

**Tribhuvan University**

**Performance and Manifestation of Agrarian Culture in Bahing Rai's *Segro***

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of the Degree of  
Master of Arts in English**

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**Recommendation Letter**

Mr. Bali Dhan Rai has completed his thesis entitled "Performance and Manifestation of Agrarian Culture in Bahing Rai's *Segro*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from January 2010 to May 2011. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva-voce.

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This thesis titled "Performance and Manifestation of Agrarian Culture in Bahing Rai's *Segro* " submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Bali Dhan Rai has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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## Abstract

*Segro* is a *Bahing Rai* typical culture. It is also considered as the non- textual form of *Bahing Rai*'s cultural, ritual and religious representation since all aspects of life, attitudes and beliefs are found in *Segro*. And inherently *Segro* has gone through various kinds of *silis* like in *Sakela/ Sakenwa*. *Segro* is celebrated with huge performances to show deep respect towards the nature and the ancestors. Since nature is believed to be the mother and the ancestors are the forerunners of *Bahing Rai*'s identity and existence, *Bahing Rai* people have immense faith and belief that are demonstrated through performing the *Segro*.

*Mundhum* is a core oral text of *Segro* and is still in oral form but it is observed with various names of *silis* to bring into performance. All those *silis* have own separate and complete existence and are performed accordingly. Among them, *Kharte sili* is very important as it elucidates the agricultural development in *Bahing Rai* family. It is a manifestation of agricultural *behaviors* of ancestors that are still prevalent in the society.

## Contents

### Acknowledgement

### Abstract

<b>I.</b>	<b><i>Rai, Rai</i> Culture and <i>Segro</i>: An Introduction</b>	1-6
<b>II.</b>	<b>Culture and Performance</b>	7-13
	Ritual as Performance	14-17
	Performativity	17-19
<b>III.</b>	<b>Performance and Manifestation of Agrarian Culture in <i>Segro</i></b>	
	Performance of Agrarian Culture in <i>Segro</i>	20-27
	Manifestation of Agrarian Culture in <i>Segro</i>	27-42
<b>IV.</b>	<b><i>Segro</i> and its Relation with Agricultural Activities</b>	43-44

### Works Cited

## I. *Rai, Rai Culture and Segro: An Introduction*

The *Rai* is generally understood as a tribe or, in the more neutral terminology widespread nowadays, an ethnic group living densely in the Eastern hilly of Nepal. Stating that *Rai* was a name given by Hindu rulers, Hudson in his book *Origins and Migrations* opines:

[T]he term '*Rai*' (N<rajan SK) is not by origin an ethnonym but a title conferred by Hindu rulers upon one segment of tribal chieftains of the East Nepal in recognition of their semi- autonomous status, but also with the idea of incorporating them into the state administrative system. (3)

It was only during the course of the past century that this title became an ethnonym for the corresponding group (3). Thus, he clarifies the word "*Rai*" through its specific historical development. And he forwards his opinion on "*Kiranti*" in a very broad term. He further opines: "The term "*Kiranti*" is very evocative. One generally means by it the "autochthonous" Tibeto-Burman group of East Nepal such as various *Rai* groups, the *Limbu*, the *Yakkha*, the *Sunuwar*, the *Hayu* and also frequently some of the groups that have settled in the Tarai such as the *Danuwar*, the *Meche*, the *Rajbansi*".

The *Rai* is culturally a distinct group with its heterogeneous ideas broadly subsumed together with several other Tibeto-Burman group of East Nepal under the generation "*Kiranti*". Similarly Tanka Bahadur Rai in his book *Kirant Itihaasko Ruprekha (An Outline of Kirant History)* writes:

[T]he descendents have their own native tongue close to Tibeto-Burman language such as *Rai*, *Limbu*, *Sunuwar*, *Jirel*, *Koyu*, *Gurung*, *Magar*, *Thakali*, *Meche*, *Koche*, *Newar* are also considered as *Kiranti*.

He takes help of Hudson and explains as Hudson's view that *Rais* are included in the *Kiranti* since the word "*Kiranti*" signifies *Khumbu* and he further divides *Rais* into three groups on the basis of the place they lived. They are *Wallo Kirant* from *Sunkoshi* to *Likhu*, *Majh Kirant* from *Likhu* to *Arun River* and *Pallo Kirant* from *Arun River* to *Singhlila* range. (4)

But Charles McDougal in his book *The Kulung Rai* says, "*Rai* and *Limbu* are supposed to be *Kiranti* since the time of antiquity. In the faces of all these speculation, one should bear in mind that *Kirants* are not very homogeneous group and whatsoever; the *Rai* is an ethnic group rather than tribe" (2).

So far as *Rai* culture is concerned, it is to a very extent determined by various kinds of myths existing as the root of origin. Myths are inseparable as well as fundamental parts of *Rai* culture since myths are prominent to establish typical *Rai* culture. Hudson in his book named *Origin and Migration* opines, "the domain of mythology is relatively easy to delimit: it consists of the oral narrative tradition in its entirety. One must stress the fact, however, that the myths often vary considerably from locality to locality and even from narrator to narrator"(2). As he describes in his book, *Rai* culture has no similar fashion in its mythology nor does it have its homogeneousness in performing the ritual. *Rai* culture bases on the myths which are in non- textual form or oral form. Since the time immemorial, myth has been transferred generation to generation through verbal form called *Mundhum* or *Thuthur Veda*.

*Mundhum* is another important ideology in terms of *Rai* culture.

Ganesh Rai in his paper “*Mundhum: Kirant Rai Jaatiko Maulik Darshan*” presented in Kirant Rai International Conference-2011 views:

*Mundhum* is an ideology of typical activities developed through nature, religion, society and culture. It describes the creation of all living beings such as plants, birds, animals and human beings. And it reflects the events, great works, contribution and rituals performed in *Kirant* regime by *Kirant* ancestors that has been told to son by father and to grandson by son and thus to other generation. (4.4)

So *Mundhum* gives high respect to the nature and the ancestors; for nature is believed as the place of origin and ancestors as our creator.

*Rai* people are very rich in terms of culture, language and rituals as there is multiplicity in culture in and among *Rai* people and so are their languages, traditions, rituals too. The *Rai* culture doesn't have uniformity in worshipping and performing cultural activities. Despite some similarities in major events such as birth, death and marriage, there are differences in using the materials for performing those rituals. They have unlike rituals and festivities. Mostly they are affected by geographical location, availability of materials and society. Different rituals are performed in different *Rai* community as there are more than 28 *Rai* dialects spoken in *Rai* community and they represent their own clans.

Ganesh Rai in trimonthly magazine *Libju- Bhubju* opines:

Under *Rai* community, there are so many clans having their different dialects. They are *Aathpahriya, Kulung, Koyu, Khaling, Chamling, Chhukwa, Chhiling, Chintang, Jero, Tilung, Thulung, Dumi, Dungmali, Dewas, Naachhiring, Puma, Phangduwali, Bantawa, bahing, Bunglawa, Belhaare, Mewahaang, Yaamphu, Laambichhong, Lingkhim, Lohorong, Waambule, Saampaang, Sotaang*. (3)

So *Rai* people have some similarities and some differences in performing their rituals. Generally *Rai* people perform Naming Day Ceremony, Feeding Day Ceremony, Kitchen Worship (*chulho puja*), *Sakela*, *Nwagi* also called *Naagi* or *Maangsuk*, *Sikari puja*, *Panchabali*, *Bhumi Puja* (Land Worship), *Udhauli*, *Ubhauri*, *Purwe Puja*, *Bayome*, *Dedaam Puja*, *Chasuwa*, *Pholsyadar*, *Chasok Tangnaam*, *Khaumo*, *Segro* and they have their typical ways of performing them. Since there are various kinds of *Rai* people, they are very rich in cultural aspects.

As described in the book *Kirant Sanskar* by Gadul Man *Rai*, it says that a child gets rice, if son after four or six months, if daughter after three or five months. On this day, the relatives and the neighbors are invited and they are served with good food and wine. For son, a cock is killed and for daughter a hen is offered on that occasion called *Nwaran* ( Naming Day). Before it starts, ‘one *pathi* rice’, clay-lamp, money, yoghurt, drinking water, fried meat and wine are managed. Grandparents, parents, other close relatives and neighbors put on *tika* with blessings.

Marriages in *Rai* community are of different kinds or types. According to Ganesh *Rai* in his paper “*Mundhum: Kirat Rai Jaatiko Maulik Darshan*”, “there are four types of marriage as mentioned in the *Mundhum*- (*Maagi*) arrange marriage, (*Chori*) stealing marriage, (*Mili*) love marriage and (*Jaari*) compensation marriage” (6). Arranged marriage is believed as a formal marriage in traditional system as negotiators make efforts to ensure the marriage between bride and bridegroom. Stealing marriage and compensation marriage are not in fashion nowadays though love marriage has been very effective. Wine is generally used to accept the marriage proposal by bridegroom’s brothers (*maitis*) and it is also given to the relatives. The quantity of wine varies in *Rai* community before and after marriage. But in all *Rai*

community, marriage takes place in the kitchen basically nearby the oven; for oven is considered as the holy place for major events.

