

PERFORMANCE OF ETHNICITY AND SPATIALITY OF ḌAṄGAURĀ THĀRUS IN
BARKIMĀR, RĀMBIHAGRĀ AND GURBĀBAK JARMAUṬI

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MEGH PRASAD KHAREL

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Tribhuvan University


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Letter of Recommendation

We certify that this dissertation entitled “Performance of Ethnicity and Spatiality of Daṅaurā Thārus in *Barkimār*, *Rāmbihagrā* and *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*” was prepared by Megh Prasad Kharel under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for the final examination by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

Dissertation Committee



Prof Dr Krishna Chandra Sharma
(Supervisor)
Central Department of English, TU



Dr Shiva Ram Rijal
(Co-supervisor)
Central Department of English, TU
Date: August 29, 2021



TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Office of the Dean
Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Ref. No.:.....



APPROVAL LETTER

This dissertation entitled *Performance of Ethnicity and Spatiality of Daṅgaurā Thārus in Barkimār, Rāmbihagrā and Gurbābak Jarmauṅi* was submitted by **Mr Megh Prasad Kharel** for final examination to the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English**. I, hereby, certify that the Research Committee of the Faculty has found this dissertation satisfactory in scope and quality and has therefore accepted for the degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kushum Shakya'.

Prof. Kushum Shakya, PhD
Dean and Chairperson
Research Committee

Date: September 16, 2021

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled, “Performance of Ethnicity and Spatiality of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus in *Barkimār*, *Rāmbihagrā* and *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*” submitted to the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is entirely my original work. I have not used its materials for the award of any kind and any other degree. I have made due acknowledgments to all ideas, and information borrowed from various sources in the course of writing this dissertation. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.



Megh Prasad Kharel

Date: August 29, 2021

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Megh Prasad Kharel

Abstract

This study examines the oral tradition of folk texts—*Barkimār*, *Rāmbihagrā* and *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*—by applying theoretical perspectives drawn from performance, ritual, spatiality and folklore studies. *Barkimār* is a Thāru *Mahābhārata*, which is particularly performed by Thāru males on the occasion of *Ḍasyā* festival. When this folk text is performed in a typical style of ritual dance, based on the semiotic narrative of five Pandava brothers and other characters from the *Mahābhārata*, is known as *Barkā Nāc*. Similarly, *Rāmbihagrā* unfolds the rural version story of Rama, the king of Ayodhya in the ancient time. The tradition of folk *Rāmāyana* is performed through different folk songs and dances like *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍiṅyā* in the spatiality of Thārus according to the structural pattern of time-duration such as, evening, night, mid-night, early dawn, morning and day-time on the occasion of their festivals, marriage, birth, grain harvesting and other socio-cultural events.

Likewise, Thāru creation myth, *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*, is also an ethnic version of cosmological worldview that involves the myth of Gurbābā, premier divine Thāru, who is believed to have created the earth, living and non-living beings in the universe. Particularly, the performing style of such creation myth takes in two ways. First, *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* recites its textual content on the occasion of their festivals, *Hāryā* and *Ḍhuryā Gurai*, as a ritual mantra in the space of *ṭhanvā*, the village deities' place. Second, it is also performed in the style of *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍiṅyā* song and dance in the courtyard and open space of the villagers during their festivals and many socio-cultural events.

Applying the multidisciplinary approach from the area of performance, ritual, cultural, spatial and folkloristic studies, the research contends that the performance of folk narratives has

the local power-relationship of particular community in the process of Thāru identity formation in the context of ethnic and caste mosaic country of Nepal. Moreover, the study follows both the theoretical analysis and descriptive interpretation based on the primary data sources like the interviews of performers and experts as well as the field visit live observation of performance and rituality of the folk texts in different villages of Dang-Deukhuri.

The basic conceptual approach of theory is developed by performance as a ‘mark identity’ of Schechner and ‘communicative action’ of Bauman, ritual as a ‘routinized act’ and ‘power of ritualization’ of Bell, ‘communitas’ of Turner, ‘cultural representation’ of Hall, spatiality as a ‘fundamental in any exercise of power’ and ‘subjugated knowledge’ of Foucault, ‘representation of cultural production’ of Lefebvre and space contains the ‘relation of production’ of Harvey, Relph’s place as ‘man’s experience of the world,’ folklore in the modern world as a ‘revivalism’ of Dorson and folklore as a ‘reflection of culture’ of Dundes. As a result, performance, ritual, ethnicity, spatiality, folklore, culture, identity, representation, cultural production, and safeguarding the folklore rooted on the primordial ethnicity are the key theoretical terms and concepts in the analysis of primary texts under consideration.

The performance of *Barkimār* on the occasion of *Ḍasyā* festival by the male Thārus in the house of *Maṭavā*, a village leader, unites all the households of the villagers. In other words, the performance of folk text on the occasion of particular festival shows the power of communitas as every household of the Thāru villagers involves in singing song and playing tom-tom and cymbal. The performers sing the couplets from its twelve chapters (*paidhār*). Indeed, performing on the ninth day of *Ḍasyā* reveals their traditional way of celebration. The house and courtyard of *Maṭavā* is selected as its performing space gives emphasis to the prominent aspect

of reviving the similar folkloristic texts on the occasion of the annual and routinized festival of the ethnic community.

When the Thāru material of *Mahābhārata* story is performed with a lengthy ritual song and big dance is called *Barkā Nāc*. The village members of Thārus take the roles of different characters of *Mahābhārata*. The performers who involve in the *Barkā Nāc* are not professional dancers and singers, but they are entirely rural farmers of Thāru community. Their different styles of dances, songs and ritual actions as well as what they use local musical instruments, dresses and ornaments mark the primordial type of ethnic identity and representation of Thārus because these folk knowledge, material and instrument are the reflection of their folk culture and ancestral property. In a typical performing style of *Barkā Nāc*, each performer represents the character of Thāru *Mahābhārata*. In the appearance of Yudhisṭhir, Arjun, Bhīma, Sahadeva, Nakul, Draupadi, Dronacharya, Bhishma and Svāne, all the performers play their own role to complete the ritual dance. *Maṭavā* and *Maṭinyā* are also involved in their role and they are additional characters in the rural version because they are not mentioned in the classical version of Mahabharata. The *rāu* bird represents the victory of Bhīma to make Draupadi as the wife of five brothers at the ceremony of *swayamvara*. Similarly, different colors of erected five wooden poles (*tārbān*) in front of dancing space of courtyard (*agnā*) and open space (*khenvā*) symbolizes the Hinauṭā king (i.e. ancient king of Himalayan region in the myth of Thārus), Yudhisṭhir, Draupadi, Duryodhan and King Vairāṭ. Thus, the semiotic mode of ritual performance of *Barkā Nāc* in the dancing space of courtyard and open space also becomes the effective communication in the community of Thārus.

Both *Rāmbihagrā* and *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* are the substantial folk texts in the community of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. Indeed, Rama story and creation myth reflect the mirror of

Thāru culture as their contents of the folk tales are manifested in the performing style of folk dances like *chokrā*, *hurḍīnyā* and *jhumrā* song and dance, which represents their identity and traditional culture. The folk dances based on these folk narratives have the key behaviors and attitudes of peasantry manner of Thārus. Thus, performance of such folk dances is the vernacular expression of cultural ideology of Thāru peasants and their common life. Besides the performing style of folk song and dance, *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* is also recited as a ritual mantra of *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* on the occasion of *Hāryā* and *Dhuryā Gurai*. Actually, the ritual performance of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* reveals the routinized act in the community of Thārus as *Gurvā* repeats the same ritual activity while reciting the folk text. In other words, such performance of *Gurbābā* narrative is a normative *communitas* because its recitation is ordained and imposed by the *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā*, who also creates hierarchy with the common people. Anyway, their cultural conviction of performing the creation myth during the *Gurai puḷā* embodies the social relationship based ethnic power of ritualization, which reinforces the commonality of magical togetherness among their households.

While performing the folk texts, the spatiality of Thārus reveals that their space is culturally significant to promote the national and cultural heritage of Nepal, particularly in the diversity circumstance of the country. In fact, their space underscores the social expression and communicative action to revitalize their primordial ethnicity based cultural values. On the other, the particular space establishes that performance of the folk texts at the courtyard of *Maṭavā*, *gharḍhurryā* and open/threshing floor of villagers gives emphasis to their individual and social identities and cultural values. Thus, performing space epitomizes their cultural identity, value and socio-communicative action.

Therefore, safeguarding the performance of folk texts and primordial ethnicity in the modern life enhances the essential matrix of cultural production, identity and representation of Daṅgaurā Thārus as it represents the cultural properties and knowledges of their bygone days. Where the folk tradition of such texts is performed, it reinforces their indigenous, ancestral and folk knowledge, which also gives emphasis to subjugated narratives of Thārus. As a result of studying the folk texts, the research findings examine five substantial themes: wide ranging performing style of folk narratives (i.e. folk songs, dances and recitation), performing context, spatiality, cultural reflection, and safeguarding the folk texts of primordial ethnicity and power-relationship of subjugated knowledge. Similarly, the dissertation concludes that the performance of folk texts and arts depicts the power-relationship of local narratives in the process of Thāru identity formation in the diversity context of Nepal. Finally, this research work, in efforts to explore the rituality in a representative ethnic group's folk performances, examines the dynamics of folk life through their enactment of the folk texts which may also contribute in the scholarship of Cultural Studies, Nepal Studies and Folkloristic Studies in the circumstance of Nepali academia.

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Abbreviations

UGC	University Grant Commission
BASE	Backward Society Education
CDE	Central Department of English
DDC	District Development Committee
FA	Folklore Academy
FoHSS	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
HA	Handicraft Association
HoD	Head of Central Department
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
KLM	Kamaiyā Liberation Movement
LGCA	Local Government Conducting Act
NA	Nepal Academy
NCP	National Cultural Policy
NCPM	Nepal Communist Party (Maoist)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NMC	Nepal Music Center
NMFAA	Nepal Fine Arts Academy
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
TASC	Tharuhat Autonomous State Council
TCM	Thāru Cultural Museum
TCPD	Tourism and Cultural Promotion Department

TJSC	Tharuhat Joint Struggle Committee
TMM	Thāru Mukti Morchā
TSM	Thāru Social Movement
TU	Tribhuvan University
TWS	Thāru Welfare Society (Thāru Kalyānkāri Sabhā in Thāru)
UN	United Nation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

Chapter I

Exploration of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus and Their Folk Texts

Background

This study attempts to examine the performance, ethnicity and spatiality in the Ḍaᅅgaurā Thāru folk texts, namely, *Barkimār*, *Rāmbihagrā* and *Gurbābak Jarmauᅇi* in the light of multidisciplinary approaches drawn from the area of performance, ritual, spatial and folkloristic criticism. Applying the key concepts and opinions of multidisciplinary approaches, the research also spotlights the primary data sources like the interviews of performers and experts as well as descriptive analysis of field visit observation of the selected folk texts in the villages of Dang-Deukhuri. The cultural performances of the folk texts are always reflective and reflexive, offering opportunity to confirm and transform values. Indeed, the performance of *Barkimār* during the *Ḍasyā* festival in their spatiality depicts the *communitas* of Thāru people as its enactment becomes the power-relation of the unity and solidarity among the households. The spatiality represents the performance of the “cultural production” based on the texts (Eagleton, *Idea* 36). So the spatiality of performing the narrative of Pandavas’ brothers becomes the substantial opportunity to comprehend the group singing with vernacular musical instruments and costumes.

Likewise, the folk material of *Mahābhārata* story is also performed in the style of *Barkā Nāc*. The rural performers of *Barkā Nāc* represent the characters of Thāru *Mahābhārata* such as Pandava brothers, Draupadi, Dronacharya, Bhishma, Svāᅅe, *Maᅇavā* and *Maᅇinyā*. The five wooden poles erected in the performing space and *rāu* bird also have the semiotic meanings of the ritual dance. The use of the vernacular musical instruments and costumes during its performance mark the identity and representation of their “primordial approach” of ethnicity rather than constructive

approach (Guneratne, *Making* 15). Similarly, the performance of Thāru *Rāmāyana* (i.e. *Rāmbihagrā*) and creation myth (i.e. *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*) reflect the vernacular culture and musical concert of Thārus with the performing style of folk song and dance like *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā*. These songs and dances reflect the core peasantry life of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. Moreover, recitation of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* on the occasion of *Hāryā* and *Ḍhuryā Gurai* by the *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* embodies the power of ritualization and also normative communitas of Thārus as all the households of the villagers are under the ritual action of *Gurvā*. However, the communitas of the social group is “the sense of sharing and intimacy that develops among persons” and, moreover, it also brings the “gift of togetherness” (qtd. in Bell, *Theories* 134). As a consequence, his routinized act of reciting the creation myth in every *Gurai pujā* gives emphasis to their power-relation of communitas.

In addition, this study also examines the challenges and possibilities of performing folk texts in the spatiality of Thārus in the modern way of life. Indeed, the folk texts are rooted on the lifestyle of primordial ethnicity, but the gradual shifting in the ancestral and familial relationship of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus in the modern time has brought the changes in the performance of folk texts. Having analyzed these performances of the folk texts in modern life, the examination argues that folk tradition reinforces the cultural representation and identity of the ethnic community. With gradual disappearances of these folk texts, Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus also loose the cultural identity and value of their ethnic identity. Thus, the power-relation of the “ethnicity is socially constructed” and such relationship is the “result of historically specific social and cultural interaction” through the performance of the folk texts on the occasion of different socio-cultural events (Johnson, *Performing* 13). So the study contends that preservation and promotion of the folk texts is an essential for the

safeguarding of the national heritage of the state as well as cultural identity, representation and value of Thārus.

