

Tribhuvan University

Rituals, Gender and Modernity:

Mundum Based Performance Culture of Kirant Women

This dissertation

Submitted to the Department of English, Tribhuvan University In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

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July, 2024

## Letter of Recommendation

It is recommended that the dissertation entitled Rituals, Gender and Modernity: A Study of Mundum Based Performance Culture of Kitant Women in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the M. Phil Degree in English by Solira Rai has been completed under my supervision. I recommend it for the final viva voce.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Shiva Rijal, Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University. For the existences of present dissertation work, in the shape as it has by now it was his scholarly guidance and insightful suggestions, constructive ideas both inside and outside the classroom and instructions that made this project a reality. I am deeply indebted to him for his comprehensive suggestions and guidance in accomplishing this dissertation. I am in debt to Head Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, for the approval of this dissertation in its present form. His hints at the need of rigor have been my lessons for lifetime. I am immensely grateful to Dr. Shiva Raj Panta who assisted me particularly for the methodological competence.

I express my special gratitude towards my parents, my father Mr. Shiva Kumar Rai and Mother Renuka Tamang for their kind help in different modes of my academic endeavors and especial thanks to my mother she stood back in my ups and downs without failure. I cannot forget my friend Smita Rai, Denju Shakya and Aiti Ghale for continuous help. Finally, I would like express my very special thanks to my spouse Sagar Rai for his great patience and continuous support and my daughters Nipsung Rai and Nuwabung Rai for providing me direct or indirect motivation while working in this study. I love you so much.

## Abstract

The Kirants, the ethnic group from Eastern part of Nepal have their major religious text is *Mundum* that constitutes the free and fair positions for the women as well. Guided by the problem of universal feminism, the research work assumes that not all of the communities of the world have dominated women. Kirant community could be an exception to state that this community has very less degree of discrimination to women. This research work focuses on some particular religious ritual's performances and their reflections on socio cultural and day to day life style of Kiranti Female taking Jaari, a movie, as the primary source of analysis and the *Mundum* itself. Ancient Kiranti women to today's modern Kiranti women are devoted and happy with own culture and religious rituals, because Kirant religion and culture are more flexible than other religious culture and rituals. The study has, by and large, acknowledged that the core theme of *Mundum* is the matriarchal society. Women's involvement in every ritual performance in fairs and festivals also raises the issue of gender equality among *Mundum* believers to that end, they enjoy freedom, own identity, individuality because it is given by the Kirant *Mundum* itself. Kiranti Women have by and large fared better when it comes to gender equality. It is the main binding factor to Kiranti women in one place. They have full faith and respect towards Kirant community and want to pass down such religious rituals to the daughters. This research work argues that the gender status in Kiranti community is good as the women are offered the equal status. Thus, the research work yields the idea that *Mundum* allows larger degree of freedom to femininity in comparison to other religions and communities.

(Key Words: Mundum, Riutal, Kirant, Performance, Women, Culture, Jaari Movie)

## Table of Contents

Letter of Recommendation	
Letter of Approval	
Acknowledgements	
Abstract	
Chapter I	
Rituals and Kirant Women Identity	1
Chapter II	
Kirant People and Mundum	7
Chapter III	
Rituals in Kirant Culture	13
Chapter IV	
Marriage System in Kirant Culture and Theoretical Aspects	22
Chapter V	
Representation of Kirant Rituals in Movie Jaari	44
Chapter VI	
Prevalence of Women in Kirant Culture	55
Work Cited	61

## Chapter I:

### Rituals and Kirant Women's Identity

Rituals are the chief backbones of the individual's behavior in that they are the sources on which the individuals rely on for their behavioral scripts. Generally, traditions and rituals are handed down from one generation to the next. Rituals occur in many settings in many forms and performances and it functions in both ways sacred and secular. It may boost our ego and allow one to be special. It consists many forms, performances to make it more sacred and secular. There are inseparable acts of human beings. To differentiate the group, community and society rituals play very vital role as it consists much power. But mass of people or collective beliefs are dangerous. It may harm or create biasness among other people since it enforces people to follow it. Patriarchal community uses it as a weapon and play politics on it. In such communities along with other thing the rituals are controlled by male and they make it male oriented and on the other hand, they categorize women in secondary level through the forceful ritualistic performance which is linked to the myth of ancestor and the whole universe.

People believe rituals are fixed, unchanging and confined by nature and most of the time it they are observed through only or mainly in religious or holy tradition. Owing to globalization and modernism they may change whilst not getting disappeared. They are celebrated in different forms and in different ways. Rituals have huge significance in people's lives and the society. Most of the rituals are strongly rooted in communities and practice passed down through the generations. They are also identity makers of a of particular community. People perform them in fixed order and repetitive behavior. Society believes that rituals are important to maintain discipline and harmony in the communities, they provide meanings for life.

More often than not, religious institutions are dominated by man and driven by the man. They create certain ceremonial rituals in their favor. Females have been performing prejudicial rituals from the past for the sake of religion and tradition. In the name of rituals, exists a hierarchy between male and female.

KirantCulture belongs to indigenous group of people in Nepal. As per census it is in minority group of Nepal but it has many scientific and less discriminative cultural and ritual mannerism; a way of respecting behavior towards women. The cultural freedom, involvement of every important ritualistic mannerism. There are many female issues in different religious context in Nepal and few feminists and intellectual are raising voice against it but the women from KirantCulture are much privileged than women from other religions in many aspects. Kiranti culture is more open, equal and respectful towards female, there is no bias in the name of the cast and gender.

The study examines both historical and contemporary rituals, which are important to Kirant communities. Kiranti women's rituals, performances, and way of life. The *Mundum* has served as the foundation for Kirant society and religion. This religion has a plethora of rites, many of which are highly pragmatic and grounded in science and socio-anthropological realities. Kirant*Mundum* does not discriminate against men or women; both sexes are treated equally and are able to participate in all social events and customs. Some rituals are like, *Womb Worship, Birth ceremony, Naming Ceremony, Rice feeding ceremony, Gunyu Cholo, Marriage, Jaar, and Ukhundi, Udhauli-Ubhauli* ect. Kiranti society has been performing such rituals since the time immemorial. Such rituals present the value of the Kirant Women because it has very distinct place for the Kirant women. But gradually things have been changing in the modern scenario. Besides this, it is very much diverse from others

religious context. This dissertation has unveiled these rituals and such display turns out to be the evidence of the provision of more liberal attitudes to the women. This dissertation has examined Jaari, a movie for substantiating the claim the Kiranti women are freer.

Every state, society and communities are functioned by different law, order and systems. Guiding factors are some sort of traditional knowledge, values, beliefs, sentiments, relationship religious faith aims others. Each religion has different wisdom and perspective towards universe, its creation and people. It contains knowledge of the beginning, the celebration and the ending with rituals and that shape an individual or group of people accordingly. We have been repeating same sort of ritualistic performances from the since the earliest time.

Hence, this research is an attempt to expose the Kiranti women as positive and happy in terms of independence, culture, and religious aspect. Modern Kirant women are giving continuity to the rituals that are handed down to them by their ancestor and they are still happy to celebrate such rituals. They are in the making of their daughters to perform these cultural religious performances. Why rituals are still performed and celebrated continuously in Kirant society? At the same time in most of the other societies women are raising many questions regarding equality and equity for which they have been fighting for since long back to achieve equal status in the family, community, society, working place, and in equal identity, in search of assimilation in many important-rituals. Relating to this research, the materials collected for this study has been taken from different sources that attempts to identify how different religions perceive and explain the female status in the society. How rituals are important to uplift women's position in the society. Ritual, Performance, Gender and Feminist theory will be applied to analyze this research questions. *Mundum* (Kiranti Veda) is a

main source to clarify the claims. It speaks about all human, demons, souls, individual action (Karm) and Universe and it never shows biasness in-between two different genders and caste. “ritual is vital to the construction of community, cultural identity, or ethnicity; it can preserve a tradition by mediating its essential features with new external demands” (Bell 251). Rituals bond people and create harmony, unity among them and gives identity to particular community, clan or group of the people. It differentiates people, tribe or community, our rituals give us a sense of identity. It captures the essence of our community and who we are.

Sacred rituals are complex and bound. Secular rituals have no cultural history. “In most cultures, social life is a series of major and minor ritual events. While predominantly secular cultures may have just a few rites to mark birth, marriage, and death, more traditional or religious societies may envelop one in a nearly endless sequence of ritual obligations” (Bell95). Sacred rituals are tough hard to maintain all the time, here we perform rituals to make unknown power happy and we expect something good in return. Whatever ritual is everyone should have equal right to perform that but most of the religions created hierarchy and place some caste, gender in different categories from where they cannot participate in many rituals. These hierarchies are totally based on power politics. Emile Durkheim explained, “Religious beliefs are representations that express the nature of sacred things while rituals are “rules of conduct” governing how people should act in the presence of sacred objects” (24). Using religion, culture, tradition and rituals, some people interlinked it and started politics. They created hierarchy: the concept of superior and inferior, touchable and untouchable as well as the idea of gender; men, and women.

Women are not permitted to take part in the key ceremonies in patriarchal cultures. Foucault mentions, “The body is political field: Power relation has an

immediate hold up on it, they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies to emit sings” (202). In actual base, they have been practicing such torture on female and force them to perform according to those rules made by certain religious people. Women are subservient in societies that are ruled by men, such as Hindu civilization. In certain rites, women are only permitted to sit—and for the most disgusting reason—when accompanied by their husbands. She cannot carry out these rites without her spouse, but her son may. They circulate power politics and control through rituals that never allow female to go a step ahead. Hinduism is most dominant religion in terms of such hierarchy in the world. Such practices are placing women in backward continually in such rituals that still is creating obstacles for female to achieve equal position like man in society, it does not look like serious matter but slowly it pushes the women in the corner from the main stream.

Although they seem like simple matters, politics begins at this moment. Traditions are cherished customs passed down from one generation to the next, imbued with a strong sense of faith and belief that is difficult for outsiders to discount or ignore. The social order is continued by rituals. But now things have been changing gradually. As Victor Turner (Functionalist) “Rituals did not simply restore Social equilibrium; they were part of the ongoing process by which the community was continually redefining and re-newing itself” (540). Rituals performances go through change but also retain the essence. For instance, various feminist movements have brought little changes however, in arguments to the pattern of religion and rituals adapting the concept of modernism to see life and universe. They are contributing in the field of social injustice and starting the women’s movements as society is treating women as other under the social hierarchy. Significant discrimination still occurs

under traditions that prevent women from ever escaping it. It has strong roots in customs, religion, and culture. These are the fundamental and essential social structures. Our pride, identity, and beliefs are derived from our culture and rituals; these are deeply emotive and important topics that shape who we are as people. If it is disregarded, it could lead to a pitiful situation because it is closely related to strong beliefs and feelings.

