowledge.

Sama Chakeba

With no exact counterpart in India, Sama Chakeba is arguably the most peculiar celebration of Mithila. Celebrated over the two weeks of Kartik Shukla (October–November), it features a complex performance of folk songs and clay sculptures that revolve around the mythological story of Sama, the daughter of Krishna, and Chakeva, her loyal brother Samba.

According to the mythological story, Sama was wrongfully accused and cursed to become a bird. Through his love and devotion, her brother Chakeva was able to break the curse by going to the forest every day to sing to her and keep her company while she was transformed. Through a rich tradition of folk singing (especially the genre of Sama Chakeba songs), the creation of clay figurines that depict Sama, Chakeva, and a wide range of related characters, and ritual performances that take place in the evening after Chhath Parva until moonlit night of that significant month of Kartik, the festival dramatizes this story.

Sama Chakeba observance is dominated by women and girls. They create elaborate clay figurines during the festival season using methods that have been handed down through the years. This artistic endeavor is strongly associated with the larger Mithila clay craft history. In the evenings, groups of women and girls congregate in courtyards or public areas to showcase their figurines, sing traditional songs, and engage in ritualized taunting of the male characters in the story, especially Chugala, the villain who falsely accused Sama. As the festival comes to an end, the figurines are submerged and farewell songs are played in honor of Kartik Purnima.

Sama Chakeba serves a variety of cultural purposes that are worth examining. First of all, it expresses and honors the kinship link between a brother and sister, which is crucial to Maithili culture. The event offers a ceremonial setting for the public affirmation and emotional rejuvenation of the brother's protective love and

the sister's faith in it. This is especially essential because, in Mithilanchal's patrilineal kinship system, women's ties to their birth families—particularly to their brothers—remain one of their primary sources of practical and emotional security following marriage.

At another perspective, Sama Chakeba is a celebration of female creativity, artistry, and unity. Making figurines, writing and performing songs, and overseeing the ritual process are all predominantly female fields that give women a cultural space where their skills, inventiveness, and unity are acknowledged and honored. The songs themselves include a rich literary corpus, with many of them written in classical Maithili and passed down almost exclusively orally among women.

Madhu Shravani

During the holy month of Shraavan (July–August), people celebrate Madhu Shravani, a festival that focuses on the oral transmission of mythical tales and the devotion of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. The festival is a significant rite of passage that signifies the change from girlhood to wifehood in Maithili society, and it is mostly observed by newlyweds in their first year of marriage. The Brahmin community (caste) of Mithilanchal is the primary celebrant of this festival.

The worship of the shami plant and the daily puja of snakes (nagas), creatures connected to Lord Shiva, are part of the Madhu Shravani ritual system. The sharing of stories (kathavachana) by older ladies to the newlyweds is the focal point of the festival's daily observance. These tales, collectively referred to as the Madhu Shravani Katha, include a sizable oral corpus that covers topics such as husband and wife relationships, the benefits of piety, the dangers of skipping ritual obligations, and the virtues of marital devotion.

From the standpoint of gender studies, Madhu Shravani's tales are very fascinating. Although they are ostensibly prescriptive

stories about a wife's devotion and the significance of appeasing the appropriate gods, their content is often subversive, with wives outwitting cruel or careless husbands, goddesses punishing unfaithful spouses, and women gaining supernatural abilities through their devotion. As a result, the festival serves as both a socialization tool for newlyweds and a venue for the ceremonial processing and recognition of the full complexity of marriage relationships, including their conflicts and injustices.

Madhu Shravani's aspect of nature worship is equally important from an ecological perspective. The complete monsoon season, when the land is at its most productive and lush, falls during the Shraavan month. During this time, there was a strong animistic tradition that saw the living world as infused with divine presence and worthy of reverence, which is reflected in the worship of snakes, shami plants, and other natural aspects. In a unique cultural synthesis, this ecological awareness is interwoven throughout the month's observances, linking the married and the ecological, the domestic and the cosmic.

Kojagara

On the full moon night of Ashwin (October), which coincides with the Sharad Purnima observed throughout most of India, Kojagara is observed. However, Mithilanchal's unique ceremonial practices, folk melodies, and societal significance as a celebration of marital love and success give the festival a unique personality.

Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, is the main deity of Kojagara. It is said that on this night, she descends to earth to inspect the globe and bestow her blessings on homes where people are awake to welcome her. The Sanskrit phrase "ko jagarti," which means "who is awake?" is where the term Kojagara originates, and the festival's all-night vigil is essential to its celebration. In order to stay awake through the night, couples, families, and

communities congregate on rooftops, in courtyards, and in public areas. They play games, tell stories, sing songs, and participate in rituals meant to invoke Lakshmi's blessing.

Makhan (fresh butter) and paan (betel leaf), which are both connected to sweetness, auspiciousness, and sensual pleasure in Maithili culture, are the particular offerings at the core of Kojagara. The festival is not just a religious observance but also a celebration of love, collaboration, and the desire for shared prosperity because husband and wife share these offerings, giving it a clearly conjugal flavor. Kojagara folk songs, or sohar, are among the most musically complex in the Maithili corpus. They frequently feature conversations between devotees and the goddess as well as between couples.