Ḍaṅgaurā Community among Thārus

The term 'Ḍaṅgaurā' refers to a unique Thāru subgroup from the mid-western region of Dang and Deukhuri valleys, the original homeland of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. In the process of migration and modernization, they have settled across the eastern and western low land of Tarai and its vicinity of Nepal. They have also been residing in different districts, including Banke, Bardia, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Surkhet. Outside Nepal, they have been living in Kheri and Gonda districts of Uttar Pradesh India with their genealogical root to the Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus (Krauskopff, "Anthropology" 198). Moreover, some of their families, who are educated and employed, have also migrated to the urban areas of Nepal. The large size of family groups, literate and illiterate farmers, still densely live in the rural areas of different districts of low land of Tarai region in Nepal. Even though Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus have moved from Dang valley and also have settled as new comers in different regions, but they still introduce themselves that native land is Dang. Moreover, they have also continued unique cultural and linguistic identity associated with Dang despite their migration.

Geography and Subgroups

The report of National Population and Housing Census 2011 has not incorporated the particular population of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus, but this census mentions that Thāru is the fourth largest ethnic group, as it has 6.6% of overall caste/ethnic groups, among one hundred twenty six caste/ethnic groups in Nepal (4). Outsiders generally think that the Thāru as one homogenous group in Nepal. But close study shows that Thārus have varied subgroups within its ethnic community and those subgroups are recognized by certain features of cultural, linguistic and regional

differences. Rānā Thārus are densely resided in the far-western region of Kanchanpur. Daṅgaurā Thārus live primarily in Dang-Deukhuri and they are also scattered in different districts of the western region. In the same way, other subgroups such as, Koshala in the eastern region, Chitoniya and Desaurā in the middle region of Tarai districts live with their unique cultural and ritual identity. Besides, Kaṭhoriya Thārus are also found residing nearly in the same areas of Daṅgaurā, but they live densely in Kailali district and also found living in Kheri and Gondā districts of India (Webster 2).

The Thārus, one of the largest ethnic groups, are an indigenous community residing in the low land of following twenty three districts of Nepal: Kanchanpur, Kailali, Bardia, Banke, Surkhet, Dang-Deukhuri, Kapilvastu, Rupendehi, Nawalparasi, Makawanpur, Udaypur, Chitwan, Bara, Parsa, Rautahat, Dhanusa, Siraha, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Saptari, Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa. Based on the settlement of different subgroups of Thārus, Thāru Welfare Society (TWS) has extended its organization in those twenty three districts¹ (Sarbahari and Chaudhari 19). In fact, the area of Thāru settlement is not only limited to Tarai region of Nepal, but also it “goes beyond to northern part of Uttar Pradesh in India” (Bista, *People* 141). Traditionally, the geography or territory of Thārus is known as ‘Thāruvān’ or ‘Tharuhat’ region, which “consists of the forested land of Southern base of the Siwalik mountain range” (141). In the gone days, Thāru settlement in Tarai region was known as heavily forested region and also that territory was “found in tropical malaria areas, infested with wild animals such as elephants, rhinoceros, bears, tigers and poisonous snakes” (114). Such geographic region is the strip of tropical, marshy, flatlands, which is found densely forested area of Tarai. World Health Organization

¹Quoted materials in this dissertation from the source of different Nepali and Tharu writings are all my translations.

(WHO) actively worked in the late 1950s to eradicate malaria and then it became easy to settle other groups from the hills (Webster 1). Before the eradication of malaria, Thārus were only success to combat the malaria epidemic as they had “developed immune power against malaria; and gently started to deforest thick forest, cultivate food grains and develop human civilization in Tarai and inner Tarai region” of Nepal (Dahit, *Indigenous* 27). In other words, it is believed that the Thārus are probably the oldest ethnic group to live in Tarai region. Therefore, Thārus are the pioneers of Tarai cultivation and the civilization in Nepal as they deforested the thickly forest areas and changed it into the fertile land and established their own way of folkloristic, ritual, customs and religious traits.

Origin

We find different folk tales as well as many views and beliefs of the scholars and researchers about the origin and racial features of Thārus. The typical interpretation of Thāru origin can be found in the cosmological myth of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus named *Gurbābā Jarmauṭi*. Before the creation, the earth was hot like burning fire and smoking. In the second phase, water filled everywhere due to the heavy rainfall. Almighty God sowed a lotus seed in the water. Then he gave birth to Gurbābā who was the first Thāru god on this earth. In the early phase, Gurbābā had no full body and so Almighty God gave him limbs, nose, hands, mouth and other necessary body organs. Later, Gurbābā ordered earthworm (*Ḍuḍhiyā*) to bring the divine soil (*ammar-māṭi*) from the underneath. That soil was scattered round the water. When that soil was scattered, it was turned into earth. After the completion of the earth, Gurbābā created different living and non-living beings as well as plants and earthly creatures. Meanwhile, Gurbābā felt alone and created the goddess Maiyā to make his wife. Relying on such cosmological myth, Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus believe that “all

men and women on this earth today are the descendants of Gurbābā and Maiyā” (Rajaure, “Thārus of Dang” 62). In this way, the myth of Gurbābā does not only reveal the creation of living and non-living thing, but also Thāru origin and their cosmological history. D N Majumdar was the first researcher who used the scientific tool to explore the origin of Thāru in 1942. The article of Majumdar entitled “The Thārus and their Blood,” was published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*. In his article, Majumdar highlights that Thārus are related to a Mangoloid tribe as he argues,

They cannot be placed in any other constellation of tribes and castes of the Province, Indo-Aryan or Australoid. Also the Rajput origin is not supported on the basis of serology. Thus it is concluded, on the basis of the evidence, that the Thārus are a Mangoloid people, or predominantly so, who have successfully assimilated non-Mangoloid physical features as well. (qtd. in Meyer “Origin” himalmag.com)

Relying on such argument of Majumdar, Kurt W. Meyer also approves that the Thārus are a Mangoloid tribe and they have also assimilated with non-Mangoloid features or close with the Aryan background. In the meantime, Yogi Narhari Nath argues that the word ‘Thāru’ was derived from the Sanskrit term ‘Sthānu’ (qtd. in Teknath Gautam 1). Likewise, Tek Nath Gautam contends that most of Thāru gods, religious beliefs, rituals and customs are similar to the Aryans and, therefore, the word ‘Thāru’ may have the origin from classical Sanskrit term ‘Tharva’. The classical Sanskrit grammar, earlier than Pānini grammar, includes the terms like ‘Tharva’ or ‘Tharvān’. Indeed, the term ‘Tharva’ refers to “the moving activity of people’s one place to another or to hunt and having no constant attitude of living them in a single place” (2-3). Thus, the term ‘Tharva’ or ‘Tharvān’ refers to the tendency of not being

able to reside in a single place for a long time, but the nomadic lifestyle. According to Gautam, it was a common practice among Thārus to change the place of inhabitant until 1940s. With the increasing of populace, it became difficult to find the fertile land as well as timber for making their cottages according to the choices. Consequently, such nomadic lifestyle decreased. Therefore, Gautam asserts that the term ‘Tharva’ or ‘Tharvān’ is the traditional Thāru life of habitual peripatetic within their locality.

Thāru scholar Ramananda Prasad Singh published a small pamphlet in English entitled “The Real History of the Thāru” in 1998 and also proclaimed the typical theory about the Thāru origin. He claimed that Thāru “is a pre-Aryan race of Mangloid origin” and Thāru people were “originated in Nepal and they are the remnants of the Sakya’s and Kolya’s, the branches of the descendants of Okaka and Okamuka, the kings of Banaras” (58). Accordingly, the Sakya and Kolian people became Buddhists later. Within Buddhism, the followers of Theravada Buddhism were known as ‘Sthavir’. Elaborating the word meaning, Singh further asserts, “From Sthavir to thavir and from thavir to Thāru is an easy and logical verbal transition. The interpretation of the word ‘Thāru’ is logical and is keeping with their traditional values and behavior” (59). Moreover, he claims that Thārus were converted into Hinduism after the advent of Shankaracharya. In this way, Singh has typical school of thought about the origin and history of Thārus. Following the notion of Ramananda Prasad Singh about the origin of Thārus, Subodh Kumar Singh has rejected the notion about the Thārus as tribal community and further mentions, “I would like to clarify that the Thārus being the descendants of the Sakyamuni Buddha and Asoka the Great cannot be branded as a tribal community . . . Even in the medieval period we come across the Sen Kingdoms of the lowland Tarai” (13). In the same way, Mahesh Chaudhari also asserts that Thārus are of Sakya clan (*Sthavirharuko* 14-7). Moreover,

Janaklal Sharma speculates that Sakya clan might have the extended settlement from eastern to western in Tarai region in the ancient time. So the present society of Thārus may have been the descendants of Sakya clan. Meanwhile, Buddha followers got divided into two branches, Mahasāngik and Sthavirism, after one hundred year of Nirvana of Gautam Buddha. It seems that there is close relation between Thārus and Sthaviras. Accordingly, it is common of “inclination of Sakya clan towards Sthavirism” rather than Mahasāngik (358). Thus, he also gives emphasis that the term Thāru was derived from the ‘Sthavir.’

Dor Bahadur Bista presents two popular tales about the origin and racial affinities of Thārus. First of all, many of them believe that their arrival in Tarai low land in Nepal was “from Rajputana in India at the time of the Islamic invasions” (141). Secondly, some Thārus view that “they are descendants of Rajput women who fled with their domestic servant rather than fall victim to enemy” (141). Meanwhile, Narendra Sharma underlines that Thārus had migrated to the Tarai region of Nepal from Rajasthan after the Muslim invasion in India and they began the agrarian occupation in Tarai. For him, Thārus are the “descendants of Rajput women in Rajasthan during the Muslim and Moghul time from thirteenth to fifteenth century” (35).

Balaram Gharti Magar discusses a typical Magar-myth about the origin of Thārus as different Magars of Rolpa and Rukum recite the names of their ancestors while performing the ritual of *kulpujā* (lineage-worshipping)². Consequently, there were two brothers’ cave-dweller families named *Sherappā* and *Gorappā* in the

². I talked with Balaram Gharti Magar about the Magar-myth on the origin of Tharus during my dissertation writing in his resident Lalitpur metropolitan-17 Satdobato in Nepal. At that time, he elaborated the ancestral relationship of Magar, Tharu, Sherpa, Tamang, Gurung and many other ethnic and regional groups in Nepal as these people are descendants of two families, *Sherappa* and *Gorappa*, who were cave-dwellers of Himalayan region in the ancient time.

ancient time (*Aitihāsik* 5). In the process of time, two brothers of the family got divided and migrated. *Sherappā* resided in Himalayan area and *Gorappā* lived near the region of Mahabharata hill. Those people who lived in Himalayan region were known as Sherpa, Tamang, Gurung and the like whereas who settled near Mahabharata hill were called Rai, Limbu, Thāru and Magar (5-6). Furthermore, such myth explains that *Jhimje*, *Airu* and *Hārje* were three heroic brothers from the ancestry of *Gorappā*. Among them, *Hārje* was the youngest brother who was wealthy and prosperous cow-farming.

The term ‘*Hār*’ means the cow and ‘*je*’ signifies possessor in Magar language. Who possesses cow was named *Hārje*. So Gharti-Magar argues that Thārus still possess many cows in Dang-Duekhuri due to such legacy of cow-farming tradition. The pertinent issue is: How were they named ‘Thāru’ in the spatiality of Tarai region? Furthermore, Gharti-Magar contends that the term ‘*Thā*’ refers to the courtyard, plain area and open space in Magar language (“Mula” 19). Accordingly, the kingdom of ‘*Thā*’ area was named ‘*Thār*’. Thus, the kingdoms of ‘*Thā*’ region were called ‘*Tharāj*’ and who resided in the territory of *Tharāj* were recognized as Thāru. Thus, he opines that inhabitants of Tarai region, inner Madhesh and plain area were inducted Thāru in the ancient time. In fact, such various accounts do not show the factual and evidenced ideas about their origin, but only reveal the speculation based stories and folk tales, which are incorporated by different researchers and scholars.

Multiple Genres in Folk Texts

Daṅgaurā Thārus have their own mother tongue and folkloristic practices as they are quite rich in multiple genres of folk literature. They practice their folkloristic texts (or folk literature) during various rituals, festivals and folk cultural events. In general, the term ‘folk’ refers to common people and ‘lore’ means knowledge and

learning. Therefore, overall meaning of folklore suggests the traditional customs, knowledge and learning of any ethnic, caste and regional community and society. In fact, the folk texts reflect the collective experience of common people under a similar race, region, tribe or caste. In their collaborative work, *Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend* Vol. I, Maria Leach and Jerome Fried underscored the wide-ranging definition of American ballad scholar and collector MacEdward Leach about the folklore in this way:

Folklore is the generic term to designate the customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices, proverbs, songs etc.; in short the accumulated knowledge of a homogenous unsophisticated people, tied together not only by common physical bonds, but also by emotional ones which color their expression, giving it unity and individual distinction. All aspects of folklore, probably originally the product of individuals, are taken by the folk and put through a process of recreation, which through constant variation and repetition become a group product. (401)

Thus, the study of Thāru folklore encompasses the folkloristic dimension of common people's experience and their expression. In many ways, folk texts of Thārus involve the comprehensive aspects of folk culture, visual, performing arts, music, theatre, architecture, crafts, sculpture, literature, language, costume, myth, legend, tale, ornament, song, dance and history. In other words, the folk texts of Thārus incorporate the way of common people about how they get the knowledge from old generation and how they share such transmitted knowledge to create their identity and representation. So the study of performing folk texts is a procedure of knowing about ethnic and other social individuals, how they communicate and deal each other, and create the meaning of them within their socio-cultural circumstance. Indeed, folk texts

or genres of folklore are transmitted from one generation to another and those knowledge are “informally learned and unofficial, part of everyday experience” because folkloristic performance itself “is expressive communication within a particular group, it is taught informally, through one’s presence within that group” (Sims and Stephen 6). Thus, the folk texts of Thārus come through their experiences with others around the members of community.