This dissertation studies *Mundum* rituals and performance of Kirant culture. Catherine Bell is one of the important figures in the field of the ritual performance. Similarly, Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner have also contributed in religious and rituals' aspects of the society. However, this dissertation mainly talks about women's identity of position in particular spaces. So, this dissertation furthers with other few feminist theorists too, who continuously speak about women's issues and dare to challenge the so-called patriarchal, male dominance over women socio-culturally. Similarly, Simone de Beauvoir points out the issues of women position as why women are considered as second sex? Similarly, this research paper goes through Judith Butler, they raise voice against social and gender discrimination. The research is mainly based on the link between ritual performance and feminism, in ways of systematic and depth study. It tries to explore some hidden facts about rituals which have provided different position to Kiranti women. The culture they practice in their day-to-day life is much liberal towards Kiranti women. It will be much useful for upcoming application for those who are interested in research of Kirant people's rituals in their community.

## Chapter II:

### Kirant people and Mundum

Diversity as the reality of Nepal, it can be deduced that the differing rituals educate the individuals of community. In Nepali context majority of population are Hindus and Buddhist rest of the other religions are in minority. Under religion gladly or unenthusiastically people celebrate or conduct many rituals. Rituals show the identity and actual lifestyle of the individual society. The practice of ritual is considered from both an ethical and a dogmatic point of view. In our context Hinduism is most dominated religion and huge mass follow the rituals under this religion. Wherein people can witness many unfair treatments of women. Hindu world is essentially a man's world. Similarly, in Buddhism female are deemed to be obstacle for Moksha. The Kirant is an indigenous ethnic community of Nepal. Usually, Kirant people are known as vagrants and hunters, they found in hilly and mountainous regions. They have knowledge about medicinal herbs, spices and the forest. Most unique fact is that they worship the nature. According to the history of Nepal, the Kirants ruled for about 1,225 years (800 BC-300 AD). In Nepal "Their reign had 29 kings" (Wikipedia). Kirant people are indigenous land owners. Ramesh Kumar Limbu mentioned Chaitanya Subba's quote in his book, *Limbu Indigenous Knowledge and Culture*, "Himalayan region was always a favorable abode of Kirants since the remote past" (37). "This Kirant state is divided into *Maaj Kirant* and *Pallo Kirant*. *Maaj Kirant* was called the Kingdom of Nine *Lakh Kirant* and *Pallo Kirant* was called the Kingdom of Ten Limbus" (48). There is an old saying; Kiranti have ten languages, ten casts, but one house of nine lakh Kirants. Kirant have different caste and different languages as per geographical periphery but they have been celebrating same culture, religious acts and rituals. Kirants have same three stone fireplaces where they

celebrate most of their rituals. Gopal Shiwakoti mentioned about Kirant in his Text *Kirant Jaati*;

The Kirant caste is one of the major castes living in Nepal. This caste is not caste but big cast. The Kirant caste is not a racial caste but a social community. Within this caste, there are many casts, religions, cultures, histories, and traditions. It has its own Vedas and philosophy. This caste also ruled the state in Nepal at different times. Therefore, the Kirant caste has a long and multifaceted influence on the history of Nepal. This caste also exists as an aboriginal, ethnic community of Nepal. Without the study of the Kirant caste, the political, social and cultural history of Nepal cannot be studied (1).

Kiranti have long and impressive history in Nepal, in fact Kirant community is the oldest community of the Nepal. They were living in the Himalayan region in Nepal.

In Nepal, they are found in eastern hilly districts such as Sankhuwasabha, Tehrathum, Dhankuta and Taplejung, Panchthar, Ilam, Jhapa. Because of modernization and globalization Kirants are found all-round the globe. Mostly they are in Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam and other many places of India, also in Bhutan, Myanmar and United Kindom. Kirant community holds typical language, literature, culture, tradition, religion, rituals, folk tales and so on. They have their own mother-tongue known as Kiranti language. Kirant are rich in folk literature that includes *Mundums*, Proverbs, Folksongs like *Palams* and *Risiya cultural songs*, *Hakpare*, and *myths, folktales, folk narratives*, and many more. In the Kiranti folk literature, the *Mundum* is core where we can find various units such as folk tales, myths, folklores, mantras, risiya, palam and overall life philosophy. Kirant have a long tradition of narrating or reciting *Mundums* and performing certain rituals and ceremonies in their own distinctive ways. Kiranti youths sing beautiful folk songs, *risiya*(a kind of

classical song), *palam*(folk song), *hakpare*(a song of mountain) in their daily life and in various socio- cultural ceremonies, in different rituals like wedding ceremony, death ceremony, fair and on festivals. The traditional Kirant folkdance which essentially contains dancing and singing form. Where female and male participants perform together, it is usually performed on marriage ceremonies, festivals, fair and in other special celebrations and occasions. Such performances have huge value and significance. It helps to demonstrate socio-cultural and historical heritages as well as tradition, culture, behavior and life styles of the people it also provides us previous information, ongoing activities, and upcoming plans and objectives such as *Sakela Dance*(dance performance) where they perform their daily life style, every dance moment tells us about the action of Kirant life style and work. *Sakela Dance* includes all male and female, elder and smaller one, it is inclusive ceremony, Kirant People gather in one place and dance together.

Hindus have religious books called Vedas, Bhuddhists have Tripitakas, Christians have Bible and Muslims have Quran. Similarly, Kirants have *Mundum*. *Mundum* is equal to Veda, Tripitaka, Bible and Quran. Kirant society and religion has been guided by it. “The word *Mundum* means the power of great strength” (Chemjong 18). Kirant people have full faith on it, they consider it as a holy and powerful scripture. Chemjong further clarify; “The *Mundum* is divided into two parts. The first is called the *Thungsap Mudum* and the second is called the *Peysap Mundum*” (Chemjong19). “*The Thungsap Mundum* is the original one and come from the very words of mouth till the art of writing was introduced and was referred to as the oral *Mundum* in books.” Further Chemjong elaborated about the *Mundum*; “The *Peysap Mundum* is a written book about religion. It is divided in to four parts. They are the *Soksok Mundum*, *Yehang Mundum*, *Sapji Mundum* and *Sap Mundum* (19). “The *Soksok*

*Mundum* contains the stories of creation of the universe, the beginning of mankind, the cause and effect of the sins, the creation of evil spirits, such as the evil spirits of Envy, Jealousy and Anger and the cause and effect of death in childhood.”

“The *Yehang Mundum* contains the story of the first leader of mankind who made laws for the sake of improvement of human beings from the stage of animal life to the enlightened life and ways to control them by giving philosophy on spiritualism.” Kiranti *Mundum* contains religion, culture, rituals, guidance for survival. *Mundum* was basically found in oral forms. It is called the *Thuturi Veda* (Oral ritual) but scripted *Mundum* was written in very ancient native Kirant language script. Certain historians and authors claim that ancient emperors burned and destroyed religious manuscripts and Kirant scripts. Kirant Culture, tradition, customs, and culture had been deteriorating in the absence of the *Mundum* text form. Since a lot has changed over time, Kirants are now dispersed over the globe and have gained enough wisdom and education to recognize the importance of their own identities, cultures, languages, and religions. Kirant have begun to study it and preserve it in the text as a result of that awareness.

*Mundum* tells about life philosophy, rules and laws of life which guides Kirant in their daily life. Kirant people completely follow and perform every ritual according to it. Kirant people share same kitchen (Das Bhasha Das Thar, Ek Bhansha) but it has different language spoken groups within. Different language spoken Kirants pronounce their holy text differently such as Bantawa Rai call it *Mundum*, Limbu as *Mundum*, Mewahang as *Muddum*, Yakkha as *Mintum*, Sunuwar as *Mukdum*, Kulung as *Ridum* and Chamling as *Dum*. In Bantawa Rai language, "*Muna*" means Man and "*Dum*" means Culture/Tradition. So *mundum* means man's tradition and culture. It describes about Universe, *Ninamma*, *Paruhang*, *Sumnima*, creation of humankind on

Earth, Kirant culture, tradition, customs, habits, rituals, nature, Kirant myths and hymns. *Mundum* contains a set of Kirant customary performance that serve as rules of law, which guide Kirants in their daily life. *Mundm* tells the stories of the Universe, creation of humankind, life cycle, talks about good deed, bad deed and sins. Tells about Karma, creation of evil spirits such as the evil spirit of envy and performance of Kiranti hymns, prayers or Mantras. Fundamentally, it contains every aspect of human being, talks about does and does not. In Rai Oral *Mundum* is called "*Doedum*" or "*Doewangdum*" and Written *Mundum* is called "*Chapdayang* or *Chhapladum*". Kirant believe that the oral *Mundum* originated from *Paruhang* and *Sumnima* when they gave life to human being, they handed *mundum* too. Since, they got life and knowledge from *Sumnima* & *Paruhang's* devinepower. It started from that time and they considered it the oldest Veda on the earth. The oral *mundum* was passed on from generation to next in a form of oral folklore, mantras, prayers. *Mundumi* rituals and traditions are performed by very special Kirant religious gurus like *Doewa*, *Mangpa*, *Nachhon* and *Faydangma* in different occasion. In ancient time, Kirant priest is called *Samba*.

Knowledge plays a vital role in human life which is acquired through various sources. In Kirant community *Mundum* is one of the sources of knowledge which guides Kirant. People can learn about the creation of the world, the universe, animals, humans, and vegetation from the *Mundum*. It is equipped with particular laws, guidelines, and decrees to monitor society. *Mundum* is known as the Oral tradition (Thuturi Veda) because the Kirant people have begun to maintain it despite its absence of a physical form. In order to maintain harmony in the community. The greatest cultural asset of the Kiranti people is *Mundum* itself, but they also have fascinating mythology, storytelling, folktales, and folk literature. The *Mundum* is

based for every literature it has poetic manner. They have a long tradition of narrating *Mundum* and performing certain rituals and ceremonies in their own typical ways. Kirants have a tradition of reciting *Mundum* in a special manner on special ceremonies. In the form of mantras, epic songs, poetry recited by the Nachhon, Priest and Dhami. *Mundum* holds extreme religious historical value and socio-cultural importance in the Kirant community.