Similarly, *Nwagi (Naagi)* is also an important ritual being performed in *Rai* community. Writer Bhupdhwoj Thomros in his book *Kulung Samchhipta Parichaya* describes, “*Kulung* people worship rivers or rivulets as they believe that water comes from the womb of the earth and gives life to all living beings. And they with the same strength worship oven (*Chulho*) as the savior of evil impacts and diseases for them. They also show respect upon their forefathers by offering them the first crop ( rice), *jaad* ( fermented millet ), wine, banana leaf, *Chindo*, ginger. They chant the names of their known and unknown ancestors, remember them and finally they cook rice and offer with the wish to get blessings. In *Kulung Rai* family, it is performed twice in a year- in summer and in winter after harvesting the crops.

People perform it as *Udhauli Nwagi* and *Ubhauli Nwagi*. *Nwagi*, here, signifies a work of providing the first crop to the ancestors. In *Nwagi*, all the relatives get together and worship their ancestors with the new crops they have stored for consumption. They believe that they can succeed in producing lots of food grains if their ancestors are happy with them, if not they have to go through several disastrous like drought, famine and death. So, in that sense, it is also regarded as the ancestral worship. Certain things like *Chindo*, clay-pot, banana leaf and a cock are used to perform. And the guardian of the family starts worshipping with the chants and begs blessings from ancestors for their happiness, prosperity, security and success.

Similaly, *Sikari Puja* is also an important part in *Rai* community since it represents the hunting nature of the ancestors. Like our ancestors, *Rai* people worship *Sikari* as the hunting-god. The *pujari* chants the words so as to request not to harm

anybody but protect them from any kind of evil fate. *Rai* people offer cock though some Rais offer cock and hen both to make *Shikari*-god happy.

Like other rituals, *Shakela* in *Rai* community is of great importance as it is hugely observed. Despite some differences, there are many similarities in performance. *Shakela* comprises various kinds of *silis* which represent different actions of cultivation such as digging, planting, harvesting, storing. It is performed twice a year called *Udhauli* and *Ubhauli*. *Udhauli* falls in *Mangsir* and *Ubhauli* in *Baishakh*. *Rai* people perform the dance according to *Silis* with their own traditional dress in the circular form. They use cymbles (*Jhyamta*) and produce symmetric sound; they carry *Liphe* that is used in the movements of their hands. *Shakela* is a nature -worship, for nature is believed to be a creator and savior of life in the universe and the people , therefore, shows due respect towards it as the god. They prepare *thaan* (a place to worship) and sprinkle *jaad* and wine. While dancing, they sing songs to make it beautiful and attractive so that other people too enjoy a lot.

Mostly, the *Rai* people perform *Shakela* with enthusiasm and great pleasure. But the *Bahing Rai* people are different to other *Rai* people in term of worship. The *Bahing Rai* people one of the clans under *Bahing* community do not observe *Segro* that looks like *Shakela* with huge respect and importance. *Segro* is also considered as ancestral worship because it is all about the history of evolution of our ancestors and their ways of life. *Nakso* Bhaijit *Rai* views that *Segro* is the oldest and the most important worship for *Bahing Rai* people.

## II. Culture and Performance

The word 'performance' has been derived from the Old French, having two components "parfournir-par" and "fournis", here "parfournir-par" means 'thoroughly' and "fournis" means 'to furnish' or 'bringing to completion' or 'accomplishing'. So, to perform is to complete a more or less involved process rather than to do a single deed or act. Theorists have been contemplating performance for centuries on the stage, in religion rites and rituals, in social and political arenas on the page and in the bodies of people who make these performances happen again and again. They utilize the basic questions of theory to ask, what is performance? Why do people perform? And how does performance organize, maintain, and transform lives, communities and cultures? But, theory can not be answered "yes" or "no" or "right" or "wrong" rather it ought to provoke observation of and reflection on performances around us. Susan Tower Hollis says in her *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*, "Theory is intended to pose interesting questions, not give final, for-all-time answers" (qtd. in Bell 3).

The word performance refers to the act of doing something such as musical, dramatic, ritualistic ceremony and other entertainments. It is an inherently human activity which refers to the act of performing a ceremony, play of piece of music. Theorists try to account for performance as something that happens, emerges, and grows in and through a process a set of activities or often described as emergent. Performances make believe, in play, for fun in the indicative mood it is "as if". Richard Schechner says in his *Performance Theory*, "In the disjunctive mood, the famous "as if" or, as Sanskrit aesthetics would have it; performances are Lilas-sports play and Maya, illusory. But the Sanskrit tradition emphasizes, so is all life, Lila and Maya" (xix). But performance is not all Lila and Maya. It carries the reality of the world, too. Richard Schechner says, "As Lilas, performances not only play out modes,

they play with modes leaving actions hanging and unfinished, so theatrical events are fundamentally experimental" (xix). It is a narrow definition of performance because performance is a theory that includes the different activities of the human being in whole society. American critic, Victor Turner writes:

I regard the social drama as empirical unit of social process from which has been derived and is constantly derive the various genres of cultural performance [. . .]. My condition is that the major genres of cultural performance, from ritual to theater and film and narration from myth to the novel not only originate in the social drama but also continue to draw meaning and force from the social drama. (93)

Another critic, Jill Dolan says in his, *Presence and Desire: Essays on Gender, Sexuality, Performance*, "Performance happens all around us, if you look at it that way" (qtd. in Bell 27). Thus, performance is a social drama, and is a combination of various genres of cultural performance. Here, drama emphasizes the multi generic nature of the examples, dynamics of the materials, content of the performance and dynamics of the examples. The social substratum is the constant formative factors which impregnates performance with womb of meaning. It also helps structure and restrictive of the performance. Hence, performance does not necessarily have the structuralist implication of manifesting form, but rather the processual scene of bringing to completion or accomplishing. Thus, to perform is to complete a more or less involved process rather than do a single deed or act. Elin Diamond says in his *Performance Cultural Politics*:

Performance is always a doing and a thing done. On the one hand, performance describes certain embodied acts, in specific sites, witnessed by others. On the other hand, it is the thing done, the

complete event framed in time and space and remembered, misremembered, interpreted, and passionately revisited action a pre-existing discursive field: introduction. (qtd in Bell 16)

In this way, performance can be viewed as an action or a set of action which occurs or can be performed in a special occasion in a particular place. It is related to the manner, behavior, experience of the particular person or community. It is a staging of production of a drama, piece of music. In fact all human activities and all cultural entities are performance. Mervin Carlson says in *Theatre Studies: Performance of Bodies, Texts and Culture*, "Performance can move from the stage, from ritual, or from other special and clearly defined cultural situations into everyday life" (78).

Thus, performance can be considered as at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself in human life and in other words, our lives are structured according to repeated raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be consideration as "performance". That's why, the definition of the performance can not be limited in single meaning. It has different meaning in different fields in the different contexts. In literature, performance is not limited to its dramatic performance between spectators and performers. It calls for greater awareness and attention to formal elements of textual representation and greater focus to its context. Collins Cobuild's *English Dictionary* defines performance in different ways:

A performance involves entertaining audiences by doing something such as singing, dancing or acting or someone's or something's performance is how successful they are of how well they do something. Or the performance of a task is the fact or action of doing it. Or you can describe something that is or looks complicated or difficult to do as a performance. (1226)

If we analyze this dictionary meaning, it is clear that performance is an action which must be acted by the performers. But performers alone can not make a successful performance as there is always necessities of the presence of spectators are also as important as the performers in performance. The main objectives of the spectators in the performance are entertainment in which sometimes they have to evaluate the performer's performance, too. As a result, there emerges a kind of communicative process between performers and spectators. In this regard, Ronald Pelias writes in his *Performance Studies: The Interpretation of Aesthetic Texts*, "Performance is communicative process. All performances are transactional communication events between speakers and listeners" (qtd in Bell16). Further more, Richard Bauman links performance with the broader sense of less communicative activities which establish one or more relation between the audience and performer. He says:

Performance is a mode of communicative behavior and a type of communication event. While the term may be employed in an aesthetically neutral sense to designate the actual conduct of communication performance usually suggest an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience. (16)

In the performance activities, however, time is adapted to the event, and is therefore susceptible to numerous variations and creative distortions. The major activities of performance time are: Event Time, Set Time and Symbolic Time.

Richard Schechner writes in his book, *Performance Theory*:

*Event time*, when the activity itself has a set sequence and all the steps of that sequence must be completed no matter how long the elapsed

clock time. For example: . . . rituals where a "response" or a "state" is sought, such as rain dances, shamanic cures, revival meetings; scripted theatrical performances taken as a whole.

*Set time*, where an arbitrary time pattern is imposed on events- they begin and end at certain moments whether or not they have been "completed." Here there is an agonistic contest between the activity and the clock. For example: . . . how many and how much can you do in x time.

*Symbolic time*, when the span of the activity represents another span of clock time. Or where time is considered differently as . . . rituals that re-actualize events of abolish time, make-believe play and games. (8)

Why do people perform? People perform to construct history, events, places, cultural memoirs and people themselves. And it has been very closely associated with the various social sciences and a complex and interesting cross-fertilization has been the result. On the other hand, the study of traditional 'artistic' performance, such as theatre and dance, has taken on new dimensions and begun to explore newly observed relationship between these and other cultural and social activities, while the various social sciences have found theatre use in exploring particular kind of human activities within their own fields of study. Especially the cultural performances are reflective of ongoing process. Each cultural performance makes an explicit or implicit claim about who is important, what is valued, how society ought to function and why this performances demand our participation. And evaluate the norms and values of a culture. Victor Turner writes in his *The Anthropology of Performance*, "A sociocultural group turns, bends, reflects back on itself, upon the relations, actions,

symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other components that make up their public selves" (24).