Thāru folk texts encompass the multiple genres of their folk literature. In other words, Thārus have ritual, festival and seasonal folk songs as well as folk performing arts, folk music, folk dance, ballad, folk epic, folk tale (*baṭkōhi*), adage (*āhān*) and folk drama. The literary genres of folklore are the product of folk cultural atmosphere based on ritual, festival and seasonal settings. On the ground of rituals and festivals of different seasons, these folk texts have been performed for centuries without any training of professional artists. Moreover, farmers of rural areas are the real performers of these folk texts.

At first, Thāru folk songs can be categorized into three groups: ritual, festival and seasonal song. For instance, *Māgar* is their ritual based wedding song as they “retell the story of the *Shiva Puran* that glorifies the life-story of Lord Shiva” (Diwas 154). Indeed, their ritual song, *Māgar*, is also known as *Phulvār* that encompasses the mythology of wedding of Shiva and Parvati. Besides, such folk materials and properties are amply used in their practice of festival songs. *Māghi*, *Ḍhuheri*, *Phagvā*, *Ḍasyā*, *Ḍevāri*, *Gurai*, *Penḍyā* and *Aṣṭimki* are their major festivals. Accordingly, they have the festival songs of *Ḍhumru*, *Maghauṭā*, *Aṣṭimki*, *Ḍasyā*, *Sakhyā*, *Paiyā*, and *Barkimār*. Thārus celebrate their festivals according to their annual calendar and those songs are performed on the basis of such calendar pattern. Meanwhile, the folk life of Thārus portrays that they have “a close affinity with seasons” (159). Hence, they

enjoy different seasonal songs. *Mainā* and *Sajanā* are popular folk songs in the months from March to May. These songs are sung while Thārus are grazing the cattle, buffalo and cow; sitting in their leisure time and collecting wood and grass from the jungle. Meanwhile, they also have seasonal songs which they sing playing the folk musical instruments. *Bārmāsyā*, *Jhumrā*, *Hurḍīnyā* and *Chokrā* are typical seasonal songs and they also sing and perform those songs at any time of the year.

Second, Thārus have ballad such as *Māḍo Sundari* and *Lākhi*. In *Māḍo Sundari*, Maḍhav and Sundari are hero and heroine. According to the story, they have to make fierce struggle for their love. Indeed, this ballad is performed with the folk dance and music. *Lākhi* is such a ballad that involves the story of female. She has to continue war for sustaining individual life. Third, Ḍaṅaurā Thārus are rich in folk epics: *Sakhyā*, *Barkimār*, *Phulvār*, *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* and *Rāmbihagrā*. These are recognized as popular folk epics as these texts are based on mythological content and also they are performed during their festivals, rituals and cultural events.

Fourth, it can be witnessed that many performing arts of folk dances have been flourishing in the folk life of Thārus. Among those dances, *Ḍholāhā Nāc*, *Paiyā Nāc*, *Lāṭhā Nāc*, *Jhumrā Nāc*, *Kaṭhoriyā Nāc*, *Mayur Nāc*, *Lāṭhā Nāc*, *Cācar Nāc*, *Rāslilā Nāc*, *Chokrā Nāc*, *Bārmāsyā Nāc* and *Hurḍīnyā Nāc* are common in their folk life. Fifth, Thārus have oral tradition of folk tales in their community and they call it 'baṭkōhi' in their language. The content of *Baṭkōhi* involves the story of nymphs, deities, gods, kings, queens and princess. Those *Baṭkōhi* have didactic, entertaining, tragic and comedic trends. The *baṭkōhi* of Shepherd, Crab Boy, Deer and Jackal, Two Sisters, Cock and Hen are popular ones among common people and they transmit those tales from generation to generation.

Sixth, the idiomatic expressions of Thārus, definitely, “unfold a rich source of folk life” (Diwas 167). Such expressions are known as *āhān* in Thāru language and they are common and very popular in daily life. *Je suṭ uhi jīṭ* (He who sleeps wins) and *āghak ṭiṭ pāchal miṭh* (Let the bitter part precede the sweet one) are two examples of *baṭkōhi* and those idiomatic expressions mirror the socio-cultural folk lifestyles and beliefs of Thārus. Finally, the folk life of Thārus also shows the unique credential of folk drama. Indeed, *Gaiyā Behrnā* and *Meghā Loṭnā* are popular folk dramas and they are performed in the typical socio-cultural context of their folk life. *Gaiyā Behrnā* is performed at the courtyard and open space during night time by females when their village and farming life “is hit by the drought” (Diwas 169). The context of this drama has the allusion from *Mahābhārata* of ‘Biraṭ Parva’ or ‘Susharma Paiḍhār’. While performing this folk drama, Thāru females play the role of ploughmen and oxen. It is believed that if Thāru women act as tilling the land, rain god sends the rain soon in the village. So the performing of *Gaiyā Behrnā* is a folk drama among Thārus when the rain does not fall in the village in rainy season.

Meghā Loṭnā is also a common folk dramatic performance in which Thāru males demand rain from the rain god when there is drought in the area. So the ritual performance of this folk drama “is performed by the males who ask Nature to send them rain” for the purpose of high time of cultivation and farming (169). Therefore, the folkloristic study of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus portrays that they have multiple genres of folk literature as they are quite rich in the practice of folk texts, rituals and performing arts. Indeed, the folk songs, ballads, epics, tales, adages and drama are popular in their folk life. Thāru folk song, ritual, festival and seasonal songs can be classified on the grounds of their practices. In other words, Thārus have local, ethnic and folk beliefs that have made their identity distinctive and unique.

Classification on Folk Literary Genres

I) Folk Song

- Ritual Song (*Māgar*)
- Festival Song (*Ḍhumru, Maghautā, Aṣṭimki, Ḍasyā, Sakhyā, Paiyā* and *Barkimār*)
- Seasonal Song (*Mainā, Sajanā, Bārmāsyā, Jhumrā, Hurḍiñyā* and *Chokrā*)

II) Ballad

- *Māḍho-Sunḍari*
- *Lākhi*

III) Folk Epics

- *Sakhyā*
- *Barkimār*
- *Phulvār*
- *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*
- *Rāmbihagrā*

IV) Folk Dances

- *Ḍholāhā Nāc*
- *Paiyā Nāc*
- *Lāṭhā Nāc*
- *Jhumrā Nāc*
- *Kaṭhoriyā Nāc*
- *Mayur Nāc*
- *Barkā Nāc*
- *Lāṭhā Nāc*
- *Cācar Nāc*
- *Rāslilā Nāc*
- *Chokrā Nāc*
- *Bārmāsyā Nāc*
- *Hurḍiñyā Nāc*

V) *Baṭkōhi* (Folk tale)

- Shepherd

- Crab Boy
- Deer and Jackal
- Two Sisters
- Cock and Hen

VI) *Āhān* (Adage/Saying/Idiomatic Expression)

- *Je suṭ uhi jīṭ* (He who sleeps wins)
- *Āghak ṭiṭ pāchal miṭh* (Let the bitter precede the sweet)

VII) Folk Drama

- *Gaiyā Behrnā*
- *Meghā Loṭnā*

Statement of the Problem

Many research works on cultural studies in Nepal, particularly on ethnic communities have been revolving around Thārus, and those are written in a too general overall survey. Moreover, there is very little research on the particular Ḍaṅgaurā Thāru and the works dealing with Thāru folk text and literature. At the same time, the problem in various writings about Thārus also describe as the homogenous ethnic group. Such accounts of too general overall survey and homogenous ethnic group have ignored the diversity of socio-cultural practices within the community of overall Thārus. However, close reading shows that Thārus have many subgroups like Kochila in the eastern Tarai, Chitoniya and Desaurā in the middle region of Tarai, Kaṭhoriya, Ḍaṅgaurā and Rānā in the mid-western and far-western region of Tarai. Furthermore, their folk life, particularly on cultural, social and historical aspect hugely varies from one sub-group to another. In other words, such generality and oversimplification about Thārus has created a great confusion to evaluate their particular folk texts and performing arts.

Existing narratives and criticisms, without emphasis on folk texts and performing arts of the Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus, ignore the unofficial oral literature of the

Thāru ethnic minority in academic discourse. In other words, they have barely examined the Ḍaṅgaurā folk texts from multidisciplinary approach. Comparatively, Thāru youths have become more mobile in the present days of glocal economy rather than previous life of traditional agronomy as they have a plentiful politico-economic access to global, national and local space in recent day. Despite their mobility in modern existence, they still need to hold on the traditional/ *pāramparik* identity and cultural value because there is dynamism in their continuity of folk song, dance, dress and musical instrument for the enhancement of local power of cultural memory and recalling through these performing folk texts. However, previous researchers and academicians have rarely encompassed the challenges and possibilities of performance in modern time of these selected folk texts in terms of the ethnicity and spatiality.

Thus, the current dissertation explores performances of Ḍaṅgaurā Thāru folk texts that unfold the power of local narratives in terms of ethnicity and spatiality in the process of Thāru identity formation. Moreover, this study extrapolates representations of Nepal's indigenous-ethnic Ḍaṅgaurā identity in the the theoretical and conceptual frames of performance of rituals in space-time continuum.

Research Questions

Questions central to this dissertation include:

- 1) What do performances of ethnicity and spatiality of the Ḍaṅgaurā Thāru folk texts embody?
- 2) Why do the Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus perform their folk texts during their ethnic festivals and cultural occasions?
- 3) How do performances of the folk texts unfold the cultural identity, representation and local power-relation of ethnic community?

- 4) What are the challenges and possibilities in the performing the primordial ethnicity- rooted folk texts in the modern time in their space?

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

- 1) To identify the performance of ethnicity and spatiality of the Ḍaᅇgaurā Thāru folk texts
- 2) To examine the Ḍaᅇgaurā Thāru performance arts and culture based on the primary folk texts during their festivals and cultural events
- 3) To explore representations of the cultural identity, value and local power-relationship of the performance of the folk texts
- 4) To analyze the challenges and possibilities of the performance of folk texts in the modern days in their space

Hypothesis

This research hypothesizes that a closer examination on the performance of ethnicity and spatiality in the Ḍaᅇgaurā Thāru folk texts unfolds the power of local narratives in the ethnic and caste mosaic of Nepal, particularly in the process of Thāru identity formation. Consequently, the construction of performing their ethnic folk texts and arts embodies the cultural identity, value and representation in the spatiality of Thārus.

Significance of the Study

This study foregrounds the performing folk literature, cultural value, identity and representation of Ḍaᅇgaurā Thārus. By carrying out research based on such performing folk texts of the ethnic and indigenous group, it may help to know the present-days' situation of the indigenous knowledge, folk festival and folk literature of Nepal. The research is focused on the performance of the selected folk texts and

their field study observation. It may enhance the new method and technique to analyze the folkloric texts in the Nepalese Studies, Folkloristic Studies and Cultural Studies of Nepal. Furthermore, the research is based on multidisciplinary discourse as it applies various literary theories, especially performance, ritual, cultural, spatiality and folklore. Thus, it may enrich the academic practice with new method of investigation. Moreover, the findings will be helpful for all those who are interested in further study of the ethno-folk literature and performing arts from field study observation. Indeed, this research may be an informed guidance for policy making level to safeguard the performing tradition, folklore and it may also facilitate to foreign scholars, researchers and academicians for further study of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus in the days to come.

Limitation of the Study

There are a number of Thārus folk texts, however, the study has been limited to Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus' particular performance of the three folk texts: *Barkimār*, *Rāmbihagrā* and *Gurbābak Jarmauᅇi*. The authentic creators of these chosen folk texts are anonymous and, therefore, I have selected the primary folk literary texts for an in-depth analysis including English translated version of *Mahābhārata: The Thāru Barkā Nāc* (another name is *Barkimār* among Thārus and, moreover, it has been edited by Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel in 1998), *Rāmbihagrā*, available from the resource person Bejhlal Chaudhari (my field study observation of this folk epic is also focused on his resident Sisahanyā, which is a Thāru model village in Dang) and *Gurbābak Jarmauᅇi* by Rajman Chaudhari (collected and published in Thāru language in 2013 and also its translated version was published in Nepali by Bhagawati Prasad Chaudhari in 2018). A local ritual performance of the story of *Mahābhārata* is named as *Barkā Nāc* (Big Dance). So this study attempts to

encompass the performance of *Barkā Nāc* by the folk performers of Jalaurā Dang (October 16 -19, 2019). Meanwhile, the field study description of live performance on collective singing of *Barkimār* according to chapter-wise pattern has also been included from Sisahanyā village after receiving the *ṭikā* of *Ḍasyā* festival on October 7, 2019.

Moreover, the study on performance of *Rāmbihagrā* tries to include the field study observation of Sisahanyā village of Dang valley (September 26-27, 2019), where folk performers under the leadership of Bejhlal Chaudhari still practice its local version. In the same way, the performance of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* is based on ethnographic study of two villages, Bhānpur and Chakhaurā (June 18, 2019 and January 12, 2019), in Dang valley. The performance of Bhānpur underlines the vignette on the recital of creation myth by *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* on the occasion of ritual performance of *Dhuryā Gurai*. Besides, the performance among the villagers of Chakhaurā is focused on the *Chokrā* dance based on the singing of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*.