Kojagara has a significant astronomical dimension as well. The monsoon season comes to an end and the winter crop cycle begins with Ashwin Sharad Purnima's full moon. This shift has significant practical implications for agricultural communities, and the festival's themes of abundance and wealth capture the optimism and excitement that come with the new agricultural cycle. The harvest moon-lit all-night vigil links the cosmic rhythms of the agricultural year with the domestic ritual of marital devotion.

Chhath

Today, Chhath is the most well-known, having transcended its local roots to become one of the most well-known celebrations of the Bihari diaspora globally. However, its origins are deeply ingrained in the ecological and spiritual traditions of the Mithila and Bhojpur cultural region, and its fundamental principles of thankfulness, purity, and respect for nature continue to be essential to its observance.

Preparations start four days in advance of the sixth day of the month of Kartik (October-November), when Chhath is celebrated. The celebration honors Surya Dev, the sun, who is

revered as the ultimate source of life, vitality, and nourishment, as well as Chhathi Maiya, the goddess of the sixth day. The most revered part of Chhath, in contrast to most Hindu holidays, is an outdoor ceremony carried out at sunset and daybreak on the banks of rivers, ponds, or any other body of water rather than a temple puja.

Chhath's ritual system is quite complex. The majority of devotees are women, however men are occasionally involved. They maintain a rigorous 36-hour fast during which they do not eat or drink (Nirjala). Seasonal fruits, sugarcane, thekua (a confection made from wheat flour, jiggery, and ghee), and other fertility and harvest-related goods are prepared as lavish offerings (prasada). The arghya, which is performed while standing in waist-deep water at sunset on the sixth day and daybreak on the seventh, are the main ritual moments.

Chhath's ecological significance is deep and complex. An ancient cosmological concept that views the natural world as sacred and life as a divine gift worthy of appreciation is reflected in the worship of the sun as the ultimate sustainer of life. The festival's relationship to the local hydrological cycles is highlighted by the use of riverbanks and other bodies of water as the ritual location. In fact, the condition of rivers and other bodies of water has become a gauge of the ecological consciousness of the society. For example, in many villages, cleaning riverbanks and water sources is part of the preparations for Chhath, and the celebration has served as a forum for advocating for water conservation.

Additionally, Chhath serves crucial societal roles. During the days of Chhath, families, neighborhoods, and entire communities get together to prepare for the festival. They share the work of making prasada, setting up areas along the riverbank, and helping devotees who are fasting. As a result, the festival creates the kind of community effervescence that Durkheim described—a

feeling of solidarity, shared purpose, and communal belonging that strengthens social ties across caste and class boundaries.

Chhath has grown to be a potent emblem of Bihari and Maithili identity in the modern era, especially for migrant groups in Indian cities and the diaspora worldwide. Chhath has become a conspicuous declaration of regional cultural identity in the public domain due to the spectacle of thousands of devotees congregating at urban riverbanks, such as the Yamuna in Delhi, the Ganga in Varanasi, rivers in Mumbai, Kolkata, and cities overseas. Water pollution, managing urban space, and balancing local cultural customs with mainstream urban norms are just a few of the additional issues brought about by this growth.

Ecological Consciousness through festivals

The profound ecological sensitivity of Mithilanchal's festival tradition is one of its most remarkable characteristics. This is a pre-modern, animistic view of the natural world as a community of living beings worthy of respect, reciprocity, and care, as well as ecology in the contemporary environmentalist meaning. In different but connected ways, each of the six festivals covered in this essay represents this ecological knowledge.

Kojagara is associated with the harvest moon and the agricultural cycle; Madhu Shravani involves the worship of plants and snakes; Chhath views the sun and rivers as the principal sacred entities; and Jur Seetal teaches the principles of cooling and conserving water. The myth of Sama's metamorphosis into a bird depicts a worldview in which the borders between the human and non-human worlds are porous and ethically relevant. Even Sama Chakeba, the most culturally particular of the festivities, takes place in a forest.

In the context of conversations on indigenous ecological knowledge and sustainable development, this ecological consciousness has drawn increasing scholarly

attention. There is real intellectual substance to the claim that these festivals encode forms of ecological wisdom about seasonal rhythms, water management, biodiversity, and the social value of living in harmony with natural cycles that are pertinent to current environmental challenges, even though academics are rightly wary of romanticizing traditional practices.

Important of female for these festivals

During these Mithilanchal festivals, women play a central role. Women exercise a type of cultural power that exists in constructive contradiction with their subservient status in the patriarchal social structure of the region because they are the main performers, knowledge holders, artists, and transmitters of festival traditions. Scholarship on South Asian women's rituals and festival practices frequently focuses on this paradox of women as cultural authorities in a patriarchal social structure.