## Chapter III:

### Rituals in Kirant culture

Rituals are important asset of the society. It forms social activities and have huge impact on people's thoughts, feelings and behaviors. It is a symbolic behavior people perform before, during and after meaningful events. People practice it within group or a society and perform in publicly or privately it has linked to with some important events of human beings. Ritual is a social practice; it shapes our everyday life. It is a basic fundamental belief up on strong but unseen power nature and universe and practices by a group of people. It speaks about eternity and infinity. Its performance is based on several religious and cultural traditions within that specific community. People carry out these rituals out of trust and believe in various belief systems that are practiced by every society. Generally traditional rituals are handed down from one generation to the next. Rituals are occurring in many settings with many forms and performs many functions in a both way sacred and secular. Rituals come with repetitive manner and are performed in fixed order; they are demonstrated in dramatic forms. Rituals boost our ego and allow us to be special. Rituals consist many forms, performed many functions both sacred and secular. Rituals are inseparable acts of human beings. "Human beings have been involved in ritual activities of some sort since the earliest hunting bands and tribal communities" (Bell XVII). Community or group of people are always chained by rituals. It begins pre- life and ends with death after. "the interrelationships of religion, society, and culture in a variety of ways, in each case ritual is seen as a definitive component of the various processes that are deemed to constitute religion, or society, or culture" (Bell 16). Every society follows culture and rituals. Rituals differentiate the group, community and society and it consists much power. Mass of the people or collective

believes are dangerous. It may harm or create biasness among the people. Patriarchal community uses it as a weapon and plays politics. In patriarchal rituals are controlled by male and they made it male friendly and they place women in secondary level by using it. Now it became a compulsion to follow such rituals weather female are educated or not. Because it is our culture and going against culture means you will be nowhere. The majority of the time, rituals occur solely or mostly in religious or holy contexts, leading people to believe that they are set, unchanging, and limited by nature. However, depending on the situation, it might alter but does not completely vanish; it only takes on new shapes and functions. Its principles remain the same regardless of changes in its form or appearance. holds the same essence, the outcome will also be the same. People are tortured by it, but not in the same manner. Rituals have huge significance in the people and society. Ritual lies in every society but it differs from society to society. People from Most of the rituals are strongly rooted in the communities. It is a kind of identity of particular community and People perform in fixed order and repetitive behavior. Society believes that rituals are important to maintain culture, provides meaning of life.

Several critics have examined the rituals. They talk about various rituals all around the world. Rituals unite people and create harmony among them. It is a cultural and historical construction that has been heavily used to help differentiate various styles and degrees of religiosity, rationality, and cultural determinism. (Bell IX) Rituals always come with culture and tradition. In the society different people are celebrating different culture, tradition and religion. People perform rituals according to these factors. It differentiates people, tribe or community. Rituals are a kind of identity for us. It reflects who people are and what their community is? It unites the people, differentiate the community.

Whatever rituals people have been performing. Most of them are handed down to us from our ancestors and some are adopted from different context and situations. Sacred rituals are complex and bound. Secular rituals have no cultural history. In Sacred ritual “religious rituals are those in which people make offerings to a god or gods with the practical and straightforward expectation of receiving something in return” (Bell108). Whenever people perform ritual, they have full faith towards unknown power and people expect something good in return. People believe that if they offer some things to God or some unseen power, they will give it back to us in a good way. Basically, it is pure and soulful activities. In one way it is directly connected with supreme power. “Rituals are designed to arouse a passionate intensity, feelings of “effervescence,” in which individuals experience something larger than themselves. These emotional responses cause people to identify their innermost selves with this sense of a larger reality, what is in effect, the collective community in a disguised form” (Bell24). Rituals reflect society and no people can cross the boundary line of the society. So, it creates certain criteria, which bounds people within a community and society.

The majority of the time, men rule society as either the head of the household or as its leader. Because of the male-dominated society, there are certain boundaries for women, and men perform important rituals. Hindu society is an illustration of a male-dominated environment in which women have a submissive role. In the sake of religion and customs, they drive women to the back and never let them take the lead. Hindu female seldom gets solitary recognition. They are mother, wife, and daughter of someone. In Nepal, Hinduism is also the predominant religion. These customs, which put women in the back seat, and the persistence of these traditions make it difficult for women to advance to a position of equality with men in society.

Rituals have huge influence and belief system that people cannot easily remove it. The social order is continued by rituals. Things have been changing gradually. According to Victor Turner (Functionalist), “Rituals did not simply restore Social equilibrium, they were part of the ongoing process by which the community was continually redefining and re-newing itself” (540). Many things have changed since the past. Ritual constantly works to keep society in balance by reestablishing what is beneficial to humanity and tolerating changes. since the social system's operation is ongoing. Time is a good teacher or a healer So, according to time something has been changing because we are in the age of globalization and modernism. Globalization has made the world smaller place. By diminishing the barriers between different cultures, globalization stands against religious congestion and reducing long term influences of traditional beliefs which are inappropriate in the context. People are surviving under different religions like Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and others. People are willing to accept new, sociable rituals from all over the world in today's modern culture, as they are aware of the negative effects of old rituals.

In male dominated society every time religious institutions are dominated by man and driven by male leadership and they created rules and rituals in their own favor. People have been performing prejudicial rituals from past to now for the sake of religion and tradition. In the name of rituals, there is hierarchy between male and female. Foundations for the women are broken so, easily they cannot fix it. De Beauvoir mentioned in her book *The Second Sex*: “This world has always belonged to males, and none of the reasons given for this have ever seemed sufficient” (96). Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism are in lead position in the world. In all religion women play a secondary role. “the bourgeoisie has always assigned to her, is

to devote herself to her children, her husband, her home, her realm, to country, and to church; man gives activity, woman her person; to sanctify this hierarchy in the name of divine will” (Be Beauvoir 288-289). Instead of allowing them to participate in main rituals they force them to stay within household activities and forced to celebrate evil rituals in Nepali context they were forced to celebrate such rituals like *Deuki prath* (girl child is offered to God), *Kumari prathaprath* (girl child is offered to God), *Chaupadi Pratha*(female should stay out of the house during menstruation), *Child Marriage (early age marriage)*, *Daijo pratha*(Dowry system), *Sati Pratha*, where wife has to sacrifice herself by sitting on pyre of her husband cremate body it was a extremes level of torture for female. People have progressively begun to abandon these rites due to outside information, yet few continue in other ways.

There are some changes in lifestyle of female but it does not mean, they have achieved everything because discrimination is deeply rooted in religion, culture and rituals it is not easy to remove it once. These are the basic and vital social mechanisms. Our culture and rituals are our pride, our identity, belief; all human beings are guided by these factors. These factors never allow women to stand equally with male.

Till now it is factmost of the religious institutions are controlled by male and driven by male leadership and they construct policies in their favour. Most of the religion there lies gender discrimination. Female are placed always in low profile than male. Tradition and cultures are not academic knowledge which we can get from school and universities. We born within it, survive within it and die within it. So, home, family, community and society play a huge role to teach basic norms, belief, moral values and own culture and its rituals. it is a part of human being and every individual has to go through it.

There are many history and feminist moments where female is raising voice against inequality, discrimination, injustice, freedom and identity or many more. They do not have equal status within in their own culture or community. Because the tradition and rituals they have been practicing it carries biasness within it. It is complicated task to fight against owns community and belief that People have been practicing generation to generation. Female from different communities has such burden and detachment towards own culture and raising continuous voice against it.

KirantCulture belongs to minority group but it has more scientific and less discriminative culture and rituals towards the women. Kirant rituals are always favorable for women. Like other religion Kiranti religion has book called “*Mundum*”. Mundum tells many stories and rituals where they never show biasness towards women and what they have been practicing in the community. That’s why the position of Kiranti women is always high and respectful in their communities. “A gender role begins with the concepts of the society in which a person is raised” (Gender Perception, 2017). Gender perception that is equal or unequal starts from the birth of one. The gender perceived value allocates and divides the roles and power to male and female differently. In the post-Vedic Manusmriti became responsible for downfall of women in Hindu society:

A girl, a young woman, or even an old woman, should not do anything independently, even in her own house. In childhood a women should be under her father’s control, in youth under her husband’s control, and when her husband is dead, under her sons’. She should not have independence (147-8).

This comes from the religious norms and value in the society. The religious cosmology and philosophy are the output of gender perception of a society. The world religions all agree on the respect for women and their crucial role in family life,

especially with emphasis on women as daughter, wives and mothers. Kiranti women are not discriminated, even in terms of performing the several rituals they equally participate each of them. Thus, there is no gender gap between male and female in Kirantcommunity.

Rituals stillplay significant role in the Kirant community and life style of Kiranti women. Kirant religion and society has been guided by *Mundum*. There are so many ritules in this religion and those rituals are equal to male and female of the Kirant society. Some ritules are *Womb Worship*(celebration of pregnancy), *Hiyapramaha*(Birth Ceremony), Naming Ceremony, Rice feeding Ceremony, *Gunyu Cholo*(new clothes give to daughter), Marriage, *Jaari* (, and *Ukhundi* ect. Kiranti society has been performing such rituals from the past to till now and makes them bit different from other communities. Religion, culture, rituals and its performance tell us about the particular society. By seeing Kirant rituals it is much obvious that Kirant women are more privileged, happy and more equal to the male.

Kirant women are still celebrating their rituals with great joy. Kiranti Culture followers have their own ways of knowledge and belief which they transfer to their generations. There is a worldview in Mundum that explains the existence and teach an individual how to be responsible and dutiful towards the society. Most importantly it also teaches about gender justice to be done in the society. Most of the society keeps women in low profile in social matters and she should avoid outside exposure. But Kirant people never exclude female from their any rituals. Actually, in every ritual female participation is compulsion and female have main role to play in it. None religion consists female in lead role. There is always male pastor in church, male priest in temple; male Kaji in mosque, and male Guru in Buddhist temples but in Kirant community has female Dhami called *Nachhon*, Female Dhami can conduct any

rituals there is no objection by male. These practices bound Kirant female towards own culture and celebrates rituals with great happiness.



Female Nachhon Performing Ritual

Things are gradually changing and there is an effect of modernism everywhere. Kiranti women are educated, independent and they are in all over the world. They still follow own rituals because *Mundum* never bise them as a male or female. Numerous rituals exist, such as Womb Worship, which is performed by women when they get pregnant, and *Hiyapramaha*, which is performed after the infant is born. In addition to marriage, where she has equal rights, additional examples include *Ukhundi*, where a woman can return to her parents' home if she chooses not to live with her husband, *Jaari*, where a woman has the complete right to leave her husband's home and choose to live with another person, *Saimundri* where parents will not transfer their daughter to in-law's *Suptulung* for many years. These customs demonstrate the revered status Kiranti women hold in their society. While patriarchy is a prctise in all religions, there is less bias against women in Kirant faith.