Table 1: Diagram of Performance of Folk Texts in Dang-Deukhuri

Folk Texts	Performed Space	Ways of Performance	Performed Date
<i>Barkā Nāc</i>	Narayanpur Jalaurā and Mahadevā Deukhuri	Ritual performance of <i>Barkā Nāc</i>	October 16-19, 2019
<i>Barkimār</i>	Sisahanyā	Performers' collective singing of its couplets on the basis of chapter-wise pattern on the occasion of <i>Ḍasyā</i> festival	October 7, 2019
<i>Rāmbihagrā</i>	Sisahanyā	<i>Chokrā</i> dance based on <i>Samrauṭi</i> to <i>Dīn- nacavā</i> pattern	September 26-27, 2019
<i>Gurbābak Jarmauṭi</i>	Bhānpur	Recitation of its text by <i>Ḍesbandhyā</i>	June 18, 2019

		<i>Gurvā</i>	
<i>Gurbābak Jarmauṭi</i>	Chakhaurā	<i>Chokrā</i> dance	January 12, 2019

Table 1 drawn by the researcher

Although the study tries to make the significant use of concepts developed in performative, ritual, spatial, cultural and folkloristic spatial theories, but it does not offer a comprehensive analysis of all these theories. However, Richard Schechner's concept of cultural performances as the 'mark identities,' Catherine Bell's ritual as a 'routinized act' and 'power of ritualization,' Victor Turner's 'communitas', Stuart Hall's perspective of representation as 'signifying object', Alan Dundes's notion of 'folklore is a mirror of culture,' Henri Lefebvre's view of spatiality as a 'social relations of production' and Edward Relph's space as 'man's experience of the world' has been used as the theoretical parameters to analyze the folkloristic texts.

Even though this study takes the primary tool from the perspectives of Schechner, Bell, Hall, Dundes, Lefebvre and Turner, it also attempts to include the required key theoretical ideas of the cultural critics (Mathew Arnold, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton), ritual and performance theorists (Elizabeth Bell and Peggy Phelan), spatial thinkers (Bill Richardson, David Harvey and Robert T Tally Jr) and folkloristic intellectuals (Martha C Sims and Martine Stephens, Jawaharlal Handoo and Abhi Subedi).

Research Methodology

This study primarily involves the qualitative research method. The research technique and tool follows both library-based textual analysis and field work visit observation (or ethnographic field study) to collect the audio-visual clips and photos for analyzing the cultural performances of the selected folk texts. Besides, I talked and interviewed with experts, ritual practitioners and performers. I have used the structural based rather than unstructured questionings with them. Therefore, their

knowledge and opinion of performing experience and research study in the area of Thāru folklore has become a substantial data to analyze the folk texts in this dissertation. The study also contends that performance of folklore (or folk texts) is descriptive and concrete category. Thus, methodology applies both theoretical analysis and descriptive of the field visit observation of the performance of the folk texts.

Likewise, this research also applies some of the key theoretical ideas of performative, ritual, cultural, spatial and folklore theories. The multidisciplinary discourses of performative, ritual, spatial, cultural and folkloric critical insights enhance to interweave the fundamental perspectives on performance, ethnicity and spatiality to portray the cultural identity, representation and spatial power-relation of the folk texts. Richard Schechner's cultural performance as a 'mark identity,' Stuart Hall's 'representation as signifying object,' Catherine Bell's ritual as a 'routinized act' and 'power-relationship of cluster,' and Victor Turner's 'communitas' of ritual performance are the primary theoretical parameters to analyze the folkloristic texts from the disciplines of performance, cultural and ritual studies. Foucauldian perspective of 'space and power relation,' Henri Lefebvre's space as a 'representation of cultural production,' David Harvey's representation of space contains the 'relation of the production' and Edward Relph's space as the "man's experience of world" are the primary theoretical parameters of spatial criticism. Similarly, Alan Dundes's notion of 'folklore is a mirror of the culture' or folklore as a 'reflection of culture' and Richard Dorson's performance of folklore in the modern world time are also the theoretical concepts to analyze the folkloristic texts.

Relying on the insights of David Silverman's *Doing Qualitative Research*, I have developed the overall framework of this dissertation regarding its subsequent

steps like paradigm, design, theory, approach, methods, concepts, tools and techniques:

Table 2: Framework of the Dissertation

Topics: Performance of Ethnicity and Spatiality of Ḍaᅇgaurā Thārus in <i>Barkimār</i> , <i>Rāmbihagrā</i> and <i>Gurbābak Jarmauᅇi</i>	
Paradigm	Constructionism
Design	Qualitative
Theory	Multidisciplinary : Performance, Ritual, Cultural Representation, Spatiality and Folklore
Concepts	Ethnicity (Primordial and Constructivist), Folklore (Orality and Cultural Memory, Unofficial and Non-institutional Knowledge)
Method/Approach	Analytical, Interpretive and Descriptive
Tools and Techniques	Textual Analysis, Collection of Audio-Visual Clips and Photos from Field Visit Observation, Interviews of Performers and Experts (structural based questionnaires)

Table 2 drawn by researcher

Organization of the Chapters

The dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter one sets introductory part of overall study. Chapter two spotlights the literature review as well as theoretical modality of multidisciplinary approaches that are applied from the key concepts and notions of performance, ritual, spatiality, cultural and folkloristic criticism. The ideas of Victor Turner, Richard Schechner and Catherine Bell are encompassed to theorize the concepts of ritual performance. To identify the cultural value, identity and representation in the performance of the folk texts, theoretical perspective of Stuart Hall's representation as 'signifying object' has been discussed. In the meantime, key

concepts and opinions of spatial theorists like Henri Lefebvre, Bill Richardson, David Harvey and Edward Relph are used to examine the spatiality of the power-relation, cultural production, collective memories and ethnographic experiences. In the next section, this chapter involves the examination of Dundesian perspective of folklore as the mirror of the culture. In the same way, the ideas of Barre Toekin, Martha C. Sims, Jawaharlal Handoo and Abhi Subedi are supportive to theorize the folklore and folk texts. Most of the folkloristic traditions and ritual performance are disappearing, but the significance and implication of cultural values of ethnic and particular community through the performance of folk texts has not been reduced in the modern life. To show the contradiction between modernity and tradition of folkloristic texts, the theoretical concept of Richard Dorson's folklore in the modern time in multiple patterns has been discussed. To support his viewpoints, Arjun Apparadurai's five dimensions of global cultural flows (ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, financescape and ideaspape) are used to analyze the safeguarding of primordial ethnicity in the shifting of modern way of life.

Chapter three encompasses the exploration on two ways of the performance of Thāru Mahābhārata: collective singing of *Barkimār* on the occasion of *Ḍasyā* and ritual dance of *Barkā Nāc*. In the first section, the study attempts to examine the power of *communitas* in the cultural performance of *Barkimār*. It also includes a descriptive analysis of its live performance through my field visit observation of Sisahanyā village in Dang valley on the occasion of *Ḍasyā* festival. In the second section, the study attempts to examine how the performance of *Barkā Nāc* is associated with the socio-semiotic implication in the spatiality of Thārus. Moreover, it also encompasses a descriptive analysis of my field visit observation in the two villages, Jalaurā and Mahadevā in Dang-Deukhuri. Similarly, chapter four provides an

exploration of how the cultural performances of Thāru *Rāmāyana* and creation myth in their space reflect the cultural root of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. Their performing style of folk dances like *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā nāc* are the lens to know their costume, folk musicality, speech and space. This section also attempts to explore the power of ritualization of creation myth when *Ḍesbandhyā* Gurvā recites on the occasion of *Gurai pujā* in the community of Thārus. Moreover, my field visit observation based vignettes of those folk dances and ritual activity in different villages of Dang valley is discussed in the chapter.

Likewise, chapter five deals with the issue of how traditional socio-cultural lives of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus are discontinuous and also existing in fragile condition in the changed context of modern life. This chapter also gives an explanation of potential ways of preserving and promoting the indigenous knowledge based folk texts, festivals and performing arts. As a concluding sector, chapter six synthesizes the analysis of previous chapters by revisiting and reconnecting of all objectives, research questions and hypothesis. Regarding the folklore studies in Nepal, the study also seeks to point out the potential amendment of the governmental policy and strategy in folklore and cultural studies in Nepal. In the same way, research prospects for future are also mentioned in the concluding part to underscore the possible research issues in the area of folklore and literary folk texts of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus in the days to come.

Chapter II

Performance, Ethnicity and Spatiality in the Folk Texts

In the first section, the study attempts to review the previous Thāru studies, particularly focusing on three categories: basic concepts (i.e. ethnicity and folklore), thematic of discipline-wise study and primary folk texts. Reviewing the varieties of previous Thāru writings and studies, the second section of this chapter involves the critical insights of major concepts and opinions from the multidisciplinary approach, particularly the areas of performance, ritual, cultural, spatial and folkloristic criticism for the extension of theoretical modality.

Literature Review

This section covers the three-pronged process of literature reviews: basic concepts of ethnicity and folklore, thematic of discipline-wise study and primary folk texts. Elaborating the basic concepts of ethnicity, there has been discussed its primordialist and constructivist approaches. Similarly, this sub-section also includes the basic concepts of folklore such as, orality and cultural memory as well as unofficial and non-institutional knowledge of the folk group and society. In the sub-section of thematic of discipline-wise study, there has been encompassed the appraisals from the disciplinary studies of language, literature, history, demography, sociology, folklore, ethnomusics and anthropology of Tharus in the Nepal and India. The review on the primary folk texts discusses the critical analysis and opinion of many literary critics, academicians and researchers. Regarding the appraisals on basic concepts, thematic of disciplinary-wise study and primary folk texts of the previous Thāru studies, this section is an attempt to portray the research gap for the exploration on the performance of ethnicity and spatiality in the Daṅgaurā Thāru folk texts in Nepal.

Basic Concepts of Ethnicity

The ethnicity of Thāru, for many researchers and theorists, is such a social group of individuals who have certain common characteristics like common ancestral origin, same religion and common mother-tongue. Without common ancestral group, religion, language and race, the concept of ethnicity is not apparently identified in the human race. In this regard, Kailash Nath Pyakurel asserts that common identification based ethnicity of Thāru is “marked by (a) symbols of shared heritage, (b) an awareness of similar historical experiences, and (c) a sense of in-group loyalty or “we feeling” associated with a shared social-position, common ancestry” (33). Such description obviously shows their similar values and interests and often with identification with specific ancestral origin.

Arjun Guneratne opines that the term ‘Thāru’ itself as an “ethnonym” because it refers to the “linguistically and culturally different endogamous group,” who particularly reside in the malarial lowland region of Nepal known as the Tarai (*Thāru* 1). As far as we know Thārus have an account of ethnic identity in the sense that they are culturally and historically distinct category of separate people in the region of Himalayan foothills, which was once not only known as an endemic malarian land, but also recognized of dense forests and swamps. At this backdrop, Guneratne also discusses Anthony Smith’s six features of an ethnicity, which is from Smith’s book *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), in this way: “it [ethnicity] has (1) a collective name, (2) a common myth of descend, (3) a shared history, (4) a distinctive shared culture, (5) a specific territory and (6) a sense of solidarity” (qtd. in *Many* 10). So Guneratne finds that ethnicity of Thārus has the specific territory, a collective name and some degree of a sense of solidarity. At the same time, Meci to Mahākālī resided in low land of Tarai of all Thārus do not have common myth of descent, shared history and shared culture. Broadly speaking, Guneratne

contends that Thāru ethnicity “is constituted through social contact” and, therefore, “ethnic consciousness and identity is political” one in the circumstance of Nepal.

Indeed, Guneratne explains the ethnicity in the form of two approaches. Firstly, the “primordialist approach” that is “an essential identity, defined by the metaphor of blood” as an ethnic group is made up “one blood” and also they have “essential biological unity,” which is also “expressed in a common culture” that is “remained fundamentally unchanged through centuries” (14-15). Likewise, Urmila Phadnis and Rajat Ganguly also argue that primordialist school of thought holds the ethnic identity on the basis of “biological ‘given’ or ‘natural’ phenomena” (23). In fact, kinship network of ethnic groups is created in primordialist approach on the basis of birth and ancestral relation. Thus, various cultural attributes of ethnic groups—for instance, language, race, religion, custom, tradition, food, music and dress—are comprehended according to genealogy, blood and ancestry. On the contrary, constructivist school of thought highlights that “ethnic or national identity is socially constructed . . . rather than biologically given ideas whose meaning is dictated by nature” (24). Second approach of ethnicity, in the words of Guneratne, is “under the rubric of social-historical” as it incorporates the “contingent nature of ethnicity” (17). In other words, ethnicity is “created through the purposeful activities of dominant classes or elites”. By the reason, elite consciousness enhances the mass ethnic consciousness as it strengthens the way and tutoring to the “subjective beliefs of the mass people.” Anyway, elites are all set as a principal agent for the ethnic and nationalist awareness to shape their identity because ethnicity of constructivist approach is socially constructed rather than established cultural orders. In other words, the social, cultural and political elites are substantial players in the process of ethnic identity.

Furthermore, David Gellner also unfolds the issue of ethnicity and nationalism in the following two positions: primordialist and instrumentalist or modernist. Accordingly, primordialist incorporates the “ethnic (and potentiality national) identity,” which is also considerable facet of social identity (7). Likewise, ethnic and national units have the role to generate the “deep emotional attachments.” Moreover, primordialist school is concerned with an essentialist notion of ethnicity whereas instrumentalism is opposition of it. Moreover, Prayag Raj Sharma affirms that ethnicity and national integration in the context of Nepal is distinctive type of historical and cultural facets as the temperament of multiethnic and multilingual country have “co-existed for centuries” (204). Likewise, Andras Hofer points out that ethnic groups are such “minorities who have a subjective ethnic identity” and, accordingly, they “are conscious of solidarity due to a (mostly mythical) common ancestry and of sharing specific linguistic and cultural phenomena” (11). In his PhD dissertation, *The Thāru of Chitwan, Ethnicity, Class and the State in Nepal*, Arjun Guneratne argues that ethnicity of Thāru identity formation has existed at the two levels: Firstly, “a regional or local one” and, secondly, “the role of elite in the shaping of identity” (5). The first level of identity is “structured through intermarriage” as it is well-established and deeply rooted since earlier time.