Cultural performances communicate the content of culture through orchestrations of cultural media. So cultural performances are capable of carrying many messages at one level what another level seems to be saying and the full reality of meaning and message is only attained through the performance. Thus, because of these above reasons people perform the performances.

Performance is organized or maintained in different occasion and places in human society. It always makes references to former ways of doing, acting, seeing and believing. Those references can uphold the status quo, critique the status quo, or certain the potential for changing the status quo by performing a new. Dwight Conquergood writes in his, *Of Caravans and Carnivals: Performance Studies is Motion*, "Performances privilege threshold-crossing, and boundary violating figures, such as shamans, tricksters, and jokers, who value the carnivalesque over the canonical, the transformative, the mobile over monumental" (138).

Here, one better example can be presented the cultural ceremony of Popua New Guinea . The 'kaiko' celebration of the Tsembaga of Highlands of Popua New Guinea is a year long festival culminating in the konj-pig kaiko. Kaiko means dancing and the chief entertainments of the celebration are dances. Richard Schechner says, "A kaiko day began with the dancers [. . .]. By the time many spectators were gathered, including men, women and children from neighboring villages. These spectators came to watch and to exchange goods" (113). The performance transformed combat techniques into entertainment. All the basic mobs and sounds even the charge into the central space. The dancing was not an isolated phenomena but a behavior nested in supportive actions. The dancing is performed late in the

afternoon and just before dusk the dancing stopped and the food which had been piled in the center of the dancing ground was distributed and eaten. Schechner again says, "The dancing is about the food, for the whole kaiko cycle pivots on acquiring enough pigs for meat to afford the festival" (113). After supper the dancing resumes and goes on all night. By dawn almost all everyone has danced with everyone else and this kaiko dance performance helps to cross the threshold of enmity, by shaping their brotherhood. And this community is a sign of a strong alliance, too. Furthermore, with the dawn the dancing ground is converted into a market place. Ornaments, pigs, furs, axes, knives, shells, pigments, tobacco are all traded or sold. Schechner writes:

The 'kaiko' entertainments are a ritual display- not simply a doing but a showing of a doing. Furthermore, this showing is both actual the trading and giving of goods resulting in new imbalances and symbolic- the reaffirmation of alliances concretized in debtor-creditor relationship. The entertainment itself is a vehicle for debtors and creditors to exchange places: it is also the occasion for a market and it is fun. (115)

The 'kaiko' culture begins with the dance performance and ends with the trading where different sorts of edible and needed things are bought and sold. And on the other hand, the enmity, between the villagers is also ended with the 'kaiko' culture and then the concept of brotherhood is emerged. In the same way, performance is organized as a result transform lives and cultures.

## **Ritual as Performance**

Dictionary definitions of "culture" have changed through time. From the Latin 'cultura' meaning 'cultivation' or 'tending' the growing plants, crops, or animals very early meaning of the word. In early era, the definition of culture was parochial. In 1882, British poet and social theorist Mathew Arnold writes culture is "The pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know ... the best which has been thought and said in the world" (qtd. in Bell 116). Here, according to Arnold, culture is pursuit of our total perfection which has been thought and said in the world, it might not be proper and complete definition. There are so many people in the world and they have their own thought and saying so no one can pursue the total perfection of many people's thought and saying. But Edward Burnett Tylor says by expanding the definition of culture as, "Complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (qtd. in Bell 116).

Thus, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society, through which whole way of life passed and will pass generation to generation that lead to a new way of thinking and doing. Culture is an umbrella, where many other terms like custom, tradition, ritual etc. can be fitted into there. Ritual is also associated with theatre and it remains the event or practice. Victor Turner argues that "Ritual forms the basis of all theatre activity as well as other sorts of worldly action and interaction" (267). Ritual performances create a sense of theatre, but the ways in which each is situated within its community or settings are vastly different. Richard Schechner constructs the 'Performance Event- Time- Space chart' to log ritual 'performance' as diverse as a Bar

Mitzvah, a performance art piece, a Ph. D. oral examination, the election of a pope, a murder trial, and the Puja (prayers) at a Hindu temple. Here, Schechner is diverse ritual can not be as synonymous as he would wish; his scheme ascribes ritual status diluted to the point of being any meaningful activity that has a sense of ceremony, an actant, and an audience, so that there is connection between with drama. Some critics see all theatrical events as ritualistic. Ola Rotimi says, "I don't call [theatre] a recreational pastime. I see theatre as a serious almost religious, understanding and I try to impress upon [actors and students] the sobriety which participation in theatre demands" (268). But in the regard of theatre, not all drama is ritual however not all ritual is drama even though ritual usually employs elements of dramatic performance. A consideration of ritual in post colonial contexts requires a reconsideration of drama itself. To understand ritual and its importance in a community; is compared with drama and its function in society by M.J.O. Echeru and says, "Drama is to the society what ritual is to religion: a public affirmation of an idea; a translation into action of a *mythos* or plot just as ritual is the translation of a faith into external action" (268).

So, ritual and drama are often similar in their transformative, transformational qualities, but they are emphatically not the same. That's why, ritual performance exhibit all the same formal characteristics as play; a special place is taken out, a sacred ground, creating a rule bound world of its own. And play, as pretend, infects poles of belief in ritual acts. All rituals involve participants who question the reality of what is happening. They prefer to participate and experience the moods and feeling rite seeks to create. Huizinga writes in his *Homo Ludens: A study of the Play-Elements in Culture* that, "Whether one is sorcerer or sorcerized one is always knower and dupe at once. But one chose to be dupe" (23).

Ritual and ritual like action around in our daily lives as a way give meaning and significance to experience. Two interrelated consists of any group on interacting animals, such as human. But human societies often include millions or billion of people in social groups. Culture differs from the simpler, inborn types of thinking and behavior that govern the lives of many animals. The people in a human society generally share common culture partners so anthropologists may refer to particular societies as culture- rituals. Ritual events are also marked by joy, fun and anticipation. Laine Bergeson writes in his *Utne Reader; Do-It yourself Ritual*:

Ritual celebrations knit us into history and even into prehistory, connecting humans to each other over geography and time [ . . . ] many still find connection in the rites and ceremonies passed down to them from the lives and faiths of their parents and grandparents. For others, contemporary life has grown so secular, colored by irony, or just plain different that the old ways of marking majors traditions no longer reasonable. [ . . . ] the need for ritual is so deep thought that people have begun creating their own. (qtd. in bell 130)

So, rituals include celebrating the arrival of menopause, births and death marked without religious ceremony, divorce ceremonies, and even marry yourself ceremony.

In general understanding, ritual is a ceremony performed by a particular group of people often for religious purpose. It can be defined as a repeated performance always done or said in a same way *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines the term ritual as "A series of actions that are always perform in the same way specially as part of a religious ceremony, something that is done regularly and always in the same way" (1313). In the same way, it views the ritual performance as those activities

which are the part of formal religious occasions. It emphasizes the sameness of those activities which are always done in a same way. Ritual in a broader sense includes rites ceremonies, service, formal procedure, custom, habit, practice, convention, tradition etc. It is a repetition of certain set of actions and behavior in a certain occasion. Collins Cobuild English dictionary defines ritual as:

A ritual is a religious service or other ceremony which involves series of actions performed in a fixed order. A ritual is a way of behaving or a series of actions which people regularly carry out in a particular situation, because it is their custom to do so. You can describe something as a ritual action when it is done in exactly the same way whenever a particular situation arises. (1438)

Thus, all rituals are the performances that involve actions or behaviors which follow the similar pattern every time they are used. Ritual performances are the fixed symbolic parts of a religious service and ceremony. They are carried out in a fixed, structured way rather than being spontaneous. All rituals are prescribed order if performing rites and procedure that are regularly followed.

### **Performativity**

Performativity is a concept which is highly stylized form of late twentieth century events which constantly demands that its audience redefines and understands, it as an act of theatre itself. Lee A. Jakobus analyses such experimentation of Richard Schechner and his performativity group in the following manner:

Most of the interesting late twentieth was century experimental theatre was done in groups such as Richard Schechner's performance group, which created what Schechner called Environment theatre in New

York City in late 1960s and Jerzy Grotowski's policy

laboratory theatre in Wroclaw , Poland during the same period. (857)

Performativity is a concept that is related to speech act theory, to the pragmatics of language, and to the work of J. L. Austin. It accounts for situations where a preposition may constitute or instantiate the object to which it is meant to refer as in so called "performative utterances". On the other hand, the basic factors involved in performativity are birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Each change is marked by a transitional period involving specific rituals: removal of the individual from his or her former status, suspension from normal social contact, and readmission into society in the newly acquired status. This transitional process some times provides others with the opportunity to adjust to the event, for example, the death of a loved one.

Performativity is an action related act, which is conducted in mass, for performing some rituals and celebrations. It is speech associated with some types of action. Schechner terms performativity with magnitude of performance argues, "Performance magnitude means not only size and duration but extension across cultural boundaries and penetration to the deepest state of historical, personal and neurological experience" (45). Though, it is difficult to say the universally accepted meaning of performativity, it determines the whole human action from theatrical arch to social drama and performance which generally is supposed to have granted for the theatrical events. It is everywhere, in rituals, celebration and feast, and in many such places. It is an art, associated with our way of living. It is naturally associated with our culture, politics and day to day actions. It crosses the alley of theatre and enters into the broad continent of human actions. In the same regard of performance, Elin Diamond writes, "[. . .] since 1960s performativity has floated free of theatre precincts

activity. It came after popular entertainments like speech, folklore, political demonstrations, conference behavior ritual, medical and religious healing and aspects of human life." (qtd. in Bell 66)

Performativity exposes the process and product by which certain performances are normalized as natural and inevitable performances that parody, exaggeration, and satire are ways to denaturalize gender, race, and sexuality. These same performances risk the reaffirming supposed naturalness of these categories.

