

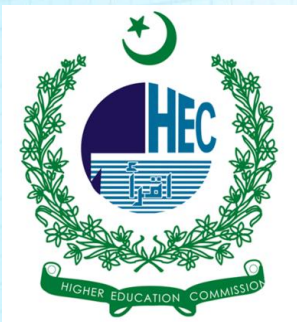
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**STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF YATCHANI MYTH NARRATED IN
GILGIT: MYTHEMES, BINARY OPPOSITIONS, AND SYMBOLIC
SIGNIFICANCE**



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Abstract

Myths are ancient narratives often revolve around gods, heroes, and supernatural beings, reflecting the cultural beliefs, values, and collective consciousness of society. This study aims at identifying the underlying structures, binary oppositions and their symbolic meaning in the Yatchani myth, one of the most famous Shina myths in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan. The study employed the structuralist methodology, drawing upon Levi-Strauss's framework of mythemes, as the fundamental units of mythological analysis, and binary opposition to interrogate the Yatchani myth's underlying structures and its deep cultural logic through textual analysis. This qualitative study classified various mythemes into events, characters, deaths, and spatial settings which possess algebraically triadic structures. These structures have been further categorized in Evental mythemes, Symbolic mythemes, Actantial mythemes and Spatial mythemes. In close collaboration, these mythemes suggest the significance of the overall structure of the Yatchani myth. Both the identified binary oppositions and the above structured mythemes in the myth found aligning with Levi Straussian universal model, however, some of the mythemes inversely suggest an indigenous hermeneutics to unfold the meanings of these underlying structures. Significantly, the interplay of the identified structures reflects the tapestry of history and Shina cultural milieu of the region.

Keywords: Yatchani, Myth, Structuralism, Levi Strauss, Shina

Introduction

Over the past few decades, scholars of folk literature have increasingly focused on conceptual patterns, including the structures of thought, action, and language embedded within traditional narratives. Myths play a pivotal role in shaping the present culture. The myth of Yatchani narrated in Gilgit region of Gilgit Baltistan has been orally transmitted for centuries, and it continues to hold cultural significance among the local population. Given its enduring impact on the Shina-speaking community, it is essential to analyze its structure and interpret its deeper meanings to revitalize and contextualize its relevance.

Myths are sanctified narratives that articulate human understanding of the world and the human condition retaining their relevance today as profoundly as they did in ancient times. Rooted in tradition, myths may stem from factual

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origins or be entirely fictional; yet they extend beyond mere storytelling to fulfill vital cultural, spiritual, and social functions. Defined as “sacred narratives” (Coupe, 2009; Peter, 1994), myths encapsulate cosmological beliefs, origin stories, and historical memory, typically transmitted orally across generations. They often center on the actions of superhuman entities: gods, demigods, heroes, spirits, or ghosts (Cupitt, 2009; Peter, 1994).

Csapo and Toynbee regard myths as foundational units of human culture, essential for fostering social cohesion (Monro, 1950; Macfarlane, 2006). Toynbee further suggests that myths simulate immortality by offering access to transcendental realities and enabling deeper comprehension of existence and collective memory. Once formed, myths are often autonomous and resistant to external influence, a feature that reinforces their perceived authenticity (Jacopin, 1988).

Beyond their content, myths function as both discourse and symbol, expressed through words while also implying deeper, often unspoken meanings (Mills, 2018). Cupitt underscores their sacred, communal nature, linking them to ritual practices and supernatural acts (Cupitt, 1982). Ultimately, myths are complex cultural artifacts that preserve societal norms and serve as conduits for interpreting the divine and transmitting communal knowledge and values.

Gilgit Baltistan is a place of mesmerizing myths and legends associated either with an abstract entity or to material being. Located in the buffer zone of Central Asia, various myths in the region are being narrated by the indigenous community. Some of the famous myths of Gilgit Baltistan are the legend of Shiri Badat-the Cannibal King, Hargin, Yacholo, Barayee, Darniji etc., and Yatchani (Kargah Buddah) has its perpetual impact among other myths. Conventionally the locals of the region have been associating this myth with the sculpture of Buddha located in Kargah valley Gilgit and the tale thus have got more impactful as compared to other abstract myths. The tale of Yatchani has been documented or recorded in various books like *Pakistan ka Sakafate Encyclopedia*, *Tribes of Hindu Koosh* and in the Archeological Department of Gilgit Baltistan. Some of the researchers have analyzed the sculpture of Kargah Buddha (Yatchani) through archaeological (Ahmad, 2018), and anthropological (Dar, 1985) perspectives. Dad has strived to draw scholarly attention to the myths of Gilgit Baltistan by exploring the indigeneity of some of the other myths of the region. However, scholars have given less attention to unearthing the elements of the deep underlying structures and their meanings of the myth. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the structural elements and underlying meanings of Yatchani, one of the most prominent myths narrated