At the same time, the second level of ethnic identity is fortified with the “extremely diverse” because they have several public meetings, the linguistically and culturally their process of identity formation is shared by every sort of Thāru as they claim: “from the Meci to the Mahākāli, we are one *jāt* (*meçi dekhi mahākāli hāmro jāt eutai ho*).” In other words, different groups and subgroups of Thārus are united and they feel the proud of one caste ‘Thāru’ within the intact nation of Nepal. At this process, Guneratne acknowledges the role of Tharu Welfare Society (TWS) as a social service organization to have a “catalyst for the emergence of a shared

ethnic identity” among different subgroups of Thārus, including eastern to far-western Tarai region of Nepal (*Many* 188). So the historical contribution of TWS has played a substantial role to enhance their ethnic identification of instrumentalist approach.

Basic Concepts of Folklore

The term ‘folklore’ was coined by Briton William John Thoms in 1846 to describe the old days’ manners, customs, ballads, superstitions, proverbs, and many other folk material constructions and buildings³. Indeed, folklore covers the multidimensional aspects of cultural and artistic expression of the common people and folk group. A significant attribute of the folklore is that it is not concerned with elite art and culture, but the impressive types of verbal, non-verbal texts and arts as well as materialistic practices, including myths, legends, folktales, folksongs, riddles, folk dance, folk dress, folk foods, folk cosmetics, folk instruments, folk drama and different constructional materials of the olden period. However, the concept of folklore was thought as a priceless national and panhuman testimony since its beginning time, but current - days of its modern study has underlined the folk properties, nostalgia and memories of the bygone days.

Orality and Cultural Memory

Most of the folkloric genres are transmitted from one person to another, one generation to another and one region to another as they are existed in the practice of oral tradition. Indeed, folklore is such a cultural practice that its different genres and their embedded knowledges are transmitted orally. Regarding such oral tradition of folklore, William R Bascom insists, “all folklore is orally transmitted, but not all that is orally transmitted is folklore” (28). Moreover, the word ‘orality’ is common to show synonym of ‘spoken,’ ‘verbal,’ ‘unwritten,’ ‘not written.’

³See Green, Thomas A (ed). *Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music and Art*. Santa Barbara, 1997.

Similarly, Graham Furniss opines that “orality has power of spoken world of oral communicative moment” as it circulates among people to perceive their commonality and experience (xi). In fact, moment of oral communication enhances the dynamic role to transmit the ideas and values, information and identities of the society. So orality in folkloristic texts has the power of the spoken world as it creates the “media of communication” in the oral societies (xii). In the meantime, orality does not only show different modes of communication in the memory of societal knowledge, but also unfolds the dynamics of cultural production in the public and private culture.

John Goody asserts that oral literature is more specific area that shows the “oral standardized oral forms” (41). In other words, oral cultures are the “memory of authorship, though never entirely absent” (46). Thus, oral cultures are “part of an ensemble of actions that constitute the setting, often the ritual, and sometimes the music and dance of the performers” (55). Moreover, transmission of oral texts is a crucial matter and those folk texts are remained in memory and also alive through the mouth practice of folk practitioners on the occasion of different cultural contexts. In addition, folk practitioners remember the unscripted pieces of such folk texts and they also recall those pieces in particular occasion of the performing texts. Very interestingly, orality provides the everyday behavior of human psychological experiments based on the memory as folk practitioners have to remember the pieces of what exactly contain in the folk texts in particular contexts. Indeed, oral tradition of the folk texts can be taken as a particular human behavior because they rely on “human memory for their preservation” (9). However, oral tradition of the folk texts reveals the “organized, coherent stories” (15). The script texts are already predetermined and stereotyped sequences of the actions whereas oral traditions of storytelling may not in the form of such sequences. Indeed, Jawaharlal Handoo also insists

that “folklore and oral traditions are subsumed as relics of the past more importantly backward past” (14). Therefore, folk performers revive the sequences and serials of those folk texts according to their cultural memories.

Unofficial and Non-Institutional Knowledge

Martha C Sims and Martine Stephens underline that folklore is “informally learned, unofficial knowledge about the world, ourselves, our communities, our beliefs, our cultures, and our traditions that is expressed creatively through words, music, customs, actions, behaviors and materials” (8). Therefore, folkloric activity is “interactive, dynamic process of creating, communicating and performing as we share that knowledge with other people.” Moreover, it is also a significant aspect of traditional belief and custom as well as “unofficial, non-institutional knowledge and experience” of particular community (11). It is informal and unofficial in the sense that recognized institutions of the state and universities do not manage to learn and share the folkloristic contents and materials. Thus, folkloristic texts are learned and continued in the societal context through the rituals and cultural practices of folk group in particular time and context. Regarding its credentials, Richard M Dorson opines that folklorists “are concerned with the study of traditional culture, or the unofficial culture, or the folk culture, as opposed to the elite, not for the sake of proving a thesis but to learn about the mass of humanity overlooked by the conventional disciplines” (*Folklore* 117). Thus, Dorson highlights that historians write histories of the elite, the successful and the visible, but literary scholars study elitist writings and the critics of the arts to confine their attention to the fine arts.

The notion of some folklorists emphasizes that folklore as a vernacular knowledge of the bottommost layers of the society as it is in the form of colloquial speech that refers “the particular localized language, objects and practices of groups within specific contexts” (Sims and

Stephens 6). Outwardly, such folk knowledge is not “just as to place, time, class and variety of issue, but as to accent—vernacular characterizations of what happens connected to vernacular imaginings of what can” (Geertz, *Local* 215). Moreover, Dorothy Noyes opines that “Marxist conception of folklore as the culture of the dominated classes and the American liberal idea of folklore as the shared vernacular of everyday life, underlying formal institutions” (16). For Marxian theorists, folklore may be “foundation for revolution” as archaism and vernacular expression through the folkloric genres facilitates to resist the dominant ideologies (16). In fact, folklore reveals the cultural expression of dominated classes as it functions like a “popular religion and, therefore, also in the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting” that enhances to resist the dominant ideologies (Gramsci 323). In other words, vernacularism remains in the everyday order of folk culture that goes against the standard and upper layers of cultural ideology.

Thematic of Discipline-wise Study

The study of various scholarly writings about Thārus reveals different thematic based disciplinary studies such as folk arts and crafts, ethnomusics and literary study, socio-cultural study, socio-linguistic study, anthropological study, ethno-historical study, Buddhist study and demographic study. Accordingly, the study of Sameera Maiti covers in-depth survey of major records of the Thāru arts and crafts, particularly the Thāru of Uttar Pradesh in India. Her inquiry not only covers different arts, crafts and activities of Uttar Pradesh based Thārus, but also provides the description of specific geographic location as its data was collected from 29 of the 47 tribal village of Lakhimpur Kheri district in Uttar Pradesh. Her analysis highlights the Indian topography based Thārus, who are rich in tradition of their arts and crafts even though these artistic creativities are day by day “fast disappearing” due to the globalism as well as shifting and

developing multicultural lifestyles (15). Regarding the examination of local aesthetic conducts, Maiti asserts that Thārus are not “guided by their own well-defined aesthetics sensibility,” but also they are “living in harmony with nature” as they use the naturally “available raw materials of their surroundings without disturbing the nature and ecosystem for the fulfillment of a majority of their requirement” (276). In this way, arts for the Thārus is an inseparable component of the life as their beautiful huts are made of woods, reed, bamboo, thatch and clay—all of these materials are accessible without troubles in the *Tharuhat* soil.

The PhD dissertation of Victoria Marie Dalzell, *Freedom, Margins and Music: Musical Discourses of Thāru Ethnicity in Nepal*, has attempted to explore the social identity formation of Thārus through the performance of folk musical practices and their experiences. In the both works, *Thāru Jātiko Lokgit Tathā Loksangit* and *Rapti Loksāhitya*, Govinda Acharya has introduced different kinds of Thāru folk songs and musics as these folk materials are practiced and performed from Meci to Mahākāli area of Nepali lowland of Tarai where many subgroups of Thārus have been living. Furthermore, Phani Shyam Thāru asserts that Thāru cultural aspect is the most inseparable as well as essential matter to show the social identity of ethnic culture. Regarding the historical aspects of Nepali socio-political transformation, Krishnaraj Sarbahari, in his book *Thāru Sāhityako Itihās*, has divided overall Thāru literature into three categories like pre-modern, modern and post-modern phases. The seminal Nepali writing work of Ashok Thāru, *Thāru Loksāhityamā Itihās, Kalā ra Darshan*, has presented the critical opinion on the folk epics of *Gurbābak Jarmauti*, *Rāmbihagrā*, *Aṣṭimki /Sakhyā*, *Phulvār* and *Barkimār*.

Kailash Nath Pyakurel’s PhD thesis entitled *Ethnicity and Rural Development: A Sociological Study of Four Thāru Villages in Chitwan, Nepal*, unfolds the sociological aspects with the inter-ethnic relations among Chitoniya Thārus. Some of the Nepali scholars and project

document—for example, Janak Raj Sharma, Medini Prasad Sharma, Gopal Shivakoti, Gopal Dahit and Nepali Folklore Society— have also introduced overall survey on Thārus and their socio-cultural aspect in the context of Nepal. In his text, *Thāru Indigenous Knowledge and Practices*, Gopal Dahit has tried to carry out the study of following three indigenous knowledges of Thārus: organizational system, medical system, and foods and drinks, particularly focusing different six districts, including Dang, Banke, Bardia, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Surkhet. Similarly, the publication of Nepali Folklore Society, *Thāru Folklore and Folklife*, introduces the diverse facets of folklore and folklife of the Thārus. Discussing the ethnic identity of Thāru, it includes general introduction of social and economic life, daily folklife and rituals, family and kinship, traditional social institutions and gender discrimination, religious and folk beliefs, folk arts, costume and architecture, food items and musical instrument, deities and festivals, medicines and heritage, folk literature and performing arts.

Dorothy Leal is considered as the “pioneered of the linguistic studies of the Thāru language” in the Nepali ambience (qtd. in Paudyal 14) as he first published a text entitled, *A Vocabulary of the Thāru Language*, in 1972. Moreover, Krishna Prasad Paudyal has emphasized to investigate the grammatical features of Chitoniya Thāru. His research is, in fact, based on “the functional typological perspective” to explore its linguistic implication (2). Likewise, Edward Daniel Boehm tries to “reconstruct the phonological system of the earliest stage of Thāru” as his study insists on Proto-Thāru and their different forms (3). Indeed, the inquiry of Boehm definitely includes the Thāru varieties such as Ḍaṅgaurā, Rānā, Chitoniya and Kochilā. In their book *A Sociolinguistic Study of Ḍaṅgaurā Thāru and Related Varieties*, Stephanie R. Eichentopf and Jessica R. Mitchell, present the sociolinguistic research conducted among Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus

as well as Kathoriyā Thāru and other closely concerned subgroups in Dang, Banke, Bardia and Kailai districts of Nepal.

The anthropology of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thāru was probably first studied by Drone Prasad Rajaure in 1970s. In his master degree thesis entitled, *An Anthropological Study of the Thāru of Dang-Deokhuri*, has incorporated the descriptive analysis of Thāru organization, ritual, festival, clans, myth and other socio-anthropological factors from a village of Sukhrwar in the Dang valley. The PhD thesis of Christian McDonough entitled *The Thāru of Dang: A Study of Social Organization, Myth and Ritual in West Nepal* also has tried to explore “a descriptive analysis on the social organization, myth and ritual” of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus in the context of Dang valley in Nepal (1). Similarly, the exploration of Gisele Krauskopff also spotlights the Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus and their social organization because her PhD thesis, *Maitres et possedes: les diux, less rites et l'ordre social chez les Thāru (Nepal) (Masters and Possessed: Rituals and Social Order Among the Thāru)* is based on “ethnographical approach” of Baibāᅅg and Hekuli villages in Dang valley, where Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus are densely resided (“Interview,” Thāruculture.blogspot.com). Indeed, her thesis was originally written in French and was also printed in book form in the same language in 1989.

Moreover, the PhD study of Arjun Guneratne, *Thāru of Chitwan, Ethnicity, Class and the State in Nepal*, highlights the advancement and progress of Thāru ethnic identity, which is also the ethnographic exploration of Chitoniya Thārus. However, Guneratne asserts that Thāru identity is basically the ethnic consciousness in the modern process of their socio-cultural way of life. In the same way, a prominent Nepali anthropologist, Dor Bahadur Bista, has presented the explanation on the Nepali Thārus and also has focused on their own traditional practice of tribal religion in the system of *Gurvā*. The ethnographical study of S K Srivastava titled *The Thārus:*

A Study in Cultural Dynamics, highlights the cultural dynamics as well as different social changes in the social organization of Thārus, particularly in Nainital Tarai of Uttar Pradesh in India around the time of 1950s. Such changes reveal that Thārus are assimilating in the Hindus or Kshatriya and Brahmin caste rather than focusing to preserve their indigenous culture and knowledge.

Tej Narayan Panjiar, a Thāru historian, spent over a twenty years period to collect the fifty royal issued documents for the exploration of Thāru history from Thāru villages of the lowland Tarai. A close reading of those documents highlights that Thārus are not only indigenous people of Tarai and they developed the biological resistance against the malaria disease. On the basis of the collected royal documents, Panjiar also asserts that Thārus are indigenous people of Nepali Tarai lowland and also dwellers of northern India as Gorakhpur district of India was under the rule of Palpa King Ratna Sen until 1843 (v.s.1900). Similarly, Kurt W Meyer discusses the historical documents of Panjiyar Collection and also focuses that those collections are the exciting period of Nepali history as the minor community of Thāru has the substantial role in “the making of the nation” (“Introduction” 15). The examination of Krauskopff on Panjiar documents dismantles the myth about Thārus, which focuses that they are backward people, isolated and have been living in the primeval forest with the activities of hunting and gathering. It seems that they were “sophisticated farmers” as well as “pioneers cultivators of the Tarai” region (“From” 35). Indeed, their cultivation of lowland Tarai in Nepal historically helped to nourish the entire nation.