Thus, it can be said that the performativity is not merely confined within a stage as theatre rather it covers the broad area such as streets, social services lines, loan offices and other useful staging ground or places. It helps us to survive the performance of our traditional or ritual day-to-day life experiences. Elizabeth Bell says, "Performativity is a theory of identity, strategy of critique, and a political practice. Gender, race, class and abilities are all constituted in and through their performance" (176). We know that performativity pays special attention to bodies, but body does not determine or cause gender as in biological determinism and sexual difference theory.

### III. Performance and Manifestation of Agrarian Culture in *Segro*

*Segro* is a larger cultural performance of *Rai* and therefore this research, after introducing *Segro* and discussing about it specifically deals with *Kharte sili* and how it manifests agrarian norms.

#### Performance of Agrarian Culture in *Segro*

Like other performances in *Shakela*, *Udhauli*, *Ubhauli* etc, *Segro* is also, to a very extent, related to performance; it consists of various kinds of activities which, indeed, have got their meanings. There are various kinds of beliefs about performing *Segro*. *Segro* is decided to perform in the family which suffers from fatal sickness to and fro. It is believed that ancestors are angry with the family and have caused troubles to suffer them. So, the *Nakso* suggests the family to perform *Segro* to get rid of evil fortunes and sickness. And the family guardian promises to perform *Segro* on their behalf by offering a pig to them. It is also believed that the family does it to show its economic prosperity and to satisfy the ancestors through the worship. So, when the family grows up economically, it promises to perform *Segro* for its further betterment. In the same way, the family manages *Segro* to enrich the pride and dignity of the family since *Segro* is supposed to be one of the major worships in *Bahing Rai* family.

When *Segro* begins, it runs for four days and three nights consecutively, during which different kinds of *Silis* along with story are performed. As mentioned earlier, *Segro* is a combined form of *sillis* and story that move ahead together at a time. Every performance is created by the story and every story becomes complete with the performance. Thus, their mutual combination provides life to the *Segro*. *Segro* comprises various kinds of *silis* which actually have their own meanings and

importance. Each *sili* has story and is performed in and outside the house i.e. at the yard. And it is the attraction as well as beauty of *Segro*.

Before the *Segro* starts, guardians from the same brothers gather together and discuss on different responsibilities. The eldest brother finally appoints them on accordance with their discussion. As the *Segro* begins, they hold their given responsibilities until *Segro* comes to an end.

The first day of *Segro* is called *Grusso* which means clearing the dirt from the yard. Mosimis dance around the yard and keep it neat and clean. The oldest person in *Bahing* community is given responsibility to take out husk off the rice, which is called *Samdijabura*. He uses wooden equipment called *Okhal*. It is used during the *Segro*. Then, rice is kept in the *Mosum* (the place where worship is done) by the systematic way called *Mosumphucho*. Only the elders are allowed to stay inside the *Mosum*. First of all, they worship *Mosum* which they believe the tidiest place.

On that day, they are found to be very busy in the *Mosum*. Very old people stay in the *Mosum* during the *Segro* which is called *Mosum Rikcho Pargadhacho*. On the other hand, some are busy to keep the records of the things which their relatives have brought to assist *Segro*. These things are kept in *Chichakham* (the place where wine, jaad are stored) and especially cooking items are stored in *Bhanse Kham*. Then, there comes a very important worship which is performed in the kitchen. It is called *Naagle*. It is a worship of *Chulo* (oven) which, indeed, carries meaning in *Bahing Rai* community. *Naagle* is supposed to be the beginning of *Segro* as it is the first task. They need a cock and one *Pathi rice* (four kilo rice) in the name of the ancestors. For it, the *Naksos* gather and start chanting the names of ancestors in a very especial tongue named *Frelo*. This is considered as the original language of *Bahing Rai*, which young *Bahing* people but old ones do not understand. It is an ancient language that the

ancestors had used. This *frelu* is only used in *Segro*. When *Naagle* is over, *Moka* (a special meal prepared from chicken and rice) is cooked and served to the *Bahing* people. But there is a restriction on sons-in-law, the small children and the women. Actually *Naagle* is the first tribute paid to the ancestors. It is also considered as the sheer devotion to them. The main *Nakso* goes on chanting the names of their ancestors; this process is called *Luna*. It goes on for hours and hours and so, the *Nakso* sometimes takes rest while chanting, which is called *Naalum*.

The second day is very important day for the *Segro* since most of the important works have to be done in this day for its preparation and performance too. It begins from the early morning. A man with wine and ginger is sent to the forest to bring a bamboo called *Lingo*. He has to sprinkle wine to the bamboo and uses some pieces of ginger into his mouth and says that it has got birth for the purpose of *Segro*. Then he cuts the bamboo and is placed at the side of the yard. The old man called *Chicha* on the other hand weaves the rope from *Babiyo* (a kind of long slender leaf grass) which is used to tie up at top of the bamboo and finally pushed into the *Mosum* through the roof of the house where *Segro* is being performed. Similarly, another old man (*Chicha*) is also sent out in search of wild ginger with wine and one old man is to go to the forest to bring either wild bird or animal. While doing these all activities, the *Mosimis* and the *Naksos* begin to dress up their cultural custom and begin to perform *Sili* to make the yard sacred. When it is over, then there comes *Po Sili*. Before *Po Sili* begins, the *Naksos* go to the *Bhansekham* and again perform their *Naagle*, for which a cock and two *Pathi* rice are necessary. Hence, *Naagle* is done at home and *Bhansekham*. Again the main *Nakso* has to do the same as he did in the first day in *Segro* house for the worship of *Naagle*.

Then the *Nakso* and the *Mosimis* gather at yard to perform *po sili*.

Indeed, the word in *Bahing Rai* language “*po*” represents pig and “*Sili*” stands for dance literally. So, *Po sili* is a dance performed to kill the pig. In *Popacho Sili* (*pig-killing dance*), first of all, a pig as promised to offer the ancestors when *Segro* was decided is brought and tied up at the bamboo with *babiyo*- rope. Like other *Silis*, Bahing Rai people use cymbals, dhols and bells to create beautiful sound. The *Naksos* and the *Mosimis* perform *Po Sili* according to sound produced. They sometimes dance in the circle and sometimes in the rows. This dance seems very attractive because they imitate like jumping onto the pig to kill. Main *Nakso* has *Chindo* and *Jaad* in it to sprinkle over the pig and the others have carried *Liphe* and *Chamar* in hand. An interesting part is that they dance by synchronizing each other so that the dance looks same and movement of dance, too, identical at all the time. Meanwhile, they use *Frelo* which really arouses the sense of love and sympathy over the pig because they say that it has got birth to serve their ancestors in such a pious worship on the earth. They beg excuse with the pig before they kill it to offer the ancestors. Finally, when *Naksos* sprinkle wine three times over pig’s head, then an old man (*Chicha*) with arrow and bow, designed to kill the pig, is invited offering a cup of wine and he, then, kills the pig with arrow. After killing the pig, the *Naksos*, the *Mosimis* including other old people (*chichas*) gather around the carcass and begin to sympathize by offering some rice over its body. It is called *Saarithyarso* in *Bahing Rai* language.

After the pig is killed, the *Naksos* go to the *Chicha Kham* to make the shares of *jaad* to the ancestors. Four different earthen pots are prepared to offer *jaad* for four ancestors named *Khara*, *Selu*, *Pilu* and *Bulu*. These are not allowed to use by the children but by the old people only. After making the shares among them, the *Naksos*

again come back to the *Segro* house. The killed- pig is shared in the name of *Naksos* , *Mosimis* and rest part of it is cooked for all, which is served to all as *Bhater*. This process is called *Saarinaam*.

Then, the *Naksos* along with *Mosimis* begin to dance called *Kharte sili* at the yard. Basically *Kharte sili* is followed after *po sili* is finished. *Kaharte sili* seems longer than other *silis* since it carries a long history of *Bahing Rai* community. This *sili* unlike many other *silis* is important and meaningful; it is in the sense that it carries the history of civilization and development of cultivation in *Bahing Rai* community. It is traditionally performed in circle by *Waisa* (male) *Mosimis* and *Mincha* (female) *Mosimis* with their special attires used in *Segro*. They show different kinds of activities based on cultivation. Since this *sili* signifies agriculture, they perform the beginning of their agrarian activities like cutting down the trees and bushes to make the field, making fire on trees, searching the grains for the crops, digging up the land with wooden sharp thing called *Kuto*, sowing the grains over dug up- land, weeding the crops, cutting them, harvesting and storing the crops etc. Such activities are chronologically performed in *Kharte sili*. So, *Kharte sili* represents the culture of cultivation. Within this *sili*, there are other *silis* like *Sinkhe sili*, *Paarga sili*, *Yu sili* because these all *silis* are associated with the different activities of cultivation. For instance, *Sinkhe sili* is performed to show like catching the birds in order to take seeds of the crops out of their stomach. *Paarga sili* is used to show like keeping the trap to catch the birds. And *Yu sili* means behaving like mouse which is performed to show stealing rice from the store. Thus, *Kharte sili* is performed with lots of importance. After these *silis* are over, then comes the turn of treatment to the sick people, which is in *Bahing Rai* language called *Bulumokte*. A small linen cloth called *Naarimokte* is put on the back of the sick people and mild hot water is sprinkled over the body by the

*Nakso*. While performing it, sick people have to catch a rope called *Saarigra* (rope pushed *into Mosimi* through the roof). It is believed that the illness of the sick people will go away through *Saarigra* if the sick people catch it at the time of treatment. Thus, *Bahing Rai* people gather and participate in the treatment. When it is over, all the people especially old ones begin to sing *Segro* song, which has very serious tone and heart- touching theme. All old as well as young people get gathered and sing with sentiments. It can easily be guessed by observing their face, too. It is, in *Bahing* language, called *Dalok*. They go on singing collectively describing the evolution of their ancestors, way of their life, evolution of their civilization. There is no any restriction as everybody can participate at that time. Then an old man gives *jaad* and pig's skin to the main *Nakso* and gingers to others which is called *Sapcho*. All *Mosimis* enter the room and stay near the *Mosum*. And with the motive of making their ancestors happy, they perform *sili* inside the room sprinkling *jaad* around there.