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in the Shina-speaking region of Gilgit-Baltistan. Hence, this paper strives to reach an answer to the questions: what are the underlying structures present in Yatchani? And how do the structures of binary oppositions in Yatchani work together unfolding the meanings therein?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several scholars have employed structuralist approaches to analyze myths across different cultural traditions. Berger (2013) has applied Lévi-Strauss's theoretical framework to examine the Greek myth of Oedipus, identifying underlying structures and mythemes to reveal their cultural significance. Similarly, Loudon (2006) analyzed the structural patterns in Homer's Iliad, demonstrating how repeated narrative motifs suggest a reconsidered understanding of the epic's organization, while drawing comparisons to Near Eastern mythologies. In the South Asian context, Bich Thuy and Nayabi (2019) conducted a comparative structural analysis of the 'Ramayana and Dam San epics in Vietnam', identifying cultural parallels and heroic archetypes. Bera (2009) also used structural analysis to explore the symbolic relationship between animals and deities in Hindu mythology, revealing how these narratives shape human self-perception. These studies collectively demonstrate how structural analysis can uncover deep cultural meanings embedded in myths.

Mills (2020) explored myth through an ontological lens, analyzing its source, form, and psychic reality, ultimately concluding that myth has functioned as a "form of inner sense" connecting individual and collective consciousness (p. 45). Similarly, If (2015) emphasized the dual nature of mythic structures, arguing they existed both as material artifacts and subjective interpretations, requiring active engagement to uncover meaning (p. 112). While both scholars acknowledged myth's complex origins and functions, Mills has focused on its existential significance, whereas If highlights its interpretive fluidity.

Applying Levi-Strauss's methods, Kessel (1972) evaluates myths through binary oppositions (winter/summer, life/death), revealing cyclical patterns that structure narratives (p. 78). Expanding on structuralist theory, Darta (2015) employs Greimas' Actantial Model to identify six key narrative roles, demonstrating how myths reinforce cultural morals, particularly the triumph of good over evil (p. 203). Douglas (1967) further develops this approach, linking myths to social cohesion by showing how they resolve cultural contradictions through symbolic oppositions (nature/culture, purity/pollution) while emphasizing their ties to ritual and taboo (p. 92). Though all these scholars analyzed underlying mythic structures, Darta and Douglas emphasized social

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and moral implications, whereas Kessel focused on formal symbolic patterns. Clarke (2018) evaluated Levi-Strauss's structuralism, recognizing its utility in identifying universal cognitive patterns however, critiqued its ahistorical abstraction. He argued that reducing myths to binary logic would ignore the power relations and the material conditions shaping their production (pp. 134-137). Douglas (1967) indirectly supports this critique by embedding myths in cultural systems, while Mills (2020) and If (2015) challenge structuralism's rigidity by emphasizing psychic and subjective dimensions (Mills, p. 52; If, p. 115). Collectively these perspectives reveal a central tension in myth studies that structuralism effectively maps deep narrative patterns, while a comprehensive understanding requires integrating historical, social, and experiential contexts.

Structural approaches have also been used to examine gender roles and supernatural elements in myths. Rapoo (2013) investigated three Botswana folktales *The Ghost of Mmamashia*, *The Night Seducer*, and *Queen Mantatisi*, revealing how these myths reinforce societal expectations of femininity through symbolic narratives and wedding songs. Tatarovskaya (2018) expanded on this by analyzing supernatural components in African mythology, identifying ethereal and corporeal structures that function as ontological frameworks for understanding reality. In South Asia, Hussain, Rubaab, and Ajmal (2020) applied Propp's structural model to the Pakistani folktales confirming its alignment with universal narrative functions. Dad (2021, 2023) contributed to local knowledge by studying mythical creatures in Gilgit-Baltistan, such as the Hargin (a dragon-like serpent) and other supernatural beings, positioning them within a hierarchy of mythological cosmology that influences human affairs. These studies highlight how structural analysis can decode cultural norms, supernatural belief systems, and oral storytelling traditions.