Ramananda Prasad Singh has his own view on the origin of the Thāru in an essay entitled, “The Real Story of the Thārus,” which was published in *Thāru Sanskriti*, a magazine published by the Thāru Welfare Society in 1988. Indeed, he underscores that Thārus are “a pre-

Aryan race of Mongloid origin,” they have also the origin of Shakyas and, therefore, Gautam Buddha was also the scion of Thārus (qtd. in *Many* 154). Supporting of such his analysis, Subodh Kumar Singh also highlights that Thārus are the descendants of the Shakyas and the Koilyas. Similarly, Mahesh Chaudhari argues that Thārus and Newar Shakya people of Kathmandu valley have the credential of similar origin (*Nepalko* 139). Besides, Chaudhari claims that Thārus do not only belong to the dynasty of Gautam Buddha, but also of Sen Kings, who were rulers up to early twentieth century in different territories of the contemporary modern Nepal.

Gopal Dahit, in his PhD dissertation, has tried to examine the historical, social and cultural relations of Thārus with the practices of Buddhism. His inquiry highlights the decreasing Thāru Buddhist monks, nuns and people in the modern way of Thāru folk life. Likewise, Yogi Narharinath has compiled the story of Dangisharan, who was the first king of Dang, in *Itihas Prakashana Sandhipatra Sangraha*. Its story has been written in Prakrit language and also this narrative has not included the facet of when the king Dangisharan ruled over Dang valley and its adjoining regions. On the other hand, Teknath Gautam has different analysis with aforementioned Thāru scholars about the Thāru dynasty. Relying on Aryan Purans, he argues that Thārus are “associated with Asurs” (25). Accordingly, Gautam highlights that the name of Asurs and Thāru clans depicts the similarity and proximity with each other. Besides, the PhD dissertation of Damodar Jnawali seeks to examine the ecological and population perspective of Thārus in Bardia district of Nepal.

Primary Folk Texts

While reviewing Thāru writings and studies, I collected some critical concepts and opinions of researchers and critics on the selected folk texts of this study. Ashok Thāru illustrates

the rationale of how folk *Mahābhārata* was created and developed as a folk literature in different regional languages in Asian context. However, Sanskrit education got day by day decreased, but the narrative of *Mahābhārata* was scattered in several provincial and local languages among ethnic people in forms of songs and stories. As a consequence, Thāru version of *Mahābhārata* emerged and got developed in the circumstances of *Tharuhāt* (*Barkimār* 2-3). In the “Prelude” of English translated version of Thāru *Mahābhārata*, Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel have explained the historical contribution of a Jalaurā Thāru village leader, Ruplal Thāru, and his folk artist team for introducing, preserving and promoting the *Barkā Nāc* in the Dang valley (*Mahabharata* 2). In this way, Meyer and Deuel argue that Thāru people are now “in the process of regenerating the traditional *Barkā Nāc* offering” in the Dang valley. Even though Thāru *Mahābhārata* has been practiced and performed in the locality of Thārus since ancient time, but it was not widely discussed in the academic arena until Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel published in English in 1998.

The Indian scholar like R.K. Narayan has talked about the classical epic, *Rāmāyana*. Accordingly, it was composed by Valmiki in the Sanskrit language almost in fifteen hundred B.C. Moreover, Narayan portrays the influence and recognition of its storyline among different categories of people and variety of public arenas. Its oral tradition is still rife among different communities. Thāru *Rāmāyana* named *Rāmbihagrā* is just one of many regional variations of Rama story in the South-Asian context. In the meantime, Ashok Thāru underlines that *Rāmbihagrā* portrays the Thāru relationship with Sanskrit *Rāmāyana* as well as the cultural and ritual of Ramayanian period (*Thāru Loksāhityamā* 185). Even though Ashok tries to incorporate some original contents as well as its historical and philosophical factor, but his study has the gap of examining in the light of cultural and other different literary criticisms.

Likewise, Govinda Acharya, in his text entitled *Thāru Jātiko Lokgīt Tathā Loksangīt*, has introduced Rama story of Thārus, but his short explanation does not include the detail inquiry of this folk epic from the perspective of performance, ritual, spatial and cultural theories. Likewise, the critic, Mukunda Sharma, has illuminated the field study based Thāru *Rāmāyana*, but his exploration is not mostly given emphasis to the territory of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thāru. His inquiry is based on two Village Development Committees namely, Pakadi and Kamhariya in Rupendehi district of mid-Tarai of Nepal. Moreover, Father Kamil Bulke's *Ram Kathā: Utpati Aur Bikās*, written in Hindi language, tries to seek prevalent of Rama story in different arenas like Vedic literature, Valmiki *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*, Buddhism and Jainism. Despite his inclusion of different contexts of Rama Story in eastern territory, Bulke has not incorporated the Rama Story of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thāru on Nepali context. Regarding its narration of ancient tradition, Dayaram Shrestha tries to seek the Rama story from the Nepali locality in both pre- and post-Bhanubhakta times.

Moreover, Govinda Acharya opines that *Gurbābak Jarmauᅇi* includes the Thāru creation myth, which portrays the local narrative of Thārus the origin of the universe, including the human and non-human beings. Even though it may include some features of Hindu *Bramhānda Puran*, but it is their original, prehistoric and innovative opinion on the origin of universe (*Thāru Jātiko* 85). Highlighting the words of Gisele Krauskopff, Ashok Thāru has given emphasis to Gurbābā as “the premier Thāru” (*Thāru Loksāhityamā* 2). So Ashok argues that *Gurbābak Jarmauᅇi* encompasses the philosophical base of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus in which Gurbābā is at the centre. In a subtitle of PhD dissertation “Myth and Cosmology,” Christian McDonough also provides an explanation of their concepts of the cosmology. Regarding the classical Indian model of four ages (*Saᅇya*, *Tetrā*, *Dwāpar* and *Kaliyuga*), McDonough underscores that Thārus view the

history of the world in two ages: *Satjug* and *kaljug*. Accordingly, mythology of Gurbābā, who is the first and most important deity in Thāru civilization, is the result of *satjug*.

Research Gap

Several researches have been conducted on Thārus but those researches are not properly examined in the light of the literary theories of performance, ritual, spatial, cultural and folkloric approaches, particularly on the Ḍaṅgaurā Thāru folk texts. Several academic writings are available by national and foreign scholars, but their anthropological, ethnomusical, socio-cultural, socio-linguistic, Buddhist, political and historical approach of theme based research articles, dissertations, books and short articles are not sufficient to explore the selected Ḍaṅgaurā Thāru folk texts.

Theoretical Modality: Performance, Spatiality and Folklore

This study, as mentioned earlier, attempts to examine the folk texts of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus within the theoretical framework of performance, ritual, cultural representation, spatiality and folklore. So this section encompasses the examination on the major concepts and opinions of Richard Schechner's performance and mark identity, Stuart Hall's representation and signifying object, Catherine Bell's ritual and routinized act, Victor Turner's ritual performance and *communitas* from the areas of performance, ritual and cultural criticism. Similarly, Foucauldian perspective of spatiality and power-relationship, Henri Lefebvre's spatiality and cultural production, David Harvey's space and reflection of production and Relph's space as "the man's experience of world" are also discussed to elaborate the theoretical viewpoint of the spatiality. Moreover, the perspective of Aland Dundes's folklore and reflection of culture, Richard Dorson's folklore in the modern world are also examined from the discipline of folkloristic studies. Even though this study takes the primary theoretical concepts and opinions from

Schechner, Hall, Bell, Turner, Lefebvre, Harvey, Dundes and Dorson, it also tries to include the supportive ideas of the ritual and performance theorists (Richard Bauman, Elizabeth Bell and Peggy Phelan), cultural critics (Mather Arnold, Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton), spatial thinkers (Bill Richardson, Robert T Tally Jr and Edward Relph), folkloristic intellectuals (Martha C Sims and Martine Stephens, Jawaharlal Handoo and Abhi Subedi) for the detail elaboration of the theoretical modality.

Performance and Ritual

The term ‘performance’ is widely used in different disciplines such as, cultural studies, arts, literature, folklore and social sciences in the contemporary academic discourse. It usually refers to the act of doing something through the means of human bodily organs. Of course, human organs perform all time. Moreover, their bodies are interacted in different contexts that underscore the discourse of performance studies. Regarding various aspects in socio-cultural performance of human body, Deborah A Kapchan opines, “to perform is to carry something into effect whether it be a story, an identity, an artistic artifact, a historical memory, or ethnography. The notion of agency is implicit in performance” (479). Moreover, area study of performance encompasses not only theatrical aspect, but also multidisciplinary such as, culture, folklore, ritual, economics, sociology, anthropology, ethnography, psychology and linguistics. Mentioning the broad aspect of performance theory and art, Richard Schechner asserts that it is “a broad spectrum of activities including at the very least the performing arts, rituals, healings, sports, popular entertainments and performance in everyday life” (“Performance Studies” 7). So performance is pervasive in our life because it incorporates different areas and concepts of humanities. At the same time, performance has the broad spectrum in the sense that it enhances “to expand to our vision of what performance is, to study it is not only as art but as a means of

understanding historical, social and cultural processes” (9). Thus, performance studies has the attributes of intercultural activity in the human society to use in the study of performative behavior of scholarly study.

Moreover, Schechner highlights two fundamentals of performance studies to regard its broad spectrum. First, performance studies has “no fixed canons of works, ideas, practices, or anything else that defines or limits the field” (“Fundamental” 11). Accordingly, the area of performance is “fundamentally relational, dynamic and processual.” Therefore, it assists to “indeterminacy” and “openness” in the academic activity of performance. Secondly, performance studies also encompasses cross-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary and interdisciplinary aspects as issues of social sciences, semiotics, gender studies, and cultural studies are taken as the primary tools to examine its multidimensional facets. Obviously, there is clear that the “questions of embodiment, action, behavior, and agency are dealt with intercultural” in the arena of performance (13). Indeed, cultural practices are interacting among various cultural and folk groups. Consequently, such cultural interactions are manifested in the innovative process of their occasional practices.

Dwight Conquergood underlines that performance studies includes the local, regional, vernacular and naïve knowledges as subordinate people do not have the privilege of explicitness, the luxury of transparency, direct communication, free and open debate. In other words, their subjugated knowledges are “masked, camouflaged, indirect, embedded or hidden in context” (370). To highlight the subjugated knowledges of folk people, Conquergood borrows the idea of Raymond Williams who views the arrogance on scripto-centrism as it is the “error” and “delusion” of “highly educated people” (qtd in Conquergood 371). Accordingly, scripto-centrism of the highly educated individual is failed to notice the skilled and creative activity of farm

laborers, folk group and craftsmen of rural region. Indeed, scripto-centrism is basically creativity of urban and middle class, which only exposes the “hegemony of textualism” rather than oral, unwritten and unscripted types of folkloristic text. Thus, the notion of Conquergood reinforces the radical study in performance as he has underscored the subjugated knowledge and anti-scriptocentrism, which helps to comprehend the oral tradition of folkloristic text. Therefore, it can be argued that folk group of performers can enact social and creative power through their performance of oral, unwritten, vernacular and local knowledge in the particular context.

In the description of Peggy Phelan, the performance is the ontological aspect. Therefore, performativity is disappearance of reality that comes through the metonymic and metaphoric performance. In other words, real performance is possible only in the present as Phelan asserts, “the disappearance of the object is fundamental to performance; it rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered” (147). It shows that cultural memory of past days is possible in the performance of folklore as lost appearances are created in the real performance of the present time. Accordingly, the body of folk performers is metonymic of self, presence and large apparent of visibility and availability. Moreover, the “performer actually disappears and represents something else—dance, movement, sound, characters, art” (150). In this way, use of body in performance of folkloristic texts is supplemental of the lack of being, which is related to the unwritten, oral and disappearance of cultural memory of bygone days.

Ritual follows the quintessential custom of the particular community that infers the social relationships. Moreover, ritual activities and functions reveal the cultural and social values at the deepest level of the particular society because their rituals are long-lasting parts of social behavior to identify the particular cultural group. Indeed. Martha C Sims and Martin Stephens

emphasize that rituals are parts of folklore as they provide the common people's embedded meaning. For Sims and Stephens, they are "significant expressions of a group's traditions, beliefs, values and identities" (95). Thus, activities of rituals are "repeated, habitual actions, but they are more purposeful than customs . . . frequently organized and controlled, often meant to indicate or announce membership in a group." In reality, rituals are different activities of performance as they are repeated, patterned and also included symbolic actions to reinforce the certain traditional ideas, values, faiths and beliefs.

Moreover, Sims and Stephens have subtly categorized two types of rituals: low-context and high-context rituals. For them, low context rituals "are less formally designated and usually not announced or planned in advanced" (98). On the contrary, high-context rituals are show "very stylized and occur at set times for specific announced purposes." Therefore, they need "to be particular dress codes" (99). So that, participants and practitioners must follow the certain dressing and wearing of ceremonial clothing or jewelry. In this way, rituals mark event, values, belief and experiences that are considered as valuable occurrences of the particular groups, who participate in their ceremonial functions and occasions.

Ritual performances exhibit the formal characteristics of sacred act, rule bound and stylized patterned of the performers, participators and practitioners. For Catherine Bell, rituals have the features of primarily "communal," "traditional" and "rooted in beliefs in divine beings of some sort" (*Ritual: Perspective* 94). It is a way that folk people can act in their world and also such ways influence the communities, world views and living of the social groups. At this backdrop, Elizabeth Bell has elaborated Catherine Bell's analysis of ritual in three characteristics. At first, ritual action is communal, involving groups of people who gain social solidarity through their participation. Secondly, the ritual action itself is traditional and

“understood as carrying on ways of acting established in the past” (128). Finally, ritual is rooted in the folk belief of divine beings in some cases of ethnic and social group.