In the evening of the second day, the main *Naksos* with the help of other *Mosimis* begin *frelu* which is known as *Sumdiberna*. They go on chanting with the mythical story of origin, their life style, their growth. Furthermore, at the meantime, they ask for strength, power, fortunes and happiness with their ancestors as blessings. So, it is a time taking performance which runs until the morning of the third day.

Third day in the morning, the *Naksos* are found to be chanting *frelu* continuously outside the *Segro* house sitting by the fire. After it comes to an end, all the people get gathered to have *Bhater* (grand meal) collectively. This has somehow more important because it can also be regarded as the last meal in *Segro*. So, this day is also called meal-eating day (*Bhater*). It is believed that the relatives who are from very far will go back their home on that day. Then the guardian of the *Segro* house comes to his sisters, who have come to participate in *Segro* from distance, to

exchange each others' happiness, feelings and fare well. He expresses his cordial thanks for taking part and co-operating in the *Segro*; in response the sisters, too, say that they are proud and happy having got chance to participate in such ancestral sacred worship, and hope to see again and again such prestigious ancestral worship in the days to come. Thus, they show mutual respect, love and understanding to each other.

Before they depart from there, they begin to dance *Jaau Khliu sili*. This *sili* has got another importance since it is indeed devoted to the sisters. As the story of *Bahing Rai* community, the two sisters named *Jaau* and *Khliu* were invited by their brother named *Koktishala* to worship the ancestors. And then, they were given farewell in a decent way. Since then, it is believed that this culture, thus, has been originated. This *sili*, too, signifies farewell to the participants who are getting to go home. They wave their hands to say good bye with the movement of dance. Though this is not the last day of *Segro*, the relatives from very far are said good bye. At the night of the third day, the main *Nakso* seeks the fortune of the people with the help of gingers. The *Nakso* cuts a side of ginger and predicts the coming situation. When it is finished, again the *Nakso* begins to chant (*frelu*) *Mundhum* that goes on until the morning of the fourth day.

In the fourth day, different kinds of works are done, as this is the last day of *Segro*. The worship to our ancestor comes to an end on this very day. Though *Mundhum* is still on, the people outside the house gather to dance *Samse sili* and *Ngyarkuwa sili*. These two *silis* are the last performances in *Segro*. *Samse sili* is performed to indicate the ending of the worship. And *Ngyarkuwa sili* though it has no distinct meaning, is also performed at the end of the *Segro*. *Ngyarkuwa sili* seems very entertaining. In the same vein, this dance looks very attractive and eye-catching,

too. Here, *Nyarkuwa* refers to a kind of bird called *karyangkurung* and this dance is the imitation of the bird's fly. It is imitated as the bird flies. It is complicated dance as the people dance it by creating the ties and knots and open these all through the dance. Many complications while dancing are experienced in this *sili*. It seems tricky dance as different kinds of tricks are used in this dance. People make locks by catching each other's hands and move randomly so as to create the confusion. It also consists of art and style. So this dance looks very interesting.

At the end of their *Segro*, when all *silis* are over, the rope is taken out from the bamboo and kept in the *Mosum*. Then, they walk around the yard. The *Naksos* walk in the front with the chants and all other people follow them. The women open their *barko* (handspun cotton wrap) with the hope of getting the blessing from their ancestors. Cymbals and bells are turned to the sky while playing them. Finally *Segro* comes to an end begging excuse for their mistakes, errors and evil deeds they have committed in their life knowingly or unknowingly.

### **Manifestation of Agrarian Culture in *Segro***

*Segro*, representation of *Bahing Rai* family is deeply rooted as worship to the nature and the ancestors. While performing it, *Nakso* goes on chanting the history of the birth of our ancestors and other different kinds of creatures, and before performing it, *Bahing Rai* people have to go to the forest and to the hill in order to collect ginger, wild cock, bamboo, *Babiyo* (a kind of grass) and deer. It clarifies that it is immensely connected with the nature.

Not only *Bahing Rai* family, there are other *Rais* who have been performing different kinds of rituals since the day of their origin. In the book, *Kirant Chaad: Chasuwa, Pholshyadar, Chasok Tangnaam and Udhaul Sakela* it describes *Yakhkhha Rai* ritual called *Chasuwa*. The word *Chasuwa* is a combined form of two different

words-“ *Cho*” and “*Uwa*”. Here “*Cho*” means drink and “*Uwa*” stands for liquid. So the complete meaning of the term *Chasuwa* is to drink something. And this word is very relevant to the nature of its worship and the activities performed in *Chasuwa*. It is like *Nwaagi* by nature.

Before performing this ritual, millet is fermented to make *Jaad*. When new rice is harvested, they manage a pair of cock and hen, egg, ginger, a kind of flower called *Mechchephung* and they are kept upon the banana leaf.

On the one hand, *Yakhhkha Rai* people prepare different types of food items and on the other hand, family guardian or someone who knows *Chasuwa* very well begins to remember all known and unknown forefathers. They provide the first crop (rice) and those all the things prepared to the forefathers with the hope that their forefathers will be happy. As a result, the forefathers move all obstacles, sufferings and problems off their life and bless them with progress and prosperity. They also believe that their forefathers help them to produce food grains successfully.

Then the *Nakso* offers *Humusa*, *Thukmusa*, *Sambiling*, *Phechching* and chants the names of all ancestors. Finally they promise to offer new crop again and again in future and share rest of all food items prepared for forefathers among the family members and relatives (8). Thus they finish *Chasuwa* ritual.

This *Yakhhkha Rai* ritual, *Chasuwa*, is a reflection of respect to the nature as it uses natural objects such as ginger, flower, water, banana leaf to worship their ancestors for their well being and devotion to forefathers. On the top of that *Chasuwa* signifies the importance of agriculture; it also makes an effort to show the livelihood of human beings basing their activities on agriculture. In the *Chasuwa* ritual, after managing all necessary things, the *Nakso* goes on memorizing all known and unknown ancestors and offer them with new food grain i.e. rice ( *naya dhaan*). While

offering, the *Nakso* says that they have been able to harvest the crops due to their ancestors' grace; their ancestors have taught them about digging, sowing, reaping and storing. They have been living because of their ancestors' contribution and their love, affection and inspiration.

*Chasuwa* though it is exclusively *Yakhhkha's* ritual primarily portrays the historical development of human society. As mentioned in the history, there were stone age and hunting age. Our forefathers used to stay in the den and hunt animals with sharp stones, objects for their food. Later, they came into the agricultural age; instead of wandering here and there, they started cultivating land, taming animals and staying in the family. They gradually set up different activities and ways of worships related to agriculture since they could sustain their life through farming.

*Chasuwa* is the representation of that agricultural society as it shows importance of agricultural products in terms of the things used for worship. Directly or indirectly they have got their close affiliation with the agricultural products such as ginger, rice, millet that are primary things for any worship. In addition to respect the ancestors, the objective of worshipping them in *Chasuwa* is to get success in agriculture or farming too. Thus, agrarian culture has been manifested in *Yakhhkha* ritual, *Chasuwa*.

Similarly in an article written by Sunuwar Central Working Committee, “*Sunuwarharuko Mahan Chaad: Phol Syandar*” mentions that they perform *Phol Shyandar* very hugely and with lots of excitement. Like other *Kirant* community, *Sunuwar* people have deep respect towards their forefathers and besides it they also equally worship nature with the belief that nature nurtures the all living beings. In the womb of the nature, they see their life sustaining power over food grains that they achieve through agriculture (10-11).

The article further mentions that there are two types of *Phol Shyandar*: *Saaliwa* and *Phol Shyandar*. Generally *Saaliwa Shyandar* falls in Baishakh Purnima and *Phol Shyandar* lies in Mansir Purnima. They manage *Jaad*, *Shyandar flower*, leaf, bamboo, rope as the preparation of celebrating *Phol Shyandar*. They share their responsibilities among the relatives so as to make it easy and effective (11).

According to the *Sunuwar Samaaj*, the main purpose of performing this festival is to make their ancestors happy so that their ancestors will bring good fortune; their ancestors will save their food grains from any kinds of natural disasters and drought, famine, heavy rain and hailstones. They can, therefore, get good production and can have happy and healthy life. The *Nha:so* chants all known and unknown ancestors and requests for well beings of *Sunuwar* family(10).