Beyond textual analysis, archaeological evidence has also been used to trace mythological influences in material culture of Gilgit Baltistan. Warikoo (2018) documented the Kargah Buddha, a rock-carved sculpture near Gilgit, as a key artifact of Buddhist heritage in northern Pakistan. Neelis (2002) supported this by situating the sculpture within the broader religious history of the region, while Stein and Jettmar (1990) debated its chronological placement, suggesting either a seventh-century or post eighth century origin based on stylistic comparisons with Kashmiri and Central Asian art. Tsuchiya (1991) further contributed by contrasting the Kargah Buddha with the Bubur figure, noting differences in artistic proportions. These interdisciplinary studies illustrate how mythological representations in art and archaeology provide

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insights into historical cultural exchanges and religious transformations. However, scholars have given less attention to the myths, like Yatchani, of Gilgit Baltistan in order to identify structures and their meanings to unearth the cultural and historical significance of the myths.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study is grounded in the structuralist methodological framework of Claude Levi-Strauss, employing a textual analysis of the Yatchani myth, a narrative from the Gilgit region of Gilgit-Baltistan. Levi Straussian structuralist framework suggests myth as a form of cultural communication operating through underlying logical structures.

Levi Strauss, building upon Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics, conceptualized myth as a collective cultural message. His seminal analysis of the Oedipus myth (1955) demonstrated that a myth's surface narrative conceals a deeper, paradigmatic structure. He deconstructed narratives into fundamental units termed mythemes, which are then organized not in their linear (syntagmatic) sequence but by their thematic and symbolic affinities (paradigmatic relations). This reorganization reveals a system of binary oppositions, a foundational mechanism Levi Strauss argued, is intrinsic to both language and human cognition (Levi Strauss, 1964-1971).

Preliminary analysis suggests that the Yatchani narrative follows a traditional folktale structure, comprising an initial issue (the Yatchani's terror), rising action (the community's quest for aid), a climax (the confrontation), and a resolution (the ritualistic defeat). A structuralist analysis, however, moves beyond this syntagmatic plot to interrogate the paradigmatic patterns. The myth appears to be organized around core binary pairs such as good/evil, natural/supernatural, order/chaos, and community/isolation, which articulate fundamental cultural concerns regarding human nature, morality, and social cohesion.

Therefore, this study systematically analyzes the text to identify its mythemes and their relational oppositions. This analytical process will transcend the literal storyline to uncover the hidden cultural logics and symbolic resolutions the myth offers, thereby providing a persuasive structural exegesis of the Yatchani narrative.

Analysis of mythemes, binary oppositions and symbolic significance in Yatchani myth

The study strives to identify underlying structures, mythemes, binary oppositions and symbolic significance, in the Yatchani myth. To do so, the study identifies mythemes which have been regarded as the smallest

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component; like event, position, character of the myth as has been suggested by Levi Strauss. In Yatchani, there are several possible mythemes like characters (Yatchani, Dayal Khimito, people, etc.), events, symbols and themes. The binary oppositions in Yatchani play a pivotal role in finding out the relationship of structures and their meanings.

The narrative, Yatchani, possess multiple structures in its surface and deep level. The apparent structure of the beginning of narrative portrays Yatchani, as a devilish woman spreading terror across the region near Gilgit (Kargah) by eating one out of two men or half of the group of men who go into the hillside or forest to fetch woods. This leads to an introduction of the second mytheme i.e., the terrorized people (character) who had been preyed by Yatchani. Survival for human beings is the most important thing to be ensured. The formal mytheme compelled the surviving community members to seek a remedy by using their own faculty or information about. The people took the council to see how to get rid of this problem (causality). For they needed something or someone who could dysfunction (bind or kill) Yatchani. A suggestion was made to fetch a shaman (Dayal) Khimito from Bagrote, who could bind the Yatchani. Some of the notables took a journey to Bagrote and at their request Dayal Khimito agreed to help them to get remedy from Yatchani.

The climax and ending of the story occur when Khimito confronts Yatchani. He used his shamanic mantra and wisdom, manipulated and misled Yatchani by giving her (false) information that her brother and father died in Baltistan and Kashmir respectively. This information diverted her attention from the current act to the loss of her closest. By making her distracted, Khimito nailed iron pegs into her body, binding her to the spot and turning her to the statue. Khimito had given them the advice that after binding Yatchani or turning her into a statue, they must bury his body sheer below the Yatchani's dwelling after his death to assure she could not come back to life again. To ensure that the Shaman does not die someplace else, the people assassinated Khimito on the spot and buried him where he had advised preventing any possibility of Yatchani's return to action.

Yatchani narrative has a structure of algebraic representation. The triadic elementary events: Yatchani's men eating event (predator), dysfunction of Yatchani (binding), and the killing of Dayal Khimito (the sacrificial burial) marks a significant probe. These triadic events of the plot are termed as "evental mythemes" for identifying the structurers therein. The term first originated from Bremond's (1973) structuralist work which classifies minimal narrative units as "elementary sequences" of potential/actualized actions. Pavel (1985)

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later advanced this as “evental mythemes” defining it as “the smallest complete action units that propel mythical narratives forward through transformations of state” (p. 112). The Yatchani myth contains (triadic) three core evental mythemes: (1) the cannibalistic predation (state of disorder), (2) the shamanic binding (transformational act), and (3) the sacrificial burial (new state of order).