Moreover, Bell also explains five characteristics of ritual activities: formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism. First, ‘formalism’ shows the “degree of formality in dress or speech that marks an activity as ritual-like.” So the hierarchical position, authority and symbolic messages are given highly priority to show the formality. Second, ‘traditionalism’ appeals the cultural precedents to show “we have always done this” among the folk performers and stakeholders. Third, ‘invariance’ gives emphasis to “precise repetition and physical control” as ritual actions are performed exactly the same in each of their time. Such repetition justifies their timeless authority of the community or group in the cultural doctrines. Fourth, ‘rule-governance’ highlights those ritual activities because these things “are governed by rules that guide and direct the activities” (129). Finally, factor of ‘sacral symbol’ enhances to appeal for supernatural beings. In such process, people and objects become sacred through ritual acts, or ritual-like acts. Therefore, such characteristics of ritual are manifested in and through performance.

Similarly, ritual celebration has the linked with pre-history and activities of the forerunners in particular community. So Schechner underlines that rituals are “collective memories encodes into actions” (*Performance* 52). Such practices and performances of ritual assist people “to deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies and desires that trouble, exceed, or violate the norms of daily life.” Moreover, performing ritual enhance “to go back the earliest periods of human cultural activity” because various ritual performances reconstruct and revitalize the history, people, events, places and cultural memories. Furthermore, those social functions of ritual reinforce culture and public memory in the particular context of

social and ethnic group. Of course, such ritual performance is “dialogic performance” in the sense that “it brings self and other together” and also highlights the “dialogue between performer and text open” (Conquergood, “Performing” 143). In other words, dialogic performance is a way of finding different voices, worldviews and value systems through dialogue between history and present context of ritual text. In the words of Roy A Rappaport, ritual “embodies social contract” because its tendency is to reveal “the fundamental social act upon which human society is found” (254). Definitely, the social conditions of collectivity and unity are manifested in the ritual performance to bolster the historical and cultural memories in the present time of the folk and social group.

Performance, Identity and Communicative Action

Social identity is reframed, reshaped and recreated through the performance of folkloristic texts. Identity means, in general, the purposeful expression of social, psychological and behaviors that are conventionally associated with different signs and symbolic meanings as well as verbal expressions. Indeed, social and cultural identity is functional to express the cultural norms and values of the particular community. At this point, Richard Schechner emphasizes that “performances mark identities, bend time, reshape and adorn the body and tell stories” (*Performance* 28). Consequently, the body of performer tells the historical, cultural and social stories of the particular community. Moreover, the ethnic and folk identity is also constituted as a part of the social recognition. In other words, performances may be arts, ritual or ordinary life of the common individual, but they are made of twice behaviors, restored behaviors, performed actions that people train to do for practice and rehearse. There may be different purposes of performance such as, aesthetic enjoyment, intellectual inquiry, cultural memory,

participatory ritual, social commentary, political action and psychological probe, but they pay special attention to reveal the purposeful and dynamic kind of social identity.

Moreover, performance carries something cause and effect to portray the story, identity, artistic artifact, historical memory and ethnography. So Elizabeth Bell asserts that “performers materialize the characters in and through their bodies” (179). The means of performance reveals the memory and history of the particular social group, family, community and region. Similarly, Judith Butler uses the word “construction” to imply “social construction” of identity in the performing social and cultural life (qtd. in Bell 79). Thus, the function of performance shows that social and cultural identity is not fixed and absolute, but always contingent and in progress. Thus, it is an essential to counter foundational approaches, especially in racial, ethnic and caste identities.

Performance is often concerned with social life and behavior that tremendously amplifies the communicative action among social members of folk group. Different social functions of the social group are performed through the metaphoric language of dramatic action. In this regard, Richard Bauman highlights that performance as “a mode of communicative behavior and a type of communicative event” (“Performance” 41). Moreover, the conduct of communication usually suggests an aesthetic aspect as well as social way of enhancing behaviors, attitudes and customs for both actor and audience. Likewise, performance also “highlights the social, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of communicative process.” However, Bauman has encompassed on five principles about the communicative form of the folkloristic text. First, communication is the ways about the information, ideas and attitudes that passes among individuals, groups, nations, and generations because these aspects are “socially constituted, rooted in social relationships and produced in the conduct of social life” (“Introduction” xiii). However, human society of

ethnic, caste and social force is constituted, produced and reproduced by communicative acts because their social organization is also recognized with the social meanings of communicative functions.

Second, the principle of communication portrays the “expressive forms of a culture, forms of art, play, display, and performance” (xiv). Indeed, they “offer an especially productive vantage point on culture, society and communication” (xiv). Such forms of cultural practice and performing arts are shaped and crafted to reinforce the engagement and commitment of the society. Third, shared understanding of the societal body is essentially the “communicative forms” that represent the social resources of “equipment for live.” Moreover, “the ways of speaking, dressing, dancing, playing music and so on—are social means” in the process of communication. Fourth, “all societal resources, communicative forms and practices are differentially valued” as they are communicative resources to enhance the commonality and harmony among the members of the human society. Definitely, observers can notice that “the system of cultural values and hierarchies of power, authority and status” because they “influence the social distribution of cultural resources” (xiv-xv).

Interestingly, audiences may have most highly valorized cultural forms among the folk or common people. At last, performance gives us an idea about the “communicative forms and practices” that “are cross-culturally and historically variable” (xv). It shows that field study of performance in the cultural and folkloristic text has different types of expressive forms and practices to be popularly accessible for the social life. Thus, explanation of Bauman’s communication “locates social life in communication, created in and across language, order, roles, identities and culture” (Bell, *Theories* 10). So such argument of performance study in

cultural life and folkloristic text upholds the exploring of communication acts to organize, produce and reproduce in the ethnic, caste and regional society.

Such cultural events of folkloristic texts are “scheduled,” “temporary bounded” and “spatially bounded” in the particular ethnic, regional and caste groups (Bauman, “Performance” 46). Within the certain boundaries of time and space, those folk texts are repeatedly programmed to perform in their social context. At the same time, cultural performances show their nature of “reflexive instruments of cultural expression”. In other words, such performance is formally reflexive to involve the signification of cultural system of the particular community. In all cases, performance is social interactional in nature that involves the symbolic forms and live bodies to constitute the meaning for the cultural norms and values. With the cultural purpose of communicative and social action, all performances of folkloristic texts are transactional types of communicative events between performers and audiences.

Ritual, Communitas and Social Power

Rituals interestingly function in the attributes of anti-structural level as they are beyond structural functions and ceremonies. In a liminal phase, performers of the rituality are departed from the ordinary demand and expectation of their folk life. They themselves “offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship” (Turner, “Liminality” 90). Indeed, their personal and social differences are put aside. However, practitioners have some recognition of “fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties” as they are uplifted and swept away from the ordinary life of the structural point. So Victor Turner points out that its position as the liberation from the constraints of ordinary life, which is like an ‘anti-structure’ and the experiences in ritual camaraderie of ‘communitas’. In the initial phase, the society seems as a structured as well as distinguished and often run with hierarchal system of political, legal and economic positions.

In the second phase, the society indicates as “an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated community.” So Turner prefers to use Latin term ‘communitas’ to ‘community’ to distinguish the modality of social relationship from the area of common living of the people in the ritual performance. Turner, indeed, explains the ‘communitas’ to show the social relationship of people who feel common living, comradeship and homogeneity in their social group. Highlighting the attributes of collective joy and inter-subjective reflexivity in communitas, Turner further elaborates, “Communitas is precisely plural reflexivity, the self actively bending back itself. It is intersubjective reflexivity, where each one is the true mirror of all. Not “binary” oppositions but permutations and combinations of relationships between varying numbers of entities, and the flashing signals from cluster on different planes and levels” (qtd. in Edith Turner 219). Hence, communitas is associated with delicate and energy zone where it is surrounded by people.

Communitas is totalities of social relations. Consequently, Turner affirms that “extreme individualism” only emphasizes on “a part of man,” but “extreme collectivism” enhances only “man as a part” (“Anthropology” 54). At this juncture, Turner finds that “communitas is the implicit law of wholeness arising out of relations between totalities.” At the same time, communitas shows a protective type of social structure that helps to bolster “free relationships between individuals,” which is “converted into a non-governed relationship between personae” (Turner, *From Ritual* 47). Thus, communitas is an experience of fellow feeling, social solidarity and cohesion. In other words, overall implication of communitas is the social force that binds the society. Thus, ritual performance is concerned with the power of communitas and, consequently, it has the credential of the ritual authorities that enhances the power of social structure in the process of social interaction.

Additionally, Turner has identified three forms of *communitas*: spontaneous, ideological and normative. At first, spontaneous *communitas* includes “a direct immediate and total confrontation of human identities, a deep rather than intense style of personal interaction” (47). It has magical feature because it highlights the individual and social “feeling of endless power” (48). In other words, individuals who interact with one another become the mode of spontaneous *communitas* because totality of ritual performance is observed into a single synchronized and fluid even. The spontaneous *communitas*, indeed, “happens when congregation or group catches fire in the spirit” as it is ritual even without imposition (Schechner, *Performance* 70). Apparently, such category of *communitas* abolishes the status and hierarchy in a congregation.

Second, ‘ideological *communitas*’ is “a set of theoretical concepts which attempt to describe the interactions of spontaneous *communitas*” (Turner, *Ritual* 48). Indeed, its sets of theoretical concepts that are concretized into a utopian form of society. Finally, normative *communitas* is “per-during social system” that “attempts to foster and maintain relationships or spontaneous *communitas* on a more or less permanent basis” (49). So this category of *communitas* is group based that commonly occur during a period of religious revival. So normative *communitas* is essentially an “official,” “ordained,” “imposed” that creates hierarchy and also people wear different dresses and costumes (Schechner, *Performance* 70). All in all, different categories of *communitas* have the commonality of magical togetherness of the people in the ritual performance. At least, *communitas* ruptures the established rules and fixed structures. Therefore, people are mobilized to achieve a goal of seamless unity to show their magical togetherness through the cultural norms and ideology of *communitas*.

Catherine Bell asserts that “ritual is first and foremost a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organizations” (*Ritual*

Theory 17). Indeed, ritual shows the “clusters of relation” that enhances the power, influence and authority in the ethnic, caste and regional society (200). Therefore, “ritual is a functional mechanism or expressive medium in the service of social solidarity and control.” Besides, the idea of ‘power’ has both positive and negative facets. So Bell claims that its positive notion indicates the ‘influence,’ but negative part refers to the ‘force.’ Consequently, the influence implies the inherent, nonspecific and controlling whereas force involves the general meaning of intentional, specific and threatening. In the case of describing ritual power, Bell underscores the clusters of relations that enhance more or less organized, hierarchical and also coordinated types of relationship. Apparently, such power relations are deeply embedded in the network of social relations. For Bell, ritual is introduced as “particularly thoughtless action—routinized, habitual, obsessive, or mimetic” (19). Primarily, it reveals that ritual as a formal ceremony on the basis of people’s beliefs, creeds, symbols and myths.

Of course, ritual can be defined as an intensive type of communication by the rule and norm of its formality and repetition. The characteristics of formality, fixity and repetition are not its intrinsic aspect, but also they reveal the potential strategy of ritualization to promote the particular community. Likewise, ritual is not simply the matter of routine, habit and the “dead weight of tradition,” but they are “strategies in certain cultural situations” (92). Such strategies of the ritualization are particularly “rooted in the body” that enhances the “interaction of social body within a symbolically constituted spatial and temporal environment” (93). Thus, the process of ritualization is “embedded within the dynamics of the body defined within a symbolically structured environment” (93). Thus, the ritualization is a dynamic and an active form of the social interaction.

However, Foucault argues that social relations of power are not simply “engendered from top down,” but also “from the bottom up” (qtd. in Bell, *Ritual Theory* 200). Moreover, ritualization of power relation also shows the multiple layers of social relations. Definitely, power of ritualization is also contingent, local, imprecise, relational and organizational. In the same way, the power of ritual activities can be seen in the form of social role to preserve the moral, political, religious and cultural values of the ritual groups. Thus, the participants and ritualized agents are a social body to bring the unity and harmony through the medium of ritual activities. Indeed, people are controlled or manipulated by ritual activity of the ethnic, caste and regional society on the lower level as it involves the appropriate minds and bodies to control the society. Moreover, Bell gives emphasis to that “ritual master is itself a capacity for and relationship of relative domination” (215). In other words, power of ritualization is not only matter of transmitting shared beliefs and creeds, but also providing their ritual ideology. Thus, the particular constructions of power relations are influenced by the social ritualization to define and empower the folk group.

Performance, Culture and Representation

The culture is not only what we live in a certain space rather it encompasses different causes and effects in the human life. Moreover, sociological aspects of culture embody the memory of the past, relationship with ancestor and kinship, aesthetic and intellectual enjoyment, communicative function and spatial power. The cultural opinion of Mathew Arnold is considered as the opening point for cultural studies in the contemporary modern time. Arnold commenced his carrier as a cultural critic since the 1860s. Particularly, Arnoldian perspective tries to establish that culture as a significant aspect of knowledge. Indeed, culture is “a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best

which has been thought and said in the world” (5). Accordingly, the reading of cultural site on the literary folk text is concerned with human perfection as well as “sweetness and light” because it enhances “to uphold steadily its ideal of human perfection; that it is an inward spiritual activity, having for its increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy” (48). In other words, culture is such an endeavor that facilitates to “know the best and to make this knowledge prevail for the good of all humankind” (Storey 19). Indeed, Arnoldian perspective highlights to justify that culture as “cultivated inaction.” For him, the culture should identify “(i) the ability to know what is best; (ii) what is best; (iii) the mental and spiritual application of what is best, and (iv) the pursuit of what is best” (19-20). However, his such opinion of cultural aspect is concerned with human perfection with cultivated function.