In every ceremony and ritual female has equal place and value these things bind Kiranti women with tradition. It reflects importance of the women in Kirant society. Because of these honor Kiranti women are interested in their rituals and willing to give continuity to such rituals. Kirant women may have different issues to

raise voice but they do not need to raise voice against equal position and discrimination within their communities Kiranti women are living admirable life then other women in their society and their culture and rituals are supporting them to stand equally in their society.

## Chapter: IV

### Marriage System in Kirant Culture and Theoretical Aspects

Kiranti are culturally rich people, they perform rituals from pre-birth to after death. Every community belongs to particular religion, culture, customs and rituals, such as, Kirant people have different culture, religion, rituals and performing it differently. “The culture and traditions of the Kirant caste who came to Nepal are still in their original form. It has developed as a culture and Sakela culture” (148). Kirants are culturally rich because it is unique and inclusive, it has variation, original and connected with nature these rituals are formal and open. Some major rituals in Kirant culture are as follows:

Womb Worship; this ritual is performed by the *Phedangma/ Nachhon* (kind of priest) it is basically for safety of baby and safe delivery of mother. “It is said that when a child is in the womb, the child's father should not hit and cut, cannot go to the funeral and give soil to the body and also cannot bring stone from there” (25). Especially it is worship of deity Yuma. Next ritual is Birth Ritual; they worship different deities along with their ancestor they thank them and ask for blessings for both mom and new born baby. Similarly, Purification Ceremony for the New-born Baby and Its Mother; “the baby’s grandmother or its paternal or maternal aunt take the new – born wrapped in clothes and standing on the doorway should say: From today onwards you have become a human being. Now you shall, speak, talk to others, move about, work in the field and go into the world to do businesses. “Mother of the new-born baby also should be given an ablution and draped in fresh clothes and her bed also should be made fresh” (Mundum 151). *Yangdong Phangma* (Naming Ceremony); *Phedangma* chants the Mundum and choose the name, “name the new born baby as per the name of the day, month and year. Baby can be named using the

sun, the moon, the sky, the earth, the planet, the stars etcetera, too” (153). *Rungriwai* (Rice feeding Ceremony); On this good day, they put money and rice in a brass plate, light a lamp and put two curds of banana leaves on rice to make tika. A copper plate and a bowl should contain all the foods to feed the child with a silver coin.

Grandfather or grandmother worship the new clothes and *diyo* (lamp) then, at first Grandmother, feeds the baby. The process of feeding baby by other relatives and guests goes turn wise after wards. *Chhewor* is a ritual of cutting son's hair for the first time on this day he is given a new pair of clothes. The hair should be shaved from the hands of the maternal uncle or the eldest person. Sister has to stop the cut hair not to be fallen on the ground. Somewhere maternal uncle gifts a topi (hat) or in some places father gifts a bow and arrow to the son. Next ritual is *Ukhundi*, it is very much unique and female friendly Kiranti ritual. When a Kiranti girl is married and her husband fails to fulfill his responsibilities wife can return back to her birth home. Being a failure husband, the husband has to pay certain things to the girl. That fine is considered to be a releasing the girl from the marriage, which is called *Ukhundi*. The daughter is brought back to the family. By the help of *Nachhon*, *Mangpa* or *Phedangma* they put back her in “*Kul*” / “*Mang*” or *Suptulung* and she is purified. Once *Ukhundi* is complete, the daughter is treated as “unmarried” and her status in the family and in the society too remains like an unmarried girl. Similarly, another ritual is *Saimundri*, this might sound extremely unusual ritual for those, who do not know Kiranti culture, in which parents retain complete control over their married daughter. After many years of waiting, they finally do this rite and completely transfer their daughter from their own *Suptulung* when they feel secure and happy about their daughter. It does not matter if it takes longer than that or a while after the baby is born. Another ritual in Kirant culture is Death ritual, Kirant Rai believe that they are

born from the land, since, they are born from the land, after death too, they should get along with the land. They do not believe that they will go to the Heaven or Hell after their death. Instead, they believe that it will come in their own “*Suptulung*” hearth. There is difference between Natural death ritual or Unnatural death ritual. “After death, the dead body is placed inside the house with the head facing the door. It should not be placed on *Radi*, so *Gundri* (a type of mat) should be placed on *Mandro*. A copper plate should be placed on the head and feet of the deceased. Some cuts a Hen and sticks the tip of the wing in the armpit of the dead body and pulls the spirit from the grave with the hen's foot. The men and women who have reached the age are dead *Bijuwa* cuts the ginger and placed directly in the *Samkha* when they are adopted by the ancestor” (50-51). If it is Unnatural Death “In case of death due to an unpleasant cause, the *Phedangma* performs a dance by cutting a piece of ginger, *Bijuwa*, who has the knowledge of Kirant culture informs the place, where dead soul should reside. *Bijuwa* guides the dead soul for choosing the place. This ritual takes place in the evening. Kirant people believe that the dead soul does not cause pain for others after this ritual. This is also known as bad spirit removal” (51). *Bijuwa* can direct the spirit to bestow at the flower garden. Among these so many interesting rituals are performed in the Kirant culture but my main focus is in Marriage ritual and Jaari ritual.

In every society marriage is one of the important social activities. According to H.M. Johnson, “Marriage is a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted without loss of standing in community, to have children” brought from slidershre.net. In the world there are many types of marriage in practice. It depends on their religion, culture, custom, and rituals. Some marriages are similar like arranged marriage and love marriage. Being an indigenous people of Nepal,

Kirant people have their own culture, custom, language, script and witness marriage ceremony in their own way. Also, they have different marriage rituals. There are many kinds of marriage rituals in Kirant Community but mainly there are two kinds of Marriage system practiced in the community: Magi Biha (Arranged Marriage): Arrange marriage is performed in the mutual understanding and arrangements of both the families – the boy's side and the girl's side. It is called Magi Biha. And next is, Love marriage: This marriage depends on one's free choice, in love marriage woman and man both of them attraction, love, liking and have feelings to each other and bounded by love. Both of them get married as per their own decision. Besides these two other types of marriage systems are also practiced in the Kirant community, such as: 1. Chori Biha (Theft Marriage): It sounds similar to love marriage but it is different, if a man takes a woman away from her home secretly without informing her parents, it is called 'theft marriage'. This sort of marriage is a bit different from 'love marriage', in that the man and woman may not have developed personal relationship for a long time, which is found in love marriage. The man may like the woman all of a sudden, which the woman may not be noticing. All of a sudden, the man expresses his wish to marry her when he meets her on some occasion or gathering – like in the fairs and marketplace (Wikipedia). 2. Senzi Zari Biha (Widow Marriage): In Rai community, there is not any social prohibition for the widows to marry. A widow or widower is allowed to get married, though it is not a compulsion. In this marriage, a certain penalty is paid to the widow's father-in-law or the senior family member, as a compensation for losing a member of the family (Wikipedia). This is also another woman friendly ritual in Kirant Community because most of the religions they do not allow widow to re-marry not only that they have lots of restrictions to widow in their community but in Kirant Community they accept such marriages.

Widow can remarry in same rituals and respect like unmarried woman celebrates and perform the rituals. There is no discrimination between widow and unmarried woman while performing marriage rituals she gets equal ritual process. 3. Jaari Biha (Marriage by paying penalty): It is another very unique and female friendly ritual we can witness in Kirant Culture where if female does not want to stay with her present husband, then she has full rights to leave her husband and choose another man. Such marriage rituals are practiced less now than the past. Taking the wife of another man away in her consent for the purpose of marriage is called Zari Biha in Rai community. In Kirant society, women are absolutely free to take decision regarding divorce and remarriage but unlikely, Kirant male cannot give divorce to his wife, but if female wants to give divorce to her husband, she can do easily returning back to her Maitighar (Parent's Home) where her family embraces her with respect and love, where she becomes kanya (like unmarried female). In other's culture bride family has to give dowry to groom's family but here is reverse custom. So, Jaari means when someone's wife returns to her parents or elopes with someone, ex-husband has right to ask back for his investment/property. Here, if wife elopes with someone from husband's house, then the current husband has to pay Jaari or if wife runs away from her parents' house, then parents will be the responsible for Jaari. Basically, ex-husband has right to ask double money for his investment.

Inspired by the notion that Kirant culture constitutes larger degree of freedom to female, this research has attempted explore the *Mundum* itself. Selected scenes of the movie "*Jaari*" have been analyzed in order for the attainment of the set purposes. To maintain the validity of the interpretation, this framework of analysis has been supported by some feminist theorists.

Religion, culture and rituals are set of beliefs of the society. Different community has different set of beliefs and more to which they act according to their belief systems. Relating to this literature, the materials collected for this study has been taken from different sources that attempt to identify how different religions perceive and explain the female status in the society. How different communities use ritual as a tool to define women's position in particular community. Different religions define male and female from different perspectives at the same time rituals are important factors to uplift female's position in the society too. Those beliefs and systems are intertwined with the religions they follow and the culture they have been practicing in the particular society. The *Mundum* in the Kirant religion provides knowledge on the genesis of the earth and the evolution of humankind. *Mundum* discusses people, spirits, free will (Karm), and the universe, but Kirant *Mundum* is more practical and scientific since it never depicts prejudice between the sexes and it does not talk about imaginary god and goddess. It is the philosophy of Kirant.

People can easily say that every ritual which Kirant people perform or celebrate both genders have equal importance. Frequent critics have examined rituals and talk about various rituals all around the world. Rituals are major indicators or true identity of the society. People do politics by using the rituals, sometimes it gives immense pleasure and joy but sometimes extreme pain. For example, in Sati Pratha, one cannot fathom the intense degree of suffering experienced by a wife who must burn herself on her husband's funeral fire, whether voluntarily or not.

Wives in certain rituals are forbidden sitting alone with their husbands. There are numerous other customs that have sense of biasness in the matter of women. It gives extreme physical and mental trauma to female body and soul there is no doubt that ritual have become one of the ways in which people structure and interpret our

world. It means if cultural, religious value and rituals celebrated by particular community reflects and defines the original face or identity of the society.