Similarly, the narrative has been set again in a spatial triadic structure: Napura (Gilgit), Yatchani’s dwelling up in the hillside, and the Bagrote valley. The triadic evental mythemes closely work with the triadic spatial mythemes to display the hidden meaning; The first evental mytheme helps the spatial triadic structure reinforcing the sovereignty of Yatchani over two places- Napura and hillside, the second event mytheme unifies Napura and Bagrote defeating the sovereignty of the first, and the last event mytheme identifies the behavior of betrayal, foolishness and ignorance of the people of Napura, consequently a cyclic bad omen to the residents, which disintegrates Bagrote valley; the wiser, shamanic hub, and heroic people’s land. This triadic structure also opens a vista to a cyclic structure for the people of Napura Gilgit unfolding the indigenous philosophy of life, that fear (terror) lets people unison to seek peace, comfort or prosperity while foolishness/ ignorance/ betrayal ends wisdom/sagacity or bravery. So, we infer from this cyclic and triadic structure of Yatchani that the people of Napura, at the end of narrative, shall again face terror and then, resultantly, unify with a wisdom for peace and so on.

The most significant inference from the above triadic spatial and evental mythemes reveal that each one of the mythemes possesses its respective power, sovereignty, and ideology. Yatchani’s ideological state spans from the top of the mountain to the human population of Napura Gilgit. In this context, Yatchani appears to be the queen of this territory and surely, she had a divine burden (supernatural responsibility of her respective kind) too to rule. In this case, only a supernatural force can replace or defeat Yatchani’s divine burden, and the second mode (the Shamanic force) becomes triumphant over the first by using wisdom and modern tools like iron pegs. The Shaman belongs to nearby Bagrote valley while Yatchani’s trace is unknown,(though used to live in Napura but was she indigenous?) however, the word “Yatchani” sounds familiar to Shina speakers, but the sculpture represents Buddhism. If Yatchani represents Buddhism (I am not sure to symbolize her with it), shamanism gets a victory which symbolizes control over chaos or evil forces, akin to the binding of Fenrir in Norse mythology or Prometheus in Greek mythology. For the people of Napura the third mode represents the transitional period for the populace of Napura Gilgit.

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Further, the structure of triadic characters in the myth could be identified as the most important to carry the plot (evental mythemes) of the story to reach to the mythical end are 1) Yatchani, 2) people of the region, and 3) Dayal Khimito.

The character of Yatchani in the narrative has been described as an antagonist, a female humanoid, lives alone up in the hillside, eats human beings, and has powers more than human beings. She belonged to the *Dev* race, a race of giants/djins in Shina culture. The readers of the story have been informed that her father lived in Baltistan and the brother in Kashmir. Her supernatural powers have been compared to the powers of the Shaman Khimito. The most interesting action of Yatchani in the narrative is the questions that what was the reason to eat men? Was the man only food for her? If yes, why does she prey on one and the other man go? Why doesn't she eat all of them? Was she showing compassion or sympathy to the one person in the pair? These questions compel us to think deeper into the philosophy of the existence of Yatchani. From the above depiction, we can say that she represents an embodiment of destructive forces as she spreads terror eating human beings, and safeguards her hillsides, meadows and forests by allowing few to go into the forest/hillside (this might give, in this case, an answer to the above raised question). Therefore, she symbolizes fear, death, destruction, undecipherable aspects of human beings and the supernatural force that create an ecological order.

Dayal Khimito is another major mytheme character who was described as a sage Shaman from Bagrote valley who has proved himself to be the protagonist of the narrative. He irresistibly stands up to help the deprived and miserable, spreads humanity, manifests compassion and bravery. When he was requested to get rid of Yatchani, he accepted this Herculean task irresistibly which sublimated his character of sagacity and valor. He did it through his wisdom, mantra and faculty of present consciousness. He, therefore, symbolizes wisdom, knowledge, and the power of shamanic spirituality or magical intervention. He enlisted himself among the figures of healers, protectors or sagas who subdued or killed the evil forces.