And *Sakela* is well familiar festival among the *Rai* people and it is also understood as common festival, in a sense it is widely recognized among other people too. *Sakela* is indeed performed with the remembrance of *Paaruhang Naayam* and *Tiyama Khimaya*, *Hetchhakuppa*, *Naagelum*. And it falls twice in a year i.e. *Udhauli (Dhiriyaamalo, Dhirinaam or Dongdaawa)* and *Ubhauli (Chhiriyamalo, Chhirinaam or Dongwaang)*.

*Udhauli Sakela* begins with *Mangsir Purnima* and it runs for a month. In *Udhauli Sakela*, *Rai* people have already harvested the crop, known as new crop that is offered to the ancestors before it is consumed. *Rai* people believe that they have got success in producing food grains because of their ancestors' great supports. Their ancestors have transferred skills, knowledge and strength for farming to *Rai* people from one generation to another generation. As a result, they have sustained their family and life. They also believe that they will have to experience misfortune or evil

fate; their crops will be destroyed due to heavy rain or other natural calamities if they ignore their ancestors. Therefore, they do not eat new food grain without offering to them.

On the contrary, *Ubhauri Sakela* is performed in Baishakh and Jestha. During that time, farmers are busy to cultivate their land for producing food grains. *Rai* people with the hope of storing good crops request the nature and ancestors to protect crops from diseases, hailstones, storms, floods, drought and other natural disasters. So they provide first product or new product and other things like millet, *Jaad* to make the ancestors feel respected and honored.

*Sakela* is a dance though it is performed within the limitation of its values which are known as *silis*. *Silis* are of different kinds and thus performed differently in *Sakela*. *Silis* are most important parts since they have carried the meanings due to which *Sakela* becomes complete. And the instruments used in *Sakela* also have equal importance as they are very old and traditional in *Rai* culture. *Cymbels* and *Dhol* (like tomtom) are used to produce musical sound; *Rai* people involving in dance performance show their symmetrical movement according to the musical sound. Similarly *Chamar and Liphe* are, on the other hand, used to make their dancing activities very attractive.

*Silis* in *Sakela* are the representation of their ancestors' activities based on agriculture. Hunting animals, cultivating land, planting, weeding out the plants, reaping crops, harvesting and storing are performed through the *silis*; they are sequentially demonstrated by *Rai* people in *Sakela*. Final *sili* is considered as *Ngyarwa ( karyangkurung ) sili*, after this *sili Sakela* is finished for the year. Before it comes to an end, *Rai* people go to the altar ( *puja than*) and worship it with the help of *Naksho* (pg.8-9).

In this regard, Ganesh Rai further says, “ importances of those silis are to provide knowledge about the time for cultivation, reaping, harvesting and storing crops” ( 9 ).

Either *Udhauli* or *Ubhauli* or in both time, *Rai* people gather at one place and perform *Sakela*. As mentioned above. *Sakela* consists of various kinds of *silis* and those *silis* carry the meanings of agricultural activities. In this context, Chandra Bahadur Hatuwali in his book *Sakenwa* talks of the origin of *silis* and their meanings. According to him, *silis* were originated at the wedding day of *Hetchhakuwa* , the only one brother of *Taangwama* and *Khiwama*. The two sisters performed dance with *silis*. The first sili is called *Maangchha sili* and still this *sili* comes first of all while performing *Sakela* (14-15).

Further he emphasizes different types of *silis* that are based on place and clans of the *Rai* people. Primarily there are three types of *silis*- *Sakenwalaak silis*, *Dilpalilaak silis* and *Kirant Koinch silis*. And basically *Dilpaalilaak silis* are about performing agricultural activities. Even in *Dilpaalilaak silis*, there are four other kinds such as *Chasuma*, *Narawa*, *Sumnima* and *Tayama*, *Khiyama*. Under *Chasuma sili*, cutting down trees, burning bushes, digging land, sowing seeds, ploughing field, planting crop, weeding plant, reaping, harvesting, thrashing, winnowing and storing the crop are performed ( pg.16).

Despite other *silis*, *Chasuma sili* signifies more importantly the activities of agriculture. Since the time of agricultural age, the ancestors of *Rai* people had developed such activities in the form of dance called *Sakela*. Still *Rai* people have been following thses *silis* as the continuity of that culture as their own typical identity. Thus, the movements and the activities are clearly presented as the agrarian culture in *Sakela*.

Nature and ancestors are the prime aspects in *Rai* community since each and every ritual is devoted to either nature or ancestors, or sometimes both. Nature is understood as the creator and ancestors as inspirers as well as saviors of *Rai* people. *Nakso* Bhajit Rai opines:

Our ancestor called *Koltipaa* was born along with tiger, bear, monkey on the earth after the births of insects, plants and birds. At the time of *Koktishala*, he got married to *Niyamo* and made house to make a family for the first time. With the help of his wife, *Niyamo*, *Koktishala* got idea of making farm land, got seeds such as rice and millet first time and started digging, sowing, harvesting and storing food grains. Then they offered the first crop to the ancestors and consumed it later. Thus, agriculture was initiated by our ancestors since the very early time of human evolution and the development of civilization.

(interview)

In the collection article of Paanchbir Thulung, writer Chandra Kumar Hatuwaali writes in his book *Sakenwa*:

In Thulung Rai family, they have their own *silis*; they are mainly *Morsehrimu sili* (avoid ghost and evils), *Sabu sili* (land), *Ngyarma sili* (avoid bad luck), *Sike sili* (birds), *Sikidaangma sili* (knitting cloth), *Khari sili* (farming) , *Risepma* (cutting rice plant), *Resepma Themu* (thrashing rice plant) and Mamachini Remboma (offering rice to the ancestors). (19)

He further says that among so many *silis*, *Khari sili* is one of them under which it comprises of many agricultural activities. They are *Chaslehim* (destroying bush), *Bujem* (collecting grass), *Mukhunum* ( burning fire), *Chasle kaaimu* (digging

land), *Bralajinmu* ( sowing seeds), *Ropakhlim* ( planting), *Mabrolmu* (weeding grass), *Lisarehamu* ( thrashing), *Chelmu* ( winnowing). Similarly *Resepma himu*( cutting rice plant), *Recepma themu* ( thrashing rice) and *Mamachini Remboma* (offering rice to ancestors) (19)

Even in *Thulung Rai* family, they have their ritual related to the nature and the ancestors, and they have developed their own culture in the society basing on their own norms and values. Their culture has also been influenced by the way of life of their ancestors as culture is like a mirror of the society and is always dominated by how the then people would believe, feel or experience. So *Khari sili* in *Thulung Rai* family has represented the *Thulung* culture developed through agricultural activities. Despite other *silis*, this *Khari sili* is considered to be important and meaningful as it is understood as the manifestation of an agrarian culture.

Since there are multiplicity in *Rai* people in terms of languages, culture and rituals, they have their own separate typical identity. Each one varies with another *Rai* people though similarity can be experienced to a little extent. *Dumi Rai* is one of more than twenty eight clans in *Rai* community. *Dumi Rai* people also have their own kind of typical identity and norms and values since the time of their origin. Like other *Rai* people they do have their *silis* that are performed in the dance. Writer Chandra Kumar Hatuwali in his book *Sakenwa* describes that *Dumi Rai* people have five main *silis*. They are *Yongkhuli sili* (cleaning yard), *Sewa sili* (service), *Nimantrana sili* (invitation), *Har sili* (Cymbal), *Chadum sili* and *Sikipari/ Sikemake sili*.(20)

*Chadum sili* and *Sikipari/ Sikemake sili* are addressed with agricultural activities. In *Chadum sili*, it undergoes destroying bushes, making fire, digging, begging water with the sky, sowing seeds, weeding grass, collecting plants, planting,

plucking flowers, cutting rice plant, thrashing rice plant, winnowing rice, taking husk off and cooking rice.

*Sikipari/ Sikemake sili* came into existence by *Tamaya* and *Khimaya* that shows the activities like *Chadum sili*. *Sikipari/ Sikemake* is also concerned with burning bushes, digging, begging seeds to *Paaruhang*, sowing seeds, weeding grass, plucking cotton and knitting cloth. Writer Hatuwali says that it was originated by two sisters named *Tamaya* and *Khimaya* at wedding day of their brother named *Hetchhakuwa*. They used different *silis* to perform dances; these *silis* are still used in *Sakela* by *Dumi Rai* people (14-15). And *Chadum sili* and *Sikipari/Sikemake sili* are similar to a great extent.

In fact, it can be assumed that *Dumi Rai silis* are also influenced by the agricultural activities of that time as they imitate those activities through different kinds of *silis*. Like *Khari sili* in *Thulung Rai* family, *Chadum sili* in *Dumi Rai* reflects movements and activities in the form of performance. Each one is directly linked with agriculture. Thus, agrarian culture is manifested through *Chadam* in *Dumi Rai* family.