Bell, in her book *Ritual: perspectives and dimensions*, says, “Human beings have been involved in ritual activities of some sort since the earliest hunting bands and tribal communities” (XVII). Rituals are bit complex because it is collective belief and guided by emotions and also it is handed by one generation to another generation. When something is attached with our sentiment in the mass belonging to particular religion and community it is not easy to break. Every individual belongs to certain group, community, tribe and religion so, right after the birth human being are chained with different customs and rituals and people cannot escape from it. Most of the time it is fixed and confined but sometime due to literacy, schooling, health and political dimension things are getting changed. Because of globalization people from all-around the world have become part of the “global society” (as a result they happen to change their way of thoughts including their culture even religion too in some extent) they slowly leave their complex rituals of their cultural/religion because they are able to see other point of views, way of life style and gradually ready to leave old ways of living. In the same manner Functionalism Van Gennep mention:

Rituals are the means for changing and reconstituting groups in an orderly and sanctioned manner that maintains the integrity of the system. These group include religious associations, totem clans, phratries (exogamous kinship groups), castes, professional classes, age groups, families, the political and territorial community, the world of the living, the world before it, and the world of the dead after it (505).

Some changes have been occurring due to modernization and cross culture, the moment of the people and information across the national borders increases,

increasing rate of the social and cultural liberation resulting in potential loosening of old traditional religious structure because nowadays religion has crossed many national boundaries. So, sometimes few new things take place and gradually it will dissolve within a main stream. Ritual is a play but it is not fun for all sometimes it is painful and humiliating because everyone has to perform it in their community or society willingly or unwillingly. That's why slowly people have started to re-think about old taboo and traditions and ready to embrace new liberal rituals. In the *Ritual: perspectives and dimensions* Bell has mentioned about *Freuds Interpretation*, "The intention behind the ritual enactment of the creation myth was not just performance to express worship, entertain, commemorate, or display political power; rather the performance was instrumental in making the original creation symbolically happen again" (302).

According to circumstances may we adopt and create new rituals and establish it within a concerned group/community but we cannot do it within a second it takes time because Rituals performance is serious act ritual itself is a power, people do it from the heart, emotions, and with huge respect. If it is a sacred ritual then it has direct link with spiritual ceremonies, prayer, meditation and religion. When it is a part of the religion automatically it became powerful and unbreakable. Religion is a set of ideas and practices by which people sacralize the social structure and bonds of the community in this way religion functions to ensure the unconscious priority of communal identification(349). Being a part of particular group and society one cannot be in denial position to perform religious act and rituals performance because right after the birth person automatically belongs to certain religion and society so, one's body is always shaped by unseen power and, expects of bodily discipline, certain prescribed behavior and some unseen powers have been controlling,

influencing the body. It is connected with our civilization if we deny established system, culture and power dynamics, it seems person is uncivilized and isolated.

Cultural Anthropologist, Victor Turner has mentioned in his book *The Ritual Process*:

That religious beliefs and practices are something more than “grotesque” reflections or expressions of economic, political, and social relationships; rather are they coming to be seen as decisive keys to the understanding of how people think and feel about those relationships, and about the natural and social environments in which they operate (6).

Religious belief and Ritual practice define people who they are and give their identity also shows their position in the society and it also projects our economic condition, political background, and it's a mirror of social background. That's why people play power politics in the name of religion, custom and rituals. Ritual is even less acknowledged and much more powerful (40). Most of the time powerful people use ritual as a weapon to maintain their position in high level and place certain group or gender in inferior level, it is an obligatory to be performed. All around the globe people are suffering from such hierarchy and doing protest time and again. Different religions hold different ideologies and circulate power accordingly. Marxists talk and highlight that not only women but all the working-class people are truly oppressed by religion. In comparison, women are more oppressed than men. They are vocal about the religions have never supported nor given equal space to women in practice of religious beliefs and value. They further said that women are always taken as secondary person and treated as a shadow of the men. Their works are never compared as equal as the men and also, they have been projected physically and mentally weak personality. Simon de Beauvoir talks about female's condition and how society treat to them. She has mentioned in her creation *The Second Sex*; “The

female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities, said Aristotle; ‘we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness’ (15). This is the fact even how so called knowledgeable and renowned people also think about female. They considered them as a weak personality and is not equal to male. They talked about difference between male and female on the basis of physical structure. They believe and make people believe female is weaker, fragile, sensitive and delicate but the fact is totally different. In the scenario of the Nepali context, Hindu women are the most oppressed. Father, husband and son are in higher level. Female should remain under the protection of father figure at first then husband’s and she should be under protection of her son at last. Globalization and modernization have brought many changes in people's life but still this trend is prevalent. All around the world religious beliefs still hinder the women to practice legal, social, cultural and political rights. Power of politics plays vital role in women's position because in the Vedic period women had access to education and had good position in the family but after 500 B.C, the position of women started to decline. It means they are forced to be in secondary position by certain group of people

Heidi Hartman: “relations between men, which have material based, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women” (14). It is purely politics of male who has created false situation and force them to believe it and follow the instruction spread by the male. They convince, force, and manipulate the female that they do believe they are weaker than male in the society, they should obey the male. Remaining under such circumstances for longer period, female starts to believe that in real male is primary and they are secondary, male is in top priority list and they are stronger, wiser, decision maker, and bold. Simon de Beauvoir again states that, “this secondary

standing is not imposed of necessity by natural 'feminine' characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men." Women are in secondary position all over the world no matter how advanced they are. It is not by virtue but it is a result of male centric believe system. It is a power politics of superior male society, where they put back the existence of the female by intentionally. This is how most of the religious belief is controlled by the male. Male dominated society always put female in shadow. Such hierarchal system always carries injustices for human being. This so-called system of upper class and lower class, rich and poor, male and female are manmade hierarchies where always powerful pack is in center, they manipulate the other and play with others' existence. Because of such hierarchy, feminist is seeking for equality and ready to fight for it. They are opposing many societal norms, values, rules and regulations.

Not only in Hindu religion, Some of the Buddhists too, treat women as obstacle of Mokshya. Women are inferior to men in the religious status. They are restricted in certain places and they are not allowed to have physical contact with monk. In Nepali Vihar and Gumba, women have not become a Lama-Buddhist priest as well as no girl students are admitted in Gurukul (Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development [CERID], 2007). It is so because of sacrilegious beliefs. Even in Christianity women are oppressed. First of all, they believe women are born from the ribs of the men. History of religion tells that woman was born after the man but *Kiranti Mundum* tells different myth about human emergence. The writer Chandra Kumar Hatuwali has mention in his book *Kirant Rai Mithak*:

In the beginning this universe was empty. There was nothing but wind and water. The absolute wind vibrates the water and land has emerged in the earth. After the creation of the earth, creatures started to come into being. But it

became difficult for cosmos to operate the universe without human beings.

Sumnima was born from the water foam that the wind stirred up the water, just as the earth was created. After Sumnima was born, alone she has started wandering in the forest (69).

The writer clarifies that the first creation of the human being was the female one. This Kiranti myth is an absolute contradictory myth than other religious myths. Other religious myths try to prove that male was born first and female was just a part of the male body and many more. From the starting Kiranti people have strong belief that women are powerful, skillful, wiser, and capable in their society. Kiranti people never see them differently moreover they place them before the Kiranti male. It seems Kiranti women are also bounded within the household work but in fact they are the one who run the house by taking all kind of decisions. Most of the time, Kirant men are outside of the house they just collect the things they need and handed to the mother of the family. It's her role to run the family. So, mostly mother is the head in the family in Kirant culture.

Women are oppressed in many ways. One of the strong reasons is religious beliefs. They did not allow to read the sacred textbook, many restrictions to visit places of worship, many religious law, custom and ritual performances are differed from men. In some religions female cannot participate in rituals performance if she does not have her husband. Although their labor and contribution are high in household activities, farming, it is not counted. For this kind of inequality and discrimination feminist have been raising voice time and again. They are fighting for equal rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities, and also asking for equality in political, economic, personal, and social rights because women are always discourse from being self, women's value is measure by how valuable they are to the men in the

community. Daughter is brought up to obey her father and live within the house with her parents until she gets married and then she would be the responsibility of her husband, so women are never ever encouraged to be an independent. It might have changed because of globalization but core is still found in the society in a different way.

So, they have different perspectives than *Mundum* about culture because in Kirant *Mundum* they place the women in equal place. A man is considered to be incomplete without a woman actually women are given high priority. They are addressed women as an intellectual, leader and teacher in the community.

Owing to industrialization, Kiranti women are now located everywhere in the world, but they have not lost their touch with their tradition. They still like performing their rituals and wish to cheerfully pass them on to their daughters. The Kirant Community has been carrying out a number of customs with great reverence and joy since they treat women equally. During marriage Ritual, there is a dialogue between spokesman of groom and bride. “Girl and boy are complementary to each-other; one is not complete without the other” (158). This is how Kirant people give respect, love, and care and count them as male member of the society. Religious background itself is biases less that’s why Kirant Female are happy with every ritual. During marriage ceremony The *Naccho* (Prist) gives them a blessing by reciting *Mundum*:

You two became one. Though you are two in bodies, in life you are one. Your two hearts have merged to be one. You shall never be discordant with each other. You shall never harbor ill thoughts of one another. You shall never fall prey to disgraceful acts. Both should be in equal terms. Wife should appreciate what husband says and husband should pay heed to what wife says. Both of you should adhere to building a family of harmony (161).

In Kirant *Mundum* they never say about gender discrimination rather they place them (both gender) in equal term/position. Those things boost up Kirant women to perform rituals and love own culture, tradition and life style. Kirant Rituals are more scientific and practical. In every issue, they give priority to female and it is very open minded and has lot of freedom to women. “The children born of an illegal wife or illegal husband will be illegal” (Chemjong 27). These lines express the equality because both are acceptable and legal. *Kirant Mundum* does not put female in different category for the same case.

Kirant are worshipper of nature and every house has holy place called *Suptulung*. Basically, it is a three stone fireplace where people cook food and it is not a manmade stone it is natural stone and very important to Kirant society. If we translate the *Suptulung* in Nepali language it is “*Tindhunge chulo*”. It should be in ground floor and has to touch the land, which also refers how Kirants are connected with the nature. They are called “*Bhumi putra*” in Nepali. Most of the rituals are practice in front of *Suptulung* on the guidance of *Mundum*. Each stone has different name and importance they are incomplete without each other, one is a *Pakhalung* it refers to “male” stone, one is a *Makhalung*, it refers to the “female” stone and another one is a *Sambelung*, it is the “guardian” stone. This is also one strong evidence to claim that from the beginning Kirant female and male are equal and have same respect, value, equal opportunity to present self and still continued. “The Kirants believe in the hearth as a symbol of the place where their dead fathers or ancestors live. Since, they believe that the soul of their deceased ancestors resides in the hearth, the Kirant people consider the hearth as the center of faith. “Rajan Mukarung Kirant Sanskar” (7). Kirant people have huge respect and faith towards their ancestor so, in every special occasion they pray and ask blessing from them. They remember them in

all special events like in seasonal change, during collection of new harvest, in marriage rituals, death rituals and many more. American Philosopher and Gender Studies Scholar, Judith Butler has mentioned in her articles *Undoing Gender*, "When we realize that the social norms that constitute our existence carry desires that do not originate with our individual personhood. This matter is made more complex by the fact that the viability of our individual personhood is fundamentally dependent on these social norms" (2).