The symbol mythemes like Iron pegs, cliff and pebbles, in the myth, describe non-living things or instruments as has been discussed above. Further explaining it, that iron is a material that has protective properties, especially against supernatural beings e.g. In Norse mythology, iron weapons were used to fight giants and other mythic elements. In Yatchani, Dayal Khimito uses iron pegs to bind the Yatchani, symbolizing iron pegs as material with the power to control and repel supernatural beings. The iron pegs in the myth also

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symbolize the tools of control and binding. The iron instrument also symbolizes the modern civilization and culture of Gilgit Baltistan at that era. It has been used to manifest cultural and civilizational power making Yatchani immovable, functionless, and dismantling the old, representing the strength and resolving mounted issues. Similarly, the cliff where Yatchani resides in a cave serves as a boundary line between the human world and the supernatural, the border of the known and the unknown dangers and peace. Finally, the gravel or pebble mytheme in the myth denotes pricelessness, and degradation. The phrase uttered by Khimito to Yachani after her defeat indicates the victory to Khimito and loss to Yatchani. In colloquial Shina we do use a phrase, "kha phuposhu dal"(translation, 'eat the ash') to the person who has lost something of importance, and Khimito's blurb might tone the same. Therefore, it suggests a fall from power to a pitiable state, feeding on something as bad as gravel.

Furthermore, (dis)information mytheme plays a pivotal role in resolving the main conflict (action) in Yatchani. The first information is about Dayal Khimito without it the main conflict of the plot would not move further, the knowledge about protagonist enhanced the effect of the myth. The second information is about the death of Yatchani's brother and father which helped Khimito to overcome Yatchani's powers and hence, he fixed her to a statue.

This information rectifies that the people of Napura had a scarcity of wisdom, capable and chivalrous personalities but they needed one direly. Yatchani's threat perpetually terrorized them and as we know, necessity is the mother of invention, therefore, they got information about Dayal Khimito and went to Bagrote, requested him to resolve that threat. Were these people living without any King/ Raja? To know this the narrative has no indications but myths always account for the mythical creatures considering him/her as eternal figure. Thus, this mytheme provides us with clues about the social and cultural milieu, its norms, values and traditions of that time.

Along with Shamanic mantra, two sort of (mis)information delude Yatchani: one was the information of the death of her brother and other was the death of her father. But one truth (according to the Shaman, if he dies, he must be buried below Yatchani's abode) let the people act in hast and they killed their benefactor (savior). And the most interesting and significant is the humanoid's eating of half of the group of men who go to the hillside pasture, in case of two of the men go out to the meadows she eats one and lets one to go. In non-living mythemes, the iron nail (peg) and gravels (pebbles) have symbolic significance.

These non-living mythemes are the "Symbolic mythemes" function as mythic

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operators (Lévi-Strauss,1971). Durand (1996) later defines them as “recurring material symbols that condensate cultural values into tangible forms” (p. 204). In Yatchani, the iron pegs function as symbolic mythemes representing: (1) technological advancement over nature (cf. Hephaestus's chains in Greek myth), (2) permanent liminality (neither fully destroying nor freeing Yatchani), and (3) cultural and civilizational memory (the pegs' ongoing visibility as narrative mnemonics).

Within the above algebraic structure, the two-unit characters; the antagonist and the protagonist make the narrative a myth. The predator mytheme, Yatchani functions as an antagonist, has been elaborated as a supernatural being who preys on human flesh. She resembles monsters or demons in various folklores who consume people, such as ogres or witches (e.g, Baba Yaga in Salvic mythology or the Rakshasas Hindu mythology). However, this antagonist also functions as a regulator of an order by following algebraic predation (a paradoxical character). The second mytheme in the myth is Dayal Khimito, the savior, wise shaman, protagonist and magical figure who was summoned to defeat the threat, identical to the wise old man or “shaman” figures in many myths who possess secret knowledge or powers to save the community. Therefore, this structure resonates “Actantial mytheme” (Greimas, 1966) which was grounded on Levi-Strauss's mytheme theory and categorized the narrative functions into six actuarial roles (Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Helper, Opponent). These actantial mythemes represent as Courtes explained “the stable, paradigmatic roles performed by characters within mythic narratives, transcending individual actors” (1991 p. 37). In the Yatchani myth, Dayal Khimito embodies the Helper actant, while Yatchani serves as both Opponent and (ambiguously) Sender of the ecological order.

Linguistically, the title *Yatchani* itself has multiple meanings having supernatural characteristics. To delve into the etymology of the word, the local version of the tale has been documented with Urdu translation in *Pakistan Ka Sakafti Encyclopedia: Shumali Ilaqa Jaat (Silsila e Karakoram Himaliya Hindukush*, in which, it has been suspected that the word “Yatchani” is feminine of “Yatch”, one of the races of djinn in Shina language and a colloquial word used in this language meaning an evil spirit, or the one that shows wild anger or vigor. The whole tale has been narrated to manifest the mythical characteristics of Yatchani, and the mytheme actively carries the capabilities and abilities of this mythical character by preying human beings who ever go up the hill side. However, the same book also speculated that the word has been derived from Yakhani, as the writer has suspected the reality of the sculpture of Kargah Buddha (locals name it Yatchani) tracing its history

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that it was the sculpture of "Chambaa Budhoo" which had been carved in the last period of the King Ashok by the orders of "Yakhani" (Queen of Kashmir).