Women are given key roles in all of the festivals that are discussed here. Women in Chaurchan convey the Hemangad story and engage in lunar worship. The cooling foods are prepared and served by women in Jur Seetal. Women are the singers, artists, and ritual coordinators in Sama Chakeba. New brides in Madhu Shrivani are taught the oral corpus by older ladies. The main devotee in Chhath is usually a lady who fasts for 36 hours on behalf of her family. Male participation is only as prevalent as female engagement in Kojagara, yet even there, women's offerings and songs continue to be crucial.

There are several reasons why women are so important in festival culture. It gives women positions of responsibility and competence that are valued and acknowledged by society. It makes it possible for women's oral literary traditions—songs, stories, and crafts—that may otherwise be lost or marginalized to be passed down through the generations. Additionally, it generates opportunities for female solidarity and group action that are significant on a social and emotional level.

Importance of Regional Identity

Perhaps the most important political role of Mithila festivals in the modern era is the development of regional identity. Festivals have become potent declarations of a unique regional identity that cannot be absorbed into larger Bihari or Hindu nationalist cultural narratives in the backdrop of India's federal politics and the historical marginalization of Mithilanchal within Bihar.

The assertion of a unique Maithili cultural identity, in which festivals play a central role, is linked to the acknowledgement of Maithili as one of India's scheduled languages, the growing movement for a separate Mithilanchal state, and the cultural activism of Maithili literary and cultural organizations. The public celebration of holidays like Chhath, Sama Chakeba, and Jur Seetal is an expression of presence and belonging for diaspora populations in particular. It is a method of declaring, "Our culture exists, our traditions matter, and our identity is real and worthy of public recognition."

The Mithilanchal celebrations take place in a constantly evolving universe. Millions of people have been uprooted from the social and ecological environments in which these celebrations originated due to mass migration from rural Mithilanchal to cities throughout India. Younger generations are competing with established customs for their time and attention due to the new media, entertainment, and cultural consumption brought about by globalization. The rivers, water bodies, and agricultural landscapes that lend many of these festivals their ecological significance have been deteriorated by industrialization and urban growth.

However, festivals are exhibiting a great deal of adaptability and resilience. Diaspora groups have managed to replicate festival celebrations in public areas, community halls, and urban residences. Social media has made it possible to connect diaspora populations with

ritual knowledge from their home regions by facilitating the sharing of traditional information across geographical distances. Oral traditions have been recorded, festivals have been held, and digital archives of traditional music, tales, and crafts have been produced by cultural organizations. Additionally, a renewed interest in festivals that their parents' generation started to disregard has been sparked by the desire of many second-generation diaspora kids to connect with their cultural background.

Most importantly, Chhath's development into a nationally and internationally recognized celebration shows that local customs can both endure urbanization and employ urban visibility as a vehicle for cultural expression. Chhath has become a symbol of Bihari cultural pride and political identity in ways that have significantly altered the festival's relationship to its regional roots due to the image of thousands of devotees standing in rivers and ponds at sunrise and sunset that has been replicated on the front pages of national newspapers, shared on social media, and celebrated in Bollywood films.

First, these festivals should be regarded not only as distinct religious occasions, but also as a cohesive cultural system in which different festivities address different aspects of social, ecological, and symbolic existence. It encompasses the entire range of culturally significant relationships between humans and nature, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, and communities and their deities, forming a comprehensive cultural curriculum that transmits Maithili civilization's values, knowledge, and identity.

Second, the ecological features of these festivals constitute a refined kind of indigenous environmental knowledge that is ingrained in ritual practice and passed down through cultural performance rather than formal education. This understanding of seasonal cycles, water conservation, biodiversity, and the interdependence of human and non-human

communities is important to the festivals' meaning and practice.

Third, Mithilanchal celebrations reveal women's cultural agency in a social structure that would otherwise limit their official power. The prominence of women's roles in festival practice as performers, knowledge holders, artists, and ritual managers shows a type of cultural authority that coexists with, and sometimes conflicts with, patriarchal social institutions.

Fourth, rather than being passive remnants of a pre-modern past, these festivals are dynamic cultural forms that are actively adapting to shifting social situations. Communities are actively engaging in the continuation and reinvention of their festival cultures, as evidenced by the modern vitality of Chhath, the diaspora adaptations of Sama Chakeba and Jur Seetal, and the increasing documentation and cultural activism surrounding these traditions.

CONCLUSION

The main celebrations of Mithilanchal Chaurchan, Jur Seetal, Sama Chakeba, Madhu Shrivani, Kojagara, and Chhath have all been examined in this study as locations of social solidarity, ecological consciousness, identity creation, and cultural meaning-making. The article has made the case that these festivals form a dynamic cultural system that actively preserves Maithili regional identity while adjusting to the demands of urbanization and globalization through a methodical examination of their mythological roots, ritual practices, social functions, and modern changes.

The study's conclusions have ramifications that go beyond the particular Mithilanchal case. They add to ongoing scholarly discussions concerning the dynamics of cultural continuity and change in the modern world, the role of intangible cultural heritage in identity formation, the relationship between traditional ecological knowledge and current

environmental challenges, and the cultural agency of women in patriarchal societies.

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