It is a social norms and values that force an individual to act accordingly. Every community has different religious norms and values, set of belief, sentiments towards ritual and custom. It is a person who needs to adopt that limit, has to mold his/her self-according to that particular societal structure. Rituals and system can change according to the time and situation but it takes lot of time and strong influential factors. Power is always in center and influence the system. Witnessing that patriarchal system is in the center and control everything. We easily see the impact of it in every religion, society and community. Almost in all communities' women are in secondary position, living life without self-identity under the identity of husband and son. One can't go against the whole system and rituals. Social norms are for better society and for harmony, chain that bound every individual in unity. A patriarchal system is one in which men exploit their position of authority to establish dominance, hierarchy, and rivalry. Hence, patriarchy refers to the ways in which men rule, oppress, and take advantage of women in social structures and practices. Women must struggle for their life and independence throughout the majority of the history and current practices, which are patriarchal. Throughout contrast, Kiranti Society have never placed women in a subordinate role and instead values them more. Gopal Shivakoti has mentioned about Kirant women's position in his book *Kirant Jaati*:

Kiranti women are shown to be more respected than men. The Kirants gave women a high and honorable position. Kirant women could study Mundum Vidya, Dhanu Vidya, etc. like Kirant men. Kirant respect the belief that men and women are equal. Kirant women could also become priests. Be present in the meeting and ask for their opinion. Kiranti women present their beauty by taking part in the battle (314).

Such statements show the condition of the Kirant women in their community. There is no doubt there is equality in the Kirant Society. They never mistreat the women and they give full respect these are the key factors which in still in Kiranti women to have faith in their own culture, rituals and want to take it further. Unlike others they do not have to seek their identity and respect because they are already getting it. Gopal Shivakoti again highlights, "In the Kirant community, an event is initiated and concluded by worshiping the Kanya. In Kirant society, if men and women work together, it is believed that full results will be achieved" (315). These lines clearly prove that Kirant Culture, religion and rituals give special treatment to female child, like in Kirant Society they do worship of female child they offer tika, give some *sagun* (a type of gift in the form of money) and they touch their feet in opening and ending of any good work. They believe that if female child is happy everything will be fine, as the same manner they do believe they will get good outcome from each work if there is equal involvement of the male and female. Kirant community never try to overshadow the female rather they walk along with them. "In marriage, there is a condition that women should be married only when they reach the age and only when their daughters are happy. Men and women are seen as equal" (315). From that ancient period, they were quite aware about age, maturity and willingness of an individual.

The Kirant community never treat Kirant women unfairly. These are the reason they perform their rituals like a free bird with so much pride and love. In *the Kirant Jaati* Book the writer state the lines from the *Kirant Mundum*:

Even in Yehan's Sastra, women are given special importance and their work is described. Yevungma (woman) sings Mundum songs and works wonders, makes flowers bloom and wakes them up again, calls out thunder from the clouds and speaks devabani, sings songs and asks for God's help saying that women can make thunder, flowers can make them bloom, divine sermons, dhamizhakari, puruhiteye and is mentioned as the Vakyati who oversees the religious work (318).

*Kirant Mundum* always speak about women in a good way. The way people see heroic man in all myths and stories, there is always male character in a lead role they never portrait female as a hero or leading position but here in Kirant culture they have mentioned about female without any hesitation that they had power to control the nature, helpful soul, they have put female in front row. Kirant women cherish those respects and do perform every ritual happily. They have a kind of identity, position, respect and the sense of safety in their own community. Kirant women have freedom inside their religion and culture. They can do anything without any pressure in their community. There are so many ritual activities which indicate the right position of the Kirant women in their own community, in the book called *Dongdum Shamkaaling* they have mentioned about the way of Kirant People ask bridal hand to her family; during conversation bride family ask:

Groom family! our daughter is young with little experiences and free soul; she might do mistake and create shameful situation at that time will you scold her? Abuse her? suppress her? And also, when she falls a sick and became a

helpless, will you mistreat her? Groom family; baba, we won't discriminate your daughter, and also, we don't give her any pain, if she doesn't know the things, we don't force her to do that. Baba (90).

This conversation between bridal side and groom side is very much interesting and the dialogue are favorable for Kirant Women. Here in this dialogue, bridal side shows immense love and support to the daughter as the same time groom side also give her respect and security in the new family. Remaining part of this dialogue is more convincing and satisfying:

Bridal side;"oh subbinghang, today you see our daughter beautiful, now in this age she is young with physical strength and beauty, but later on, she will lose her strength, she will grow old, lose her beauty, will you bring other women when she will be anugly woman? With the intention of herdemise, you may send her meadow field for tiger, beer?May you send her to pasture place for Elephant, forest animals? You might send her in dangerous mountain, waterfalls?

Groom Side; "baba! Gaaji Raja prabhu! We promise to our daughter – in – lay from our own mouth we promise that if she is not able to get something, we won't force her to get that, don't force herto know the thing. If she is not capableof doing something we won't force her to do that. She has full freedom to eat, drink and wear clothes the way she wants. We won't discriminate and replace her by another women (90).

The above conversation between two families of bride and groom has clearly shown that Kirant women has full freedom to do things and has supportive family. The way family member asks the things to the groom family. They are securing her after marriage too but all women are not so lucky to have such family because in Hindu

marriage bride father says: from today my daughter is yours, you have full authority to do whatever you want. There are so many evidences that make us clear that Kirant Women celebrates their rituals with so much ease and happiness because it gives them joy and respect. There is less biasness regarding cast, position and power in Kirant family, community. Kirant people never forget the existence of female in their society. Bal Krishna Mukurung Rai has mentioned in his book “Kirant Rai Jatiko Ritiriwaj” where he has mentioned about many Kiranti rituals one is during marriage ceremony, they celebrate the ritual called “siruthaune” (Respectthanks Giving ceremony)

“Ingrooms’ family right before the marriage ceremony, they do ritual called “sayachongma” (helpers respect) in this ritual they need to give four pair of ribs and one pair gift to the alcohol making group. Four pair of ribs and one pair gift for the people who collects leafs. Four pair of ribs and one pair gift for kamauli. Four pair of ribs and one pair gift to accountant, at last head of buffalo and one pair gift to matchmaker. This is a ritual of honors and thanks giving, they thanks to all by saying ‘you helped us so thank you so much’ during this ritual they do daughter/sister ritual where they give full of Thunche rice. One buffalo leg and money. This ritual also showing the importance of the women in the family/society. Many women in other Society are trapped by tradition and religion but at least Kirant women do not have such burden. Kiranti Women has space in every ritual of their family/Community shows respect and address their presence not only that they give them the respect which is more important to exist in particular society. That sense of security, freedom, love and respect is rare to found in many communities. They even do not have right to do household work freely for that they need to get permission from their father, husband or son, this picture shows helpless situation of the female.

Kirant *Mundum* talks about widow marriage and it is acceptable in their society.

“Kirant Society has trend that, Widow women have right to re – marriage. They do not have any restriction to wear any colorful clothes and ornaments” (*Kirant Rai Jatiko Ritiriwaj*- 48). Kirant culture itself talks about widow marriage and has no objection about it, they do have such rituals where women easily can choose another husband or her family itself insist to re marriage. They do not have any restriction to wear any kind of ornaments or colorful clothes. They live simple and colorful life with husband or without. After demise of husband female are not allow to wear colorful clothes, ornaments not even eat whatever she likes in other society/culture. Second marriage is beyond her imagination. Here they are lacking of their individual identity they have been known as someone’s daughter, wife and mother. They do not have their own identity neither have freedom to choose happiness. According to time and situation, thigs have been changing gradually but not finished yet, it takes time. This is how different culture, religion, custom and rituals treat an individual differently. Kirant women are more fortunate and freer. These are the reasons; they do have faith in to their religions and rituals.

Lionel Caplan mentioned in his research called *Land and Social Change in East Nepal*:

When a woman marries and comes to live with her husband, she brings her deities along, and these become recognized as the gods of the household in which she resides. Certain important deities will be common to all women, but each will have a more or less unique set (66).

Caplan has done a research of a particular community, daily life style of the eastern people and rituals what they have been practising in the community. Where he mentions about Kirant Women’s existence in the family and society. It is another

lively example of the women position in their community they believe that a newly married Kirant woman brings positivity and good luck in the family. It means they respect her presence in the family and give equal status in the community. Kirant community is always liberal towards the Kirant Women. They never show biasness and hierarchy in between two persons. Every individual has different nature and presentation but sometime due to influential circumstances, people may act accordingly but overall, their Mundum doesn't have two different aspects for men and women.

When married daughters living in their natal households are allowed the customary privilege of earning a private income over which no other members of the household can exercise claims. Although in-married wives also have certain rights to possess property outside the household estate, it is not until they are mistresses of their own households that they can fully expose/utilize their rights(35).

Again, Caplan tells that Kirant women can return back to her parents' house if she doesn't like to stay with her husband. Her family easily accept the situation and give her a space not only that they allow her to own her personal property. Similarly, every woman has right to own her individual property and no one can claim it. They have full right to own it and use it. It shows independency, freedom and Kirant women has access of property. They can hold it and use it wherever they want. If person is economically strong and independent then there is no problem of identity crisis. His research tells us Kirant is an open society, harmonious society where they accept, respect each other's presence not matter who they are. Gender does not matter they live together, dance together by holding each other's hand, eat together, work

together. Kirant Community appreciates the female existence, they always remember/invite them in every religious act and in every ritualistic activity.

## Chapter: V

### Representation of Kirant Rituals in Movie *Jaari*

Every community has different philosophy of life. They have their own specific culture and style. Kirant people are indigenous people who worship nature and has their own philosophy towards the life. They are simple and honest and true. Their all activities have been guided by Mundum. The Movie “Jaari” has presented the cultural, historical reality of the Kirant Society. The director has tried to show authentic Kiranti village life style, fun, emotion, comedy, social problems and social practice. The movie presenting the women are not man’s toys, social condition of the women, values, presence in the family, community the freedom. They have been celebrating in their own way it also shows how capable they are to tackle the situation. They are capable of taking decision shows Kiranti women’s strong psychology. The director has presented the authentic story. He did not want to disturb the originality, lively presentation of the dialogues, thrilling recitation of the Palam (poetic language), co-existence of friends, family, their unconditional support, love to each other, strong friendship. The movie shows the ritual practices of the Kirant community and its impact on the people’s life. This movie has beautifully shown the Jaari ritual practiced by the Kiranti People. Jaari is a tradition of Kiranti society where if married women doesn’t want to stay with her current husband, and elope with new husband that time, new husband or wife’s family has to pay compensation to the former husband. This movie is all about the ritual Jaari practice prevalent in the Kiranti community especially in Eastern Nepal.