To reach an answer of the above speculations about Yatchani, first we discuss the word Yatchani if it really the feminine of Yatch (a male Dav race in Shina culture), secondly, the speculation that the sculpture might initially be named Yakhani- the Kashmiri queen, and later on the name got modified by the locals to Yatchani hence the emergence of the Yatchani character/narrative. Well, in Shina, as I and my fellow researchers are Shina speakers, no female is associated with Yatchani, rather both the gender or sex is associated as Yatch, therefore, the word Yatch is neutral or applied to both the sex. The latter point raises the question that did any such queen really live in history of Kashmir? Ajay Vaid and Ms Samta Sharma (2022) identified ample strips of evidence in "Rajtarangini" which regards to the laudable women of Kashmir and mentions only three queens who ruled Kashmir: Yasovati of the Gonanda dynasty, Sugandha (904-906 A.D.) of the Utpala dynasty, and Didda (1003-1320 A.D.) of the Lohara dynasty. However, Kota Rani (1338-1339 A.D.) of the 11th Lohara dynasty was the fourth and final woman to rule. Jona Raja, a Kashmiri historian, has given Kota Rani significant recognition in his 'Dvitiya Rajtarangini,' which is a continuation of Kalhana's Rajtarangini. Thus, neither a Yakhani queen of Kashmir has any traces in any record nor any female in present day Shina is attributed as Yatchani, however, a female, for sure on certain occasion, is regarded "Yatch" (neutral) if she acts with wild anger or possesses supra vigor. Therefore, it might purely be the fictitious narrative of the proto storyteller for reasons creating desired impacts and the myth has its convoluted etymological history in terms of its origins, meanings, and functions as Mills, J. (2020) informed us in literature review section.

Whatever be the linguistic meaning of Yatchani, but pondering over the structure of death mytheme in Yatchani, we identify that again three deaths (triadic structure) and a life turned statue have changed the course of the horror to epical ending of the myth: the first is the death of the people of Napura, not natural obviously, due to Yatchani's act of cannibalism or supposed governance of a supernatural entity, however, this mytheme prompts the people to think, to gather information about a conflict resolver, and to counsel among themselves. The second death is, say it the news, the information or disinformation about the father and brother of Yatchani which helped the savior to bind Yatchani and to bring peace in the region. The third death occurs when the conflict or problem is resolved, and it was, again unnatural, the assassination of Dayal Khimito, the savior. Therefore, the tri-modal death; unnatural death (the people and Khimito), natural death (brother

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and father of Yatchani's death news occurred beyond the scene or sight) and the life turned statue death (Yatchani), are the recurring mytheme significant to ponder.

We did not find the character of Yatchani dead. The word "bind" or "turned to statue" in the tale indicates that she has not been killed by Dayal Khimito but have made dysfunctional by binding or turning her into a statue. This point reveals to us those supernatural entities like Yatchani, are immortal creature, however, Dayal Khimito, another supernatural character faces death after completing his task. The myth informs us of two mythemes of heroic figure's sacrifices. Dayal Khimito and Yatchani. Dayal Khimito takes the risk of sacrificing his life to face Yatchani's rage, fear and terror in order to ensure the community's safety. Dayal Khimito also has the consciousness that after the bondage of Yatchani, he would be buried beneath the Yatchani's residue unlike the tradition of burring him in his native graveyard. If he was not buried in the suggested place Yatchani could return or unbind herself to continue her course. On the other hand, apart from the terrorizing and eating people, Yatchani serves as a heroic deed, too, of protecting and preserving the nature and ecology of the mountain. For the purpose she eats half of the groups of men and leaves the lives of the other to meet their needs by fetching the woods or other essentials. In this sense Yatchini keeps the order and balance of nature and she could be considered having the divine burden unlike human exploitation of resources. This heroic action of Yatchani explains the actions beyond human reason, self-sacrifice, natural order and for the human reason, Yatchani appeared to be the antagonist. Thus, Yatchani and her actions gist chaos, green-governance, human exploitation, and divine order.