*Koyu Rai* people like other *Rais* have their own ways of worshiping nature and ancestors inherent in their culture. While performing worships to either nature or ancestors, they too show their respects and portray the ancestral activities through dance, for which they demonstrate their *silis* existing in traditional culture. Writer Hatuwaali in the same book *Sakenwa* says:

*Koyu Rai* people have *Chasum sili* and *Khawasi/ Sikiri sili*. Other *silis* are known as *Mauwa sili* (Kalchuda), *Khissa sili* (Deer), *Hawa sili* (Air), *Yaanga sili* (Fish), *Sengkesha sili* (Animal/bird) and *Haadibo sili* (Porcupine). *Khawasi/ Sikiri sili* is in fact about knitting clothes. So the *Khawasi/ Sikiri sili* is assumed to be developed as the result of

ancestors' activities. More importantly *Chasum sili* is hugely related to the agrarian society since it comprises different agricultural activities such as *Kharduwa* (destroying bushes), *Sipa Haimu* (making fire), *Ka: Amu* (digging), *Ngepmu* (sowing seeds), *Rur Romu* (weeding), *Khapka* (winnowing). (21)

*Chasum sili* shows not only farming process but also the process of producing crops and making *jaad* (fermented rice or millet). It, therefore, seems complete form of agriculture- based activities. It also performs grinding millet, making porridge and eating with the family after offering to the ancestors. Thus, *Chasum* manifests agrarian culture through its different kinds of *silis*.

*Wambule Rai* people living in Southern part of Okhaldhunga district in Nepal have various culture, traditional beliefs and values. Since all Rai people have their own typical nature in terms of culture, tradition and rituals, *Wambule Rai* people have deep belief on *Saune Sakranti*. Puspaa Rai in his article “*Wambule Rais and Bhume Puja*” says:

*Saune Sakranti* is supposed to be a threshold of good season as they do not have to experience the famine after celebrating *Saune Sakranti*. In this festival, *Wambule Rai* people manage buffalo or goat and female *Wambule Rai* people make their houses neat and clean. Male *Wambule Rai* people go to forest to kill wild animals. First of all they offer to their ancestors and then share among all *Wambule Rai* people. And they shout at drought, famine with blazes. They believe that the drought, famine, flood, heavy rain, hailstones and other natural disasters will run away and as a result, they can have good weather for their crop. (65-66)

Thus, they associate the *Saune Sakranti* as an omen of their good weather and the time of getting rid of natural disasters in producing crops. Though they have some restrictions such as not taking bath, not trimming hair, not cutting nail, not playing flute and not playing tom tom for fifteen days, they think that their crops will be very good and can harvest a lot if they obey such restriction.

In the same manner, *Wambule Rai* people have another important culture called *Dhwangkukumpurne*. It falls on *Bhadra Purnima* each year and is known as nature worship. Shuvaraj Rai in his article “*Waambuleko Dhwangkumpurne*” says that in the past, *Wambule Rai* people used to offer an ox but nowadays they offer buffalo due to legal restriction. In *Dhwangkumpurne*, they worship *Libju*, *Bhubju* and *Dibhujju* collectively. There are four kinds of *Naaksos* ; they have their certain responsibilities. They kill one pig and a pair of hen and cock for *Libju*, *Dhwangkum* and *Sisi Sikari* and request to protect their crops from any kinds of harms (70-74).

In *Rai* culture, either it is dance or any kinds of worship, mostly the matter of different kinds of things can be prominent. In terms of dance, there comes the *sili* that represents culture of the past. And the worship is concerned, *Rai* people have belief on the ancestors and the nature in a sense that nature has nurtured the human beings and ancestors have maintained the human existence. As mentioned above, the descriptions about different *Rai* people have been devoted a lot and secured the culture as important as their own life.

Like other *Rai* people, *Bahing Rai* community has also been following their own belief, thought, attitude and concept on culture. Originally they have been living in Solukhumbu and Okhaldhunga districts. Besides these two districts, *Bahing Rai* people are in Udayapur, Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa districts. Various kinds of traditions and rituals have been existed since the development of human civilization in

*Bahing Rai* family. Human civilization is actually the development of the way of life in community, society as tradition, ritual and culture. So civilization comes through a long period of activities performed by the human beings.

Among many other festivities in *Bahing Rai* family, they perform *Naagle* (offering new crop to the ancestors), *Bhumi puja* (Land worship), *Sikari puja* (hunting god worship) and other birth, death and marriage occasions. On the top of that, *Segro* is very important and considered as the eldest and the most expensive festivity, said *Nakso* Bhaijeet Rai. He further goes as such that *Segro* is indeed not about the worship on nature and ancestors only even though in *Segro*, *Bahing Rai* people importantly go to the nature, take natural objects so as to offer to their ancestors. It reflects that nature and ancestors are intertwined each other in the *Segro*.

But *Segro* is not limited within the periphery of nature and is not bound merely with the ancestral worship. Rather, the *Segro* is more beyond those attitudes. It explores the human civilization and human evolution in the nature performed by the ancestors. And the *Segro* has got its life through *Mundhum*.

All *Rai* people have a common feature of their culture that is *Mundhum*. In fact, *Mundhum* is an unwritten form of *Rai* culture existing in mouth. As in the paper *Kirant Rai Jaatiko Maulik Darshan* presented by *Kirant Rai Yayokhkhha* Central Office, it defines that *Mundhum* is an explanation of the births of all living and non-living beings and the description of various aspects of human life, social and natural phenomena developed as traditions or culture. It is like *Bible* in Christianity, *Tripitak* in Buddhism, *Veda* in Hindu and *Kuran* in Muslim. Since it is still in an oral form, it is expressed by *Nakso*, or *Nokso* or *Nakchhung*. Therefore, *Mundhum* is a manifestation of *Rai* culture (1-3).

In *Segro* as well, *Mundhum* is very crucial in a sense that *Segro* performance undergoes according to the *Mundhum*. *Naksos* play the roles of like presenters or the anchors as they are designed or supposed authentic representatives in *Bahing Rai* community. They should know the history or *Bahing Rai* culture and have to express continuously for four days and three nights. Yas Bahadur (Bahing) Rai, the chairman and Keshar Bahadur (Bahing) Rai, the General Secretary of *Jimi Rai Utthan Samaj* opine that the *Segro* is the most important and also known as the eldest culture in *Bahing Rai* family. It is performed through *Mundhum* in a very systematic way. In *Segro*, the brothers from the same line gather in a *Segro* organizing house and share the responsibilities as it is very expensive to perform and it is a huge culture too.

Besides *Segro*, there are other worships as well; they are *Tumaa taam*, *Chhidam* and *Naagle* and categorically second, third and fourth in ranking. *Naagle* is supposed to be the worship of ancestors since it is performed each and every year. The *Nakso* offers *Jaad*( fermented rice), a matured cock, one *paathi* rice and banana leaf and recites the names of known and unknown ancestors so as to make them happy and show devotion towards them.

Unlike *Naagle*, *Segro* is performed four days and three nights without any stops and many activities are simultaneously done in the *Segro*. *Naksos* and *Mosimis* lead *Segro* successfully if not *Segro* cannot be performed. One if possible two *Naksos*, fourteen male *Mosimis* and six female *Mosimis* are required to make *Segro* effective but not must be exactly regarding the numbers. Male *Mosimis* are called *Waisa Mosimis* and female *Mosimis* are known as *Mincha Mosimis*. *Waisa* and *Mincha Mosimis* have got their own kinds of cultural attires. So far as cultural attires are concerned, *Waisa Mosimis* put on *Baagu*, *Piya Lokcho*, *Kipsaari*, *Kyangma*, *Mokte*,

*Bolayungma, Salama and Simba. Mincha Mosimis use Munje, Champuri, Vincha, Kipsaari, Baagu, Salam and Simba.*

The *Mosimis* perform different kinds of *silis* in accordance with the *Naksos*. They have to go ahead along with the *silis*. They help the *Naksos* to perform *silis* through dance. Stating different kinds of *silis* in connection with the *Segro Mosimis* Prem Kumari Rai and Prem Rai explain:

*Silis* in *Segro* are primary or inseparable as *silis* flow with the story manifesting them in dance forms. Each *sili* has to carry the meaning and has to be performed sequentially. The *silis* in *Segro* are *Dyambulu Dimcho sili* (dance in the yard), *Pachomi sili* (invite relatives), *Po paacho sili* (killing pig), *Naagle sili* (worshipping ancestors), *Hari kari sili* (protecting own body), *Khadi mudi sili* (protecting area), *Bhakpa sili* (killing deer), *Ringmo sili* (fishing fish), *Chilo sili* (killing bird), *Kharte sili* (agricultural activities), *Palaripcho sili* (treating people), *Jaau Khilu sili* (showing farewell) and *Ngyarkuwa sili* (birds' dance). These all *silis* stand for at least an activity (interview).

Among so many *silis* for different activities performed in *Segro*, *Kharte sili* is supposed to be an important *sili*. *Mosimis* Prem Kumari Rai and Prem Rai further elucidate, “*Kharte sili* takes very long time to perform since it goes through lots of activities. And these all activities are entirely based on agriculture. According to them, there are so many *silis* under *Kharte sili*; they are not easy to perform and those *silis* have carried the meaning of ancient civilization of agrarian society.

*Kharte sili* consists of *Bhasme Kotha diyo sili* ( looking for bush), *Bhasme Hipcho sili* ( destroying bush), *Cho cho sili* ( making fire on bush), *Kokcho sili*

(digging land), *Wacher Phucho sili* ( sowing seeds), *Sarukcho sili* (weeding grass), *Secho sili* (reaping crops), *Graksori Pucho sili* (making food grains dry), *Toknong Tukcho sili* (thrashing crops), *Ngyasi kicho sili* (making Jaad), *Lipuri sili* ( keeping onto the pot), *Pupum pacho sili* ( putting into *Chindo*) and *Jee anchili* (inviting richness, prosperity). While performing *Kharte sili*, all *Wainsa* and *Mincha Mosimis* imitate the activities of doing cultivation in the field. Their gestures, acting or performance look like the activities of ancient agrarian culture.