Movie starts with two lead characters Hangma (Wife) and Namsang (Husband) they have small argument regarding baby because it’s been five years and they don’t have kid yet. The husband blames Hangma for not having a kid. Their

verbal abuse turns in to physical. Namsang hit her, immediate after that fight Hangma does take too long time to decide to leave him. Here is the point is she knows that if she will go back to her natal home, she has a safe place to stay. Mr. Chandra Kumar Hatuwali clarifies in his book *Rai Jatika Bisesh Sanskritihru*:

Ukhundi is a culture that respects daughters and empowers them with authority. It liberates the husband and wife from the need to be reconciled and from the social scorn of being widowed. If she is tormented by her husband's rudeness and social misbehavior, she can decide for herself. It is placed at the front of the close relatives and neighbors of the husband and wife. In this way, after informing the husband family members that she will be living as per Ukhundi, she informs the natal side also(71).

Kirant woman has right to leave her current husband's home if she does not feel comfortable, secured, respectful and free in her home. It's a unique and very different culture in Kirant community, usually such rituals are not found in different society. Her family has to accept her without any hesitation and has to put her back in suptulung/Mang chula and she will be considered as virgin woman again. She has full right to choose another person if she wants. Because of such Kirant ritual here the main lead actor Hangma is not ready to take any disrespectful behavior from anyone and left the house immediately.



Hangma and Namsang going through small argument/ fight

After that incident when her mother tries to convince her by saying it is not right to leave husband in small issues. The way her father defends her is amazingly beautiful, literally he shouts on her mother said “your mother talks nonsense while having dinner can’t you say latter on or tomorrow?” (00:6:38-00:6:43). Basically, he is protecting his daughter giving security not to worry. We are here to take care of you. Of course, broken relationship is not nice and has brought painful environment in the family but the maternal family will not leave her alone in-between. They always stand behind her. In this movie, the director has presented such sensitive topic very beautifully shows his knowledge of Kirant *Mundum* and his respect towards the rituals, which Kirant people have been performing.

In next scene Hangma went fair with her friends, she wore beautiful dress, set of jewelries like other unmarried girls and without any hesitation. She is ready to sing a Palam (a kind of poetic song) where they put a condition, if girl wins the Palam, the boy has to go with her and if the boy wins the girl has to go with him and she lost it and went with a boy. It means she gets married with second husband. Here she is the one who choose the second one, it’s her willingness, nobody is there to force her. This is the second bold decision taken by the Hangma. She has just followed the guidance of the *Mundum* where Kirant women are free to take self-decision. Iman Singh Chemjong states that in his book *History and Culture of Kirant People*; “The divorced wife will be treated as an unmarried girl and will be allowed to marry again” (59). Hangma decided to get married again without consulting any family members this incident shows the courage of the Kirant women.



Hangma in the Fair with her Firends

They are mentally strong because of the upbringing of the society where they are never counted as a secondary. On the other hand, family gets scared of her decision because she had ended her first marital relationship just few days ago but within a few days, she jumps in to a second relationship that has caused the case of Jaari. Again, Chemjongs mentioned that:

When a man's wife lives with her parents and goes away with another man, then the parents of the woman hold responsible for her. 18. But if a woman quits her husband's house and goes away with other husband, then in such case the husband himself will be responsible for her(59-60).

Here the situation is she is with her biological parents and parents would have to take all responsibilities so, her family is worrying about the Jaari where they have to return sum and investment of the groom side. This is the principle of Mundum. There is a dialogue between Hangma's Mother and Brother: -

Mother; -I said that a daughter who got married and went to her family's house should not be kept in her natal house. When I spoke that I became a villain hum?

Brother: -Oh, for one blessed life, you will have to spend with the person you like, mother! She might not like Angsaranga, she left him that's it.

Mother: -someday Angsarange will come to take Jaari. Then you will know(00:25:50-00:26:20).

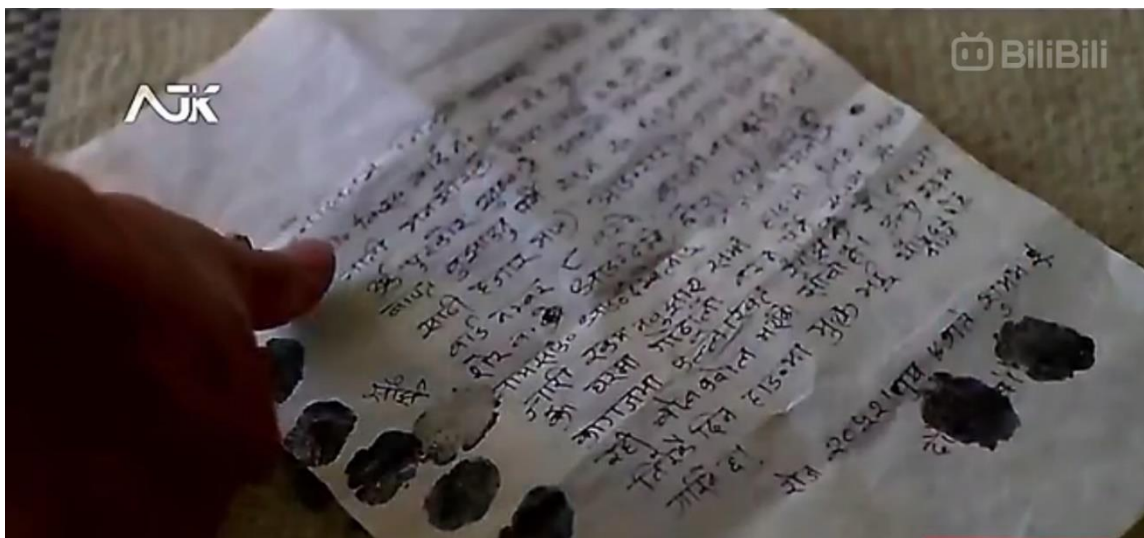
The film writer/director is very much conscious about the ritual and its value in person's life. They have showed it very well. Hangma took all the decision but the family has to face the consequence and still her brother has agreed with Hangma and tries to defend her. For them the only thing that matters Hangma's happiness, they understood like that Hangma was not happy with Namsang (ex-husband) and now she is happy with new husband. What a liberal thinking pattern and supportive behavior of her family members. In the same dialogue, the director tries to show the ritual Jaari the way mother mentions it, it is obviously burden for family members. They have to give certain amount of the fund for middleclass people. It may create problem in their lives but still they do not deny to pay back.



Namsang and villagers talking about about Jaari

In a same way Namsang goes to his sasurali (wife's house) to ask for Jaari and the condition of the Hangma's family is little low, they could not pay him Jaari, Here Hangma takes another strong decision that she is ready to go back in her ex-husband's house as a slave until she will clear all the sum. Here also, she herself takes a decision

there is no one to force her, she does not ask her husband's family neither her own family but takes a step by herself. The director knowingly or unknowingly has presented Hangma as a bold and strong-minded woman. This is the representation of the Kirant Culture and freedom of Kirant women and also depiction of unbiased Mundum, its guidance. Story goes to the previous location where she used to be a wife of Namsang but now she is a servant of the house.



#### Agreement of Jaari

In one scene Hangma's mother is scolding her son:

Mother: - go away we don't need such useless son. it is better not to have such useless son.

Son: - what happened? Why are you angry?

Mother: -(Spit!) Besaram, bezati ask what happened to the world? Don't see your father and mother being crushed by the world, don't hear the pain of your sister who is working as a servant in another person's house. Just play with Chebrung (a kind of drum) eat, enjoy alone today, my daughter has to stay as a servant in people's house (00:41:03-00:41:31).

How much pain they have been going through but still they care about daughter. The way Hangma's mother showing concern towards the daughter's situation is beautiful.

sometime ago she was the one who was trying to convince Hangma to stay with the husband but now when the situation is worst, she is taking side of her daughter. Now she is showing her frustration on her son because he is busy in his stuffs and not paying attention towards the household incidents. Actually, he is not aware of the current situation. The director/writer is presenting two different circumstances of the life. First is Hangma who is kind of bold and silent character who doesn't speak too much but does actions so loudly and she never regrets on it. Her all decisions are taken by herself. She never asks any help from other. On the other hand, male character Namsang has difficulties. After rejection of his own wife, he gets stuck in male ego. He wants to show Hangma that he is happy and will get new wife soon. There are many supportive characters to help him to find a new wife but search everywhere but they are failure to do so.



The woman chasing them while they are in search of new bride.

In one-part Namsang, his friend and one spokesperson is in someone's house and asking for the daughter of that house they were talking with mother (another strong personality women alone can take a decision of the important issues of the family) suddenly father of the girl arrived and said to his wife; - "There is a rumor in

the village that the boy has been discarded by his first wife, at first take proper information and do promise” (00:45:02-00:45:07). Here Kirant *Mundhm* advocates the issues of female, Hangma is receiving support from each and every corner and Namsang keep getting rejection from the community. The writer has presented Namsang as a pitiful character because most of the people thinks that it’s his fault that he could not hold his relationship. Because of his stubbornness and male ego, he destroys his family so, nobody is ready to give him a daughter.

In search of new bride, Namsang went to a fair meet and talk with girls, when he wasn’t convincing her to marry with him, his friends encouraged him to pull the girl and he did same. When he was dragging a girl, the member of the girl’s team asked “Are you agreed or not?”. The girl replied, “Not agreed” (00:55:21). then the girl’s team defends the boy’s team and manages to get girl back. In such kind of incident, they put a girl in priority, respect her decision and act as per her verdict. This is how Kirant women feel secured with her father, brother’s relatives and villagers. Kiranti people do admiration of women’s decisions. In such incident, the girl might have said “Agreed”. Then the family members, relatives and villagers wouldn’t do anything and let her go with that person. Namsang got another shock here that he failed to get new wife again.



Namsang and friends dragging a lady for marriage.

Namsang adores his wife, but he never acknowledges how his masculine ego gets in the way. The way the community is supporting Hangma while Namsang is receiving hate from the same community demonstrates how overly protective and caring Kiranti culture is for women. The writer has mentioned about the situation of the Kiranti Women in his book *Kirant Jaati*, where he talks about “The Scriptures of Yehhang” where he found; “It is understood that women are free to leave their first husbands and take other husbands if necessary (318).