Binary Oppositions in Yatchani

Having identified the structure of the above mythemes, binary oppositions in Yatchani also elaborate structures further. Dundes, quoting Levi Strauss, explains that every mythical idea begins with an understanding of opposites and progresses toward their successive mediations (1965). He further interprets that binary oppositions show the contradiction within the real-life situations; these contraries mark the basic elements of all cultures. Therefore, the identification of these binary opposites reveals the meaning of these structures of the myth and similarly provides a model to overcome real contradictions in daily life situations. The Yatchani folktale contains several binary oppositions.

The perplexing pattern of binary oppositions in Yatchani displays the cultural beliefs and values through the apparent clash between good and evil . Dayal Khimito, who is a shaman and protector of the people, embodying wisdom

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and sacrifice possesses good qualities while the evil is represented through the character of Yatchani, a malevolent and cannibal humanoid who eats people, causing death and destruction. In the same way, the people of the countryside, including Dayal Khimito, who represent the habitat of human beings, their vulnerability and faculty to overcome the chaos whereas Yatchani possesses supernatural abilities and poses threat to humans.

In Yatchani folktale, the nature vs. supernatural binary opposition appears to be central to the narrative structure. This binary opposition highlights the tension between the everyday, observable world of nature and the hidden realm of the supernatural. In the context of Yatchani tale, nature encompasses the physical environment like mountains, rivers, plants, animals as well as the inherent knowledge of these natural elements. The supernatural realm in Yatchani is characterized by a force, a being, or events beyond human comprehension and away from the physical world, including spirits, gods, and magical powers. The myth often bridges the gap between the natural and supernatural, serving as a guide to human characters in their encounters with the mystical. The supernatural is responsible for creating the hidden forces behind natural phenomena, such as weather, growth, fertility, or illness.

In the same way, the binaries of life and dead in Yatchani represent the desire of the people to survive and live their life without the fear of the Yatchani and the sacrifice and dead of Khimito is necessary for the greater good. The Yatchani narrative brings death to the people, and Khimito accepts death to permanently bind evil Yatchani.

Community vs isolation is also an important binary opposition in Yatchani myth. The collective action of the people (community) who come together to find a solution to Yatchani's caused problems. Their unity is essential for their survival while the Yatchani represents isolation, living alone in her dwelling and preying on individuals or small groups, disrupting the unity of the community.

Further, the folktale also embodies the binary opposition of chaos vs order. In the tale, the community seeks to restore order by eliminating the threat of the Yatchani. Khimito's actions represent the imposition of order over chaos and disorder created by Yatchani whereas Yatchani's presence brings chaos, fear, and death, destructing the normal life of the people.

Another important binary opposition in Yatchani is the contrast between wisdom vs ignorance. Dayal Khimito uses his wisdom and sanity to bind Yatchani, relying on intelligence, consciousness and Shamanic mantra rather than brutal force. While Yatchani, due to her ignorance, lesser supernatural power and emotional fragility, is ultimately defeated by the cleverness of

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Khimito. Khimito is considered a hero in the tale, and he defeated Yatchani with his shamanic powers. In other words, we could say that there is transition of an era in Gilgit Baltistan, transition from the era of Yatchani to Shamanism (may be from Buddhism to Shamanic era).

The binary of truth vs deception plays a central role in the story, as Khimito deceives Yatchani by telling her the false news about her family members' death, which enabled him to immobilize her. This binary contrasts between truth and lies, showing how deception can be a tool for good when used strategically. Yatchani's defeat could not be possible through shamanic powers only or straightforward confrontation alone but through clever manipulation of lie also helped to defeat her.

Finding and Conclusion

The Yatchani narrative aligns with Levi- Strauss' framework, as it is structured around mythemes (e.g., Yatchani as the cannibalistic antagonist, Dayal Khimito as the shamanic protagonist) and binary oppositions (good vs. evil, chaos vs. order, truth vs. falsehood, loyalty vs. deception). However, while Levi-Strauss' focuses on universal structures, the Yatchani myth also embeds culturally specific elements, such as Shina linguistic nuances and regional folklore, which diverge from his emphasis on pan human cognitive patterns.

A key alignment between Levi-Strauss' structural theory of myth and the Yatchani myth lies in the use of binary oppositions to structure narrative conflict. In *Myth and Meaning* (Levi-Strauss & Wilcken, 2013), Levi-Strauss argues that myths resolve cultural contradictions symbolically. The Yatchani tale exemplifies this through oppositions like supernatural (Yatchani) vs. human (the villagers), wisdom (Khimito's shamanic knowledge) vs. ignorance (Yatchani's emotional vulnerability), and truth (Khimito's burial necessity) vs. deception (false news of her family's deaths). These binaries mirror Levi-Strauss' claim that myths mediate irreconcilable tensions. Yet, the Yatchani story introduces a unique twist: the "heroic" duality of Yatchani herself, who, while destructive, also embodies ecological balance by limiting human exploitation of nature. This complexity challenges the rigid good/evil binary, suggesting a more nuanced cultural negotiation absent in Levi-Strauss' generalized model. Eventually, while Levi-Strauss' structuralist approach provides a scaffold for analyzing Yatchani's mythemes and binaries, the myth's cultural depth (linguistic, historical, and ecological) exceeds his "universalizing model" (Levi-Strauss & Wilcken, 2013).