Actually *Kharte sili* is itself a very important section of the *Segro* as it covers a large portion of the *Segro* as the forms of different *silis*. All *silis* under *Kharte sili* come one after another and are demonstrated in sequences. As described by *Mosimis*, Prem kumara Rai and Prem Rai, first of all they go to see the bushes whether they can destroy or not, how fertile they are for cultivation. This *sili* is regarde as *Bhasme Kotha Diyo Sili*. Then they make sure and destroy the bushes. They perform it as *Bhasme Hipchho sili*. As already mentioned, there comes another *sili* called *Bhasme Haaphe Haamchong Paacho sili*. In this *sili*, the *Bahing Rai* people make their crops dry. They again go there to be sure if the bushes are dry . Then there comes *Cho Cho sili*. In *Cho Cho sili*, fire is made with the help of *Chakmak*, *Jhul* and White stones through friction which they use for making fire on the bushes. At that time, they go out to look for *Jhulo*. So the *sili* is itself named as *Jhulo Kotha Dicho Sili*.

In fact, these *silis* have significant meaning in *Kharte sili* since *Kharte sili* cannot be complete and meaningful without such *silis*. Though they look like trivial and not effective, one must go deep into the core level to find each meaning of the *sili*. These are coherently organized and performed in the *Segro*. So the coherence is considered to be the beauty of *Kharte sili* and on the top of that *Segro* as a whole.

Besides these *silis*, there are many other *silis* that are also performed in *Kharte sili*. When in *Segro*, *Cho Cho sili* is finished, then the *Mosimis* perform *Chakmak Chichilung Raapcho sili*. They use *Chakmak*, White stones and *Jhulo* in order to make fire. When bushes are cleared out causing fire over the bushes, *Bahing Rai* people go to see the situation of the area, likely to be used for farming. This *sili* is known as *Bhasme Cho Cho sili*.

After clearing the bushes, the *Mosimis* begin to perform *Kokcho sili*. *Kokcho sili* by name stands for digging land for farming. This *sili* is a representation of agrarian nature of *Bahing Rai's* ancestors. After digging the land, there comes the activity of sowing seeds in the land. In the *Bahing Rai* tongue, it is called *Wacher Phucho sili*. *Wacher Khumcho sili* is another *sili* that follows *Wacher Khlumcho sili* as *Wacher khlumcho* means planting the seeds. When the plants get matured and give food grains, then it is time of reaping crops. After *Wacher Khlumcho sili*, *Bahing Rai* people perform *Graksori Pucho sili* that means keeping the crops under the sun. Thus, the activities such as thrashing food grains, cooking millet for *Jaad* (fermented rice) named as *Ngyasi Kicho*, *Ngyasi Paacho silis* take place. In fact, the activities from making bush-fire to planting crops, cooking and offering first crop to the ancestors are performed through those *silis*. As we do have agricultural activity without overlapping in real terms one after another, so are the cases in *Kharte sili*. It is assumed that *Kharte sili* was originated when society was in agrarian base.

#### IV. *Segro* and its Relation with Agricultural Activities

In *Bantawa Rai* family, they perform *Chasum sili* that consists of activities about farming. In *Sakenwa* dance, they perform *Sumnima sili*. *Sumnima sili* also performs agricultural works so is the case of *Chamling Rai* in *Puma sili*. Even though *Chamling Rai* family has got forty one *silis* on different aspects, *puma sili* reflects farming activities. And *Thulung Rai* family has its various types of *silis* like other *Rai* people. Despite other different *silis* to perform the culture, *Thulung Rai* people observe *Khari sili* (cultivating the land). *Dumi Rai* family also does have its own ways to perform the culture through *silis*. *Dumi Rai* people have their *sili* that comprises of activities like farming in *Bahing Rai* that is known *Chadum sili*.

Whatever the names are, they have their similarities in the main theme. The characters and the ways of worshiping seem to be little different but their purpose of worship is on the same ground. For instance, *Wambule Rai* family perform *Khaumo* that has the same importance with the *Segro* in *Bahing Rai* family. *Khaumo* is their worship to the ancestors and is of two types. They are *Phuri Khaumo* and *Kuyamo Khaumo*. *Wambule Rai* people perform it for three days continuously offering various things like buffalo, pig, a pair of hen and cock and rice. They celebrate first two days with worships to the ancestors through the myths of their origin, rituals and festivities developed in their ancestral period and in the final day, they farewell their relatives coming from distance. So are the activities in *Bahing Rai's Segro* too. In *Bahing Rai* dialect, *Segro* stands for the ancestral worship. They perform it offering animals, birds, rice and reciting the myths of origin, rituals, traditions and festivities developed by *Bahing Rai* ancestors in ancient time.

As the *Segro* typically belongs to *Bahing Rai* family, it explores the life style, their attitudes, traditional concepts on nature and ancestors. *Segro* is even today

supposed to be culturally, historically and religiously very important for *Bahing Rai* family.

In fact, culturally in a sense *Segro* is a representation of *Bahing Rai* origin. And it also describes various kinds of activities basing on their life style. It is a long ritual performance that has carried the complete theme of *Bahing* culture. Beside ancestral worship, it comprises with various *silis* that are performed through different body movements and gestures. *Silis* are regarded as the beauty of *Segro* since *silis* have huge significance and big impacts upon *Bahing Rai* culture. There are so many *silis* inherent in *Segro* that are performed at the time of *Segro* worship. They have their not only mythical and cultural importance but also historical, agricultural and social importance.

While observing the *silis*, the *silis* seem to be developed very seriously, consciously and carefully. They are still applicable and contemporary. And while going through the sequence, the *silis* show that the *Bahing Rai* people were very decent by nature. For instance, *Bahing Rai* people begin to perform *silis* from clearing the yard, inviting people, offering pig for ancestors, protecting themselves and their area from enemies, showing agricultural activity and doing farewell to the relatives. And those *silis* demonstrate how they are still important.

According to *Kharte sili*, the people used to go to see the bushes, make fire on them and dig the land for cultivation. This activity has its connection with the modern way of farming. Even in *Bahing Rai's* ancestral period, they turned the land fertile by burning the bush and sowed seeds in the land. They used to protect themselves before doing any important ritual in order to avoid any kinds of harms. And they had a concept of doing farewell to relatives formally even at that time. Those activities display that *Bahing Rai's* ancestors were advanced, polite and moral in their manners.

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**Glossary of *Bahing Rai* Family:**

*Mundhum*- oral history of culture about worshipping the ancestors and the nature

*Nwagi*- worshipping to ancestors with the first crops

*Chindo*- a kind of pot made up of vegetable like *gourd*

*Sikari puja*- worshipping to hunting god

*Pujari*- a person like witch doctor

*Sili*- a method of dance

*Thaan*- an altar

*Liphe*- a wooden thing used by male in dancing *Segro*

*Nakso*- a person called in *Bahing Rai* dialect who helps worship ancestors

*Grusso*- first dance of *Segro*

*Mosimi*- persons who are designed to assist the *nakso*

*Samdijabura*- taking rice off the husk to worship ancestors

*Mosum*- a place where worship is performed

*Chichakham*- the place where *jaad*, wine are stored for the *Segro*

*Jaad*- a thing made from fermented rice

*Bhansekham*- the place where rice is collected

*Naagle*- performance like *Nwagi*

*Frelo*- *Bahing Rai*'s special dialect

*Moka*- special rice forbidden to children, sons- in – law and females

*Naalum*- a moment of taking rest while chanting *segro*

*Chicha*- old *bahing* people

*Waisa*- female

*Mincha*- male

*Popacho sili*- a kind of dance performing to kill pig

*Saarithayrso*- a process of treating people by *Nakso* in *Segro*

*Naarimokte*- a thin linen piece of cloth used over the back of sick people for treatment

*Khara, Selu, Pilu, Bulu-* names of ancestors belonging to *Bahing Rai*

*Saarinaam-* process of sharing among the people

*Kharte sili-* a kind of dance indicating about cultivation

*Sinkhe sili-* dance like catching the bird

*Parga sili-* dance like trapping the bird

*Yu sili-* dance like running mouse

*Saarigra-* a kind of rope made with *Babiyo*

*Dalok-* a way of singing song getting together at the yard

*Sapcho-* provide ginger to the people

*Jaukhliu sili-* dance like two sisters named *jau* and *khliu* in *Bahing Rai*

*Koktishala-* brother of *jau* and *khliu*

*Koltipa-* first ancestor born on the earth

*Niyamo-* wife of *koktishala*

#### **Nepali Glossary:**

*Paathi-* amount of four kilo gram

*Babiyo-* a kind of grass having long and slender leaf

*Chamar-* thing made from yak's tail

*Bhater-* big feast

*Kuto-* a kind of equipment used to dig up the land

*Lila-* an incarnation

*Okhal-* an wooden log ditched to one side

*Dhol-* like tom tom in big size

*Chakmak-* an equipment used to make fire

#### **Glossary of Other Dialects:**

*Chasuwa-* worshipping of ancestors in *Yakhkha kirant*

*Shakela-* a kind of celebration performed in mostly *Bantawa Rai*

*Phol shyandar-* a festival performed in *Sunuwar family*

*Khari sili-* like *kharte sili* in *Bahing Rai*

*Chasum sili-* dance about cultivation in *Bantawa Rai*

*Dhwangkum purne-* a festival of *Wambule Rai*

*Libju- bhubju-* names of ancestors belonging to *Wambule Rai*