Arnold further emphasizes on two concepts: ‘anarchy’ and ‘culture,’ which are deeply political ones. Relying on these two opinions, culture shows two types of function in the human based social life. At first, it must guide and instruct the aristocracy and the middle class from the tendencies of the barbarian and savage. Secondly, it also brings the control to the working class people due to the source of authority that also counteracts the tendency of anarchy as authority helps a centralized state for its power. Thus, aristocratic nature wants an authority and their culture “suggests the idea of the state,” but ordinary self or working class lacks such state-power (71). Furthermore, Arnold asserts that working class has no “strong feudal habits of subordination and deference,” but such people can assist to restore its lost sensibility (57). As a consequence, Arnold underlines that culture as the pursuit of perfection and such perfectness is pursued by the beauty, intelligence, sweetness and light. As a final point, his analysis is that anarchy of working class can be replaced by “harmonious influence of culture” (Storey 22). In

fact, Arnoldian perspective of culture is hugely influenced by self-perpetual of intellectual elite rather than attitude and behavior of the ordinary and common people.

As a forerunner of cultural studies, Raymond Williams underlines the cultural aspect in whole way of life of common people that hugely has influenced the domain of humanities. Regarding three general definition of culture, Williams offers that first definition of culture is the 'ideal' one, which focuses it "is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values" (*Long* 57). Besides, this definition is concerned with Arnoldian perspective because cultural values can be seen in the form of "timeless order" and permanent reference for the universal human condition. Second definition of culture is 'documentary' record as it defines "culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work." Indeed, it underlines that culture is human thoughts and experiences that are needed to be recorded in the applicable approach.

Finally, the culture involves the 'social' definition as it is "a description of a particularly way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior" (57). Highlighting the three definitions of culture, Williams underscores that social definition of culture enhances following three ways: "First, 'anthropological position', which sees culture as a description of a particular way of life'; second, the proposition that culture 'expresses certain meanings and values'; third is the claim that the work of cultural analysis should be the 'clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture'" (qtd. in Storey 46). Therefore, this third point embodies the social analysis of culture.

However, third one emphasizes that culture "as a particular way of life, culture as expression of a particular way of life, and cultural analysis as a method of reconstituting a

particular way of life.” It reveals that Williams seeks to underscore the departure from the aristocratic nature of artistic values by underlining the ordinary kind of culture. In *Culture and Society* (1957), Williams also tries to distinguish between middle class and working class culture. For him, middle class culture as “the basic individualistic idea and the institutions, manners, habits of thought, and intentions which proceed from that” whereas working class culture as “the basic collective idea and the institutions, manners, habits of thought, and intentions which proceed from this” (qtd in Storey 48). Furthermore, Williams claims that working class does not produce a narrow sense of culture because it is based on the “collective democratic institution, whether in the trade unions, the cooperative movement or political party” (*Culture* 327). In this regard, working class culture is concerned with the primarily social that also creates institutions rather than individual. Thus, Williams contends that culture should be lived experience of ordinary people that should be based on their daily interactions of everyday life.

For Williams, culture is ordinary in the sense that every human society has its own shape, purposes and meanings that helps to find for common meanings and directions. At this point, Williams finds that the word ‘culture’ is used in two sense of meanings: First, “to mean a whole way of life—the common meanings,” second, “to mean the arts and learning—the special processes of discovery and creative effort” (Barker, *Making* 66). So the appraisal of Williams on culture seems typical approach and departure from Arnold, who was culturally elitist, but Williams emphasized on ordinary culture, collective based democratic institution and plurality of common class cultures, i.e. folkloristic way of life. So Williams’s dictum ‘culture is ordinary’ underlines the viewpoint of common culture that goes against the tradition of Mathew Arnold and his school of thought.

According to Williams, in his book *Keywords* (1983), the term 'culture' is extracted from '*cultura*', which indicates Latin term '*colere*.' Similarly, the term '*colere*' denotes the multiple meanings such as, "inhabit, cultivate, protect, honor with worship" (87). Anyway, his phrase 'culture as ordinary' "supports the investigation of history and culture as productions from below" (Barking, *Making* 63). Indeed, the cultural perception of Williams underlines the active, creative capacity of ordinary people that makes a shared meaningful for the cultural practices. Thus, his opinion of ordinary culture and its common way of life underscores the authenticity of common people's cultural way of ordinary life and its phenomena.

Foucauldian notion of 'subjugated knowledge' permits to know the reality of cultural power and knowledge. Accordingly, culture does not only function in the form of single center of monopoly, but also enhances to identify the multilayers of such local power and knowledge. So Foucauldian explanation of subjugated knowledges on the cultural facet does not show its power of official cognition and qualified. Such subjugated knowledges are "particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge" because of their "low-ranking knowledges" and "unqualified knowledges" (*Power* 82). On the one hand, the culture of subjugated knowledge is not assumed as the products of meticulous, erudite and exact historical knowledge as it is a socio-cultural product of insignificant and trivial setting.

On the other, subjugated knowledges in culture are local and specific knowledge, but they have no totality and widespread meaning because such cultural objects and materials are the under representation of the social entity in macro-politics. Therefore, critical discourse of Foucauldian perspective takes such cultural knowledges of underrepresentation that are "the buried knowledges of erudition and those disqualified from the hierarchy of knowledges and sciences" (82). At this backdrop, Foucault highlights the "*insurrection of subjugated*

knowledges” for the promotion of the local, regional and bottom based different types of cultures and knowledges. In the meantime, folkloristic texts of ethnic, caste and social group have the linked with micro-power politics of particular society from the perspective of representation theory.

To know the combination of cultural power and knowledge, the discourse of Foucauldian notion assists to be aware as it emphasizes, “Power relations permeate all levels of social existence and are therefore to be found operating at every site of social life in the private spheres of the family and sexuality as much as in the public spheres of politics, the economy and the law” (qtd. in Hall 50). In fact, the spotlight of Foucault is that any “power is co-extensive with the social body . . . relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations (production, kinship, family, sexuality)” (142). Meanwhile, modern and functionalist view of power reveals the societal relations, “more or less organized, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations” (198). Moreover, it needs to be considered that cultural knowledge and power has a productive network, which is conducted through the entire social body rather than only individual body. In fact, social and collective body is such a “place where the most minute and local social practices are linked up with the large scale organization of power” (qtd in Bell, *Ritual Theory* 202). Accordingly, cultural body of social force is the basic and fundamental point of power relations because it is deeply rooted in the social network of social relations.

Indeed, the local based cultural power and its subjugated knowledge correlates that culture is not only a totality based world view of dominated class or any social and ethnic group, but it is also understood as the micro-politics of everyday life of local, regional and bottom-level of social body. Hence, Foucault emphasizes the “experiences of groups subordinated to power that have never advanced to the status of official knowledge” (Habermas 280). Therefore, his

discourse of power-knowledge theory also reflects the cultural site of underrepresented ethnic, caste, regional or any social group.

The concept of representation encompasses the broad sense of theoretical ideas in the background of cultural matter in the modern time. However, the traditional notion of representation is “associated with concept of resemblance and imitation” (Cavallaro 45). In the ancient Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, mimetic theory uses the term ‘mimesis’ that means ‘imitation,’ which is from Latin word ‘*imitatio*.’ Moreover, ‘*imitatio*’ or ‘mimesis’ originally refers the physical act of miming, mimicry, emulation, resemblance and verisimilitude as Plato and Aristotle underscore mimesis as a “common human behavior over to the realm of artistic production: art imitates the world much as people imitate each other” (Potolsky 2). So the ‘mimesis’ or ‘imitation’ portrays the “relationship between artistic images and reality” (1). Such argument gives emphasis to the fundamental notions about the art and representation in the ancient time.

Folk literary text represents something of physical, spiritual, psychological and social worlds by symbolizing the objects and producing things and ideas. Accordingly, Raman Selden underlines that representation of the literary text is “to give a pictorial rendering or symbolization of external objects, or to reveal the general and universal features of human natures or to present the ideal forms which lie behind the external objects of the natural world” (7). Such opinion involves the consideration of basic philosophical notion about the tendency of human knowledge (epistemology). Besides, any literary text represents the reality of certain objects of the natural and social world as well as materialistic cause and effect of humanistic life and value. Therefore, any literary representation depicts different literary modes of representation as Selden points out:

(i) literal or scientific representation of natural objects and social life (Naturalism), (ii) Generalized representation of nature or the human passions (classicism), (iii) Generalized representation of nature or the human passions, subjectively viewed (pre-romantic criticism), (iv) Representation of ideal forms inherent in nature and the mind (German Romanticism) and (v) Representation of transcendental ideal forms (idealism), (vi) Representation of art's own world (Art for Art's Sake). (8)

In this way, Selden finds the representation with different trends of literary representation such as naturalism, classicism, pre-romantic criticism, German Romanticism and Neo-Platonic idealism. Likewise, in his text titled *Keywords*, Raymond Williams notes that the word 'represent' uses for acquiring "a range of senses of making present: in the physical sense of presenting oneself or another, often to some person of authority; but also in the sense of making presenting in the mind" (266). Indeed, such description underscores the making presence to anything in its absence. Similarly, Dani Cavallaro asserts that "representations are a vital means of supporting a culture's ideology" (40). In other words, such remark on representation enhances that culture as an ideological strategy, which requires representing the cultural norms and values of any ethnic, caste and regional forces in the human society.

The formation of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University (UK) in the 1960s highlights the question of culture and representation. Moreover, Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggard founded it in 1964 and their discourse not only underlines on the exploration of literary, social and cultural text, but also gives emphasis to the broader interdisciplinary study of the interrelationship between the diversity of cultural discourses and practices. Indeed, British cultural studies movement of the 1960s tries to observe "how representations function in a particular society" because "no object in society can exist without

representation” (Nayar 21). Representation is, of course, the “process of signifying” and also encompasses “the word/sign and its concept/meaning.” Meanwhile, representation may be an image, a word or a concept that uses different signs to generate meanings. Interestingly, analysis of cultural studies spotlights that representation is the alphabet of a culture as well as “an exploration of specific contexts (culture, community, nation, caste, class, gender, race, sexuality) where representations produce and reinforce identities through particular modes” (25). As a consequence, the cultural studies in totality is “concerned with culture as constituted by the meanings and representations that are generated by signifying mechanisms in the contexts of human practices” (Barker, *Making* 4). Besides, it is related with the productions and consequences of those representations and also with the matters of power, signifying practices as well as institutions and virtual structures. For Stuart Hall, culture is concerned with the “shared values of a group or of society” (2). Moreover, culture reveals the shared social meanings as

two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly same ways and can express themselves their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. Thus, culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and ‘making sense’ of the world, in broadly similar ways. (2)

At the same way, social meanings of culture make people too unitary for cognitive as those meanings are generated by the social collectivity of a particular community rather than only the individual conviction. Indeed, shared meanings of culture are about the “feelings, attachments and emotions as well as concepts and ideas.” At this backdrop, language works through the ‘representation’ because cultural meanings are “systems of representation” (4). In addition, different ways of language “stand for or represent what we want to say, to express or

communicate a thought, concept, idea or feeling” (5). Moreover, language itself is the medium of thought and feeling with the representational value and implication.

Moreover, Hall underscores that “spoken language uses sounds, written language uses words, musical languages uses notes on a scale, the language of the body uses physical gesture, the fashion industry uses items of clothing and the language of facial expression uses ways of arranging one’s feature” (4). Moreover, different elements like sounds, words, notes, gestures, expressions and clothes are part of our natural and material world. They also construct meaning, signify and transmit such implication. Indeed, they “operate as *symbols*, which stands for or represent (i.e. symbolize) the meanings we wish to communicate . . . They function as *signs*” (5). Besides, signs may stand for or *represent* “our concepts, ideas and feelings in such a way as to enable others to read, decode or interpret their meaning in roughly the same way that we do.” In addition, Hall affirms that language is “a signifying practice” because “principles of representational system through language” produce a certain meanings, which helps procedure of the production and circulation of the culture (7).

The schema of Hall is the ‘circuit of culture’ that enhances the “holistic view” in the “production of culture” (Spencer 2). In this model, “representation is one position in a matrix alongside processes of identity, production, consumption and regulation.” Moreover, opinion of representation also spotlights on the circulation of shared meanings and ideas. Representation is, Hall argues, “one of the central practices which produce culture” (1). In the meantime, “representations of race, gender, sexuality, class, age and disability” highlight the nexus in the “politics of representation” as they relate the markers of their identities in different layers (Kidd 15). Moreover, representation should make the realization that “we live immersed in representation: it is how we understand our environments and each other. It is also how we both

are, and how we understand ourselves; representation is implicated in the process of *me* becoming *me*” (Webb 3). Thus, representation is the “constructive, resilient and implicated in the forging of identities, cultures, communities and in the articulation of difference” (Kidd 19). Moreover, the cultural meaning is produced and embedded in different layers—production, representation, identity, consumption and regulation. Thus, culture has both characteristics of constitutive and reflective of the human society.

Hall has prominently contributed to understand the representation—the production of meaning through language, discourse and image. In other words, folkloristic text can be examined in the light of “systems of representation,” including the signs, language and discourse work of the particular region, community and ethnic group (17). Besides, Hall mentions three models of representational approaches to explain “how representation of meaning through language works” (24). First, the ‘reflective approach/mimetic theory of representation’ emphasizes that “meaning is thought to lie in the object, person, idea or even in the real world, and language functions like a mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world”(24). In other words, such theory of representational system shows that “language works by simply reflecting or imitating the truth that is already there and fixed in the world”. For example, Homer’s great poem, *The Iliad*, has imitated a heroic series of events.

In second, ‘intentional approach,’ the speaker or the author “imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language” and “words mean what the author intends they should mean” (25). In other words, “the essence of language is communication,” that “depends on shared linguistic conventions and shared codes” because “our private thoughts have to negotiate with all the other meanings for words or images which have been stored in language which our use of the language system will inevitable trigger into action.” Lastly, “constructionist approach”

reveals the “public, social character of language” as “it acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language.” This approach is concerned with “*material* world, where things and people exist, and the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate.” For this thing, “language is central to meaning and culture and has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meanings” (1). Accordingly, social actors use the conceptual systems of