However, the myth's architecture reveals three primary structural components: actantial mythemes (the demonic Yatchani, the shamanic savior Dayal Khimito, and the imperiled villagers), eventual mythemes (the systematic predation,

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ritual binding, and sacrificial betrayal), and symbolic mythemes (iron pegs as techno-cultural signifiers, the cliff as liminal space, and gravel as abject sustenance). These elements coalesce into a series of binary oppositions i.e. order/chaos, nature/supernatural, wisdom/ignorance that constitute the narrative's dialectical apparatus. The myth's triadic spatial structure (Napura's human society, Yatchani's liminal domain, Bagrote's shamanic wisdom) mirrors its temporal progression from crisis through resolution to paradoxical regression, embodying "myth's capacity to mediate cultural contradictions through narrative recursion" (Mills, 2020).

The ontological status of Yatchani emerges as a site of folkloric palimpsest, where linguistic and historical registers collide. While the book *Pakistan Ka Sakafti Encyclopedia* posits an etymological link to Yakhani (a conjectural Kashmiri queen), cross-referencing with Vaid and Sharma's (2022) historiographic analysis of the Rajatarangini reveals no such sovereign, suggesting a post hoc mythologization. The Shina linguistic context further complicates this: *Yatch* functions as a gender-neutral term for malevolent spirits, rendering Yatchani either a folk feminization or a lexical fossil of cultural memory. This ambiguity diverts through the character's archetypal duality; she operates simultaneously as an arithmetic predator (consuming precisely half of any group, evoking mathematical cosmologies in myth) and ecological regulator (enforcing resource equilibrium through controlled violence). Her structural counterpart, Dayal Khimito, embodies the shamanic trickster archetype, employing ritual deception (the fabricated deaths of her kin) and techno-symbolic domination (iron peg binding) to enact what Clarke (1977) terms "the paradox of civilized violence" using controlled brutality to suppress chaos. The villagers' subsequent ritual parricide of Khimito, while ensuring Yatchani's eternal binding, instantiates the "sacrificial paradox" as Douglas (1967) interpreted which mean that the purgation of threat necessitates the destruction of the purgative agent.

The myth's non-linguistic signifiers constitute a sophisticated semiotic system. The iron pegs, resonating with Indo-European mythic traditions (e.g., Norse use of iron against giants), operate as civilizational signifiers which demonstrate material testaments to human technological supremacy over nebulous terror. Their deployment echoes Kessel's (1972) observation that "binding myths" universally employ metallurgic symbols as culture/nature mediators. The cliff functions as a liminal membrane, spatially demarcating the human oikos from the supernatural agon, while Khimito's vertical ascent/descent performs the shamanic axis mundi traversal. Most provocatively, the command to "eat gravel" inverts the nutritious mytheme:

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Yatchani's consumption shifts from anthropophagic dominance to mineral abjection, mirroring the Shina idiom's use of ash as symbols of ritual humiliation. The triadic death structure: the villagers' unnatural deaths, the reported natural deaths of Yatchani's kin, and her own symbolic death-in-life, completes what Levi-Strauss (1955) terms a "mythic transformation set," wherein cosmological balance is restored through sacrificial calculus. Significantly, Yatchani's bound immortality (contrasted with Khimito's mortal sacrifice) suggests Darta's (2015) identification in comparable myths that the "supernatural threats are never eradicated, only ritually contained, awaiting potential reactivation", is a narrative loophole preserving myth's cyclical potency.

This analysis reveals the Yatchani myth as a cultural algorithm; its structures recursively treating the binary tensions of Gilgit-Baltistan's historical consciousness. The triadic event sequence model (predator, binding, sacrifice) reflects "mythic fractalization" (If, 2015) where micro level narrative patterns mirroring macro level cultural dilemmas. The villagers' ultimate regression into pre-shamanic terror, having assassinated their savior, instantiates Mills' (2020) theory of myth as failed mediation, wherein resolutions inevitably contain the seeds of future crises. This cyclical temporality distinguishes the narrative from linear heroic myths, positioning it within "aporetic tradition" (Clarke, 1977) of South Asian folklore, where victories are always provisional and power eternally ambivalent.

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