Since ancient times, women have been able to advocate for themselves. Because men had left to go hunt for food and other necessities, the Kirant people have historically practiced matriarchal families. Women were responsible for taking care of the home and making decisions for the family at that time. They rose to prominence and influence inside the family. Hangma demonstrates her courage by eloping with a new partner and receiving support from her family and the community. Another conversation between ex Mother -in-law and Hangma shows the importance of female in the family, ex mother-in-law says “A house without a daughter is like a barn” (00:69:23-00:69:25). According to her, a house is only made by women; otherwise, it is nothing more than a shed. It implies that a woman is necessary to make a place livable.

The "Jaari" sum that Hangma's brother brought to free his sister from a form of servitude in her ex-husband's home is another powerful argument. When the film opens, her brother is living his own life and does not have any domestic duties. However, when he learns that his sister is having problems, he is willing to spend all of his money on her freedom, which demonstrates the endearing relationship between siblings. He may have believed that she made a mistake and must accept the

consequences, but he supported her during her trying times. Because of the respect and consideration Kiranti women receive from their family, they are courageous in every way.



Hangma's Brother paying Jaari amount.

Movie has turned in different direction when Namsang has realized his mistake that he loves his wife too much and will not marry another girl. Chandrakumar Hatuwali mentioned in his book. "If you accept a marriage proposal while you are living in maternal home or if you have to go and get married, there should be a complete ritual; like an unmarried girl and she can easily stay at her new home"(71-72). If a married woman decides to remarry, she will receive the same rites and respects from her family and community, and no one will speak negatively about her decision. The Kiranti ladies take great pride in these customs. The *Mundumic* knowledge and ritual activities that are celebrated among Kirant communities were portrayed in the film. Namsang realized his mistake when Hangma and her brother returned to her home, and he, together with his father and a friend, went back to Hangma's house to beg her hand in marriage while following all the formalities associated with his marriage.

Namsang's Father said; "Whatever happened to the mistake, it was bad. My son also made a mistake. Maybe your daughter also did a mistake. I have forgotten all and came here Samdi Saaheb" (1:43:42-1:41:53). He has overlooked all the past incidents and went to ask his ex-daughter-in – law's hand again with full respect and

within cultural periphery. These all incident has been presented so beautifully. The Director has tried to serve the Kiranti culture as it is, his all actions are guided by the Kiranti Muhdum and stories goes with that law and order.



Namsang, his father and friend in Hangma's house again with marriage proposal.

In the final scene, Hangma once more demonstrates her audacity by placing a demand on her ex-husband. She will accompany him if he wins the Paalam with her present husband. His stubbornness and masculine ego are being challenged, as she desires to be respected and her presence acknowledged in his life. Hangma said; "If you really want me, win the Palam in front of Srihang and take me back" (1:46:27-1:46:30). Hangma is prepared to return to her former spouse; hence, she compelled Namsang recognize his error and realize it without consulting anybody, not even her present husband Shreehang. Namsang performed the same act of singing a Palam to win his love without realizing it was Palam. She and her former spouse returned.

Finally, Hangma gave birth to a girl, and when the father learned it was a girl, he was overjoyed and shouted, "Well Done." (1:55:20). Namsang's father's enthusiasm serves as more proof that gender bias does not exist in the Kiranti community.

### Prevalence of Women in Kirant Culture

Each community, and society owns its own unique cultural circulation and belief system that distinguishes it from the rest of the cultural systems. Every member of the community is destined to follow the systems envisaged by those communities. Different factors play vital role to distinguish social norm and values, such as its religion, culture, custom, rituals and politics. Main vital fact is power and what religious belief is in practice, those factors play main role to establish social rules and regulation, norms and values and law and order of the nation. Some social norms and values are changeable according to the time and context. Globalization and Modernization has brought changes in person's life and slowly effects the community, society and country. But if it is attached with religious belief, it is quite harder to change it. If we see the history of the world in the globe, every time male is in the center and in decision making position. So, it is very much obvious that they have been producing rules and regulation, rituals in their favor. Placing women in subordinate position they are always at the center. They manipulate women and make them perform rituals as per their wish in sugarcoated way. The status of women in society is an outcome of the interpretation of religious texts and of the cultural and institutional set-up of religious communities, (Klingorova, & Havlicek, 2015). Hinduism is most dominant religion in Nepali context. It advocates hierarchy system in cast and gender. Male is in dominant position and female is subordinate position. Their works, physically as well as mentally are labeled as weak. Things are changing due to the effects of industrialization and globalization, yet the essence remains in a covert manner. After being married and having a child, a woman must move under the protection of her husband, son, as she was previously under the protection of her father. There is no self-identity for female. Daughter, wife and mother of someone,

that is the only identity of female in entire the life span. Globally, religious beliefs have helped to barricade women to apply and use legal, social, cultural and political rights. Religious beliefs are core level of societal structure and gender discrimination starts from there. So, it is deeply rooted in core level and hard to remove in one shot. It takes longer time phase and lot of struggles, efforts and determination. Second largest religion is Buddhism, it sounds liberal and equal to all but it is also discriminative towards the female. Buddhists believe that women are hindrance towards the path of Moksha. In the religious status, female is always in inferior position. There is restriction for female, physical contact with monk is not allowed and female cannot sit on the monk's place. Now a days there is little place for female also but till now there is none Female -Buddhist Priest in any Vihar and Gumba in Nepal, because of massive or collective religious beliefs. Impact of globalization is everywhere along with other things Christianity is growing fast in Nepali society. Christianity also advocates that male is in center and female is in secondary level. Many renowned churches have not given leading role to the female, and in Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches only male can be a priest. Everyone is a witness about the story of human creation in Christianity; "Adam was created first, and Eve from Adam's rib." "Eve being God's second Creation indicated female inferiority" (Wikipedia). This is how discrimination has started from the very beginning of the human history. Impact of such myths have been going on in people's life, like female are not allowed to be a priest in church, they can be just a devotee, subordinate in the church.

Kirant culture is more open and flexible towards the women in comparison to other communities in Nepal. Kirant people believe that fully functional society is incomplete without equal presence of the women. Woman's status and rights are equal

to man in the *Mundum*. Kirant culture has female *Nachhon* (priest) she can perform the rituals equally like male *Nachhon* does. *Mundum* is highly female oriented and women are given high priority. They are called intellectual, leader and teacher. If we see the history of the origin of the human beings, there are many myths where female characters are more intelligent, wiser and knowledgeable. There are many verses in the *Mundum* where they have mentioned about quality, skills and knowledge of the female. In one verse, there is a female Naimma Chinima, who has the knowledge and skill to make beer and it's totally her decision of distribution of the drink. Without her decision and permission, nobody is allowed to touch the beer. It shows the respect that a woman gets for her work. In every auspicious occasion Kiranti Phedangma, *Nachhon* prayed by calling their female ancestor names. That is also another solid proof that Kirant people have equal faith and respect towards male and female. Kirant female and male have equal importance in ritualistic performances. Kirant women have full freedom to live life the way they want. In the past, Kiranti women were limited within in the community, society, and the nation, but at present, due to globalization and modernization they are all around the world, they have achieved many things and able to make their own identity but still Kirant women have full faith in their religion and *Mundum*, they love to perform rituals, happy with their culture and life style that's why they are not seeking for the other options like other women are looking for it. *Mundum* is in the favor of women. In previous history Kirant people experienced matriarchal society, there were many educated women who had led the society, there is a history where Kirant female ran the state after demise of the King. Still in most of the Kiranti societies, matriarchal system is found in practice. That is why, people say that indigenous Kirant Rai society is one where mothers, the

female are given the leading role and they are independent as they have freedom, rights and equality and practice matriarchy.

In other religious society women have been raising voice against patriarchy because they have been oppressed by the male from the same society and the family directly or indirectly. Over all the main stream society of the Nepal has hierarchical division of the social status of the people. Different than this, in this particular matter Kirant women are more liberal. In the same way, the projection of the strong female character is in movie “*Jaari*” is lively example of the Kirant society. In the movie, “*Jaari*”, female character “*Hangma*” never compromises her feeling and respect. She has always maintained her dignity, self- respect, self- love and own identity by taking bold decisions. She is able to do that because she has supportive religious rituals, culture and community. In every scene, *Hangma* takes decision herself without taking anybody’s help and suggestion. She makes a decision to leave her husband after small fight. The welcoming family represents the Kiranti Society. Every family and community are supportive in the matter of daughter that gives the strength and power to every Kiranti female to be an independent. She goes to fair with her friends wearing beautiful dress and ornaments, she meets another person and sings a song called *Palam* (a cultural song) putting a condition if she loses it, she will be ready to go with him. Even though she knows the consequence of losing in that beat, she deliberately accepts to sing. It means, a kind of second marriage. So, Kirant women have more liberty in Kirant community. They are living life beautifully in their terms. Kirant community gives the sense of security to female from the time of their childhood. *Jaari* movie depicts the same story of Kiranti women. It is all about female freedom, self-respect, and strong personality. Female character is shown as strong headed and independent. Whatever decisions she takes in the movie that’s all her own

decision. Jaari ritual is not negative ritual rather it is respectful and beautiful ritual where females have full liberty to live in their term. Another beautiful part is daughter's family is always welcoming and soft towards the female. If married woman doesn't want to stay with her husband and returns her home that family has to accept her and put her back in the *Mangkhim* (Three stone oven, where they believe their ancestors are bestowed) this ritual is called *Ukhundi* and society gives her equal value and respect as unmarried daughter. If someone wants to marry her, he has to bring equal proposal with full rituals for her. If one female becomes a widow, she can marry again like a normal female of the community. That's the real freedom of female in Kirant community because in other society once female gets married, she has to stay with her husband in any condition, it doesn't matter how useless husband is. If she becomes a widow, then everything will end with her husband even, she cannot wear a colorful dress, cannot do different rituals. She needs to stick with her husband's family.

This research work has been exploring the different ritualistic life style of the female in different religious back ground, how they are treated in own community. These tiny factors are key factors of the happiness. There are many feminist movements going on because they do not feel safe and appreciated in their own community and fighting for freedom but Kirant women do not need to worry about that particular matter because they have already been receiving huge respect, care and safety from Kiranti family, society. So, these are the key factor for all women that they need respect, love, support, equal opportunities and freedom of life. It is the responsibility of the religious community and it has to ensure the secure life for women.

To conclude, this research work, claims that Kirant community has the provisions for women that shares the sense of equality to women. This claim has been made on the basis of the Mundum itself and the Movie called "*Jaari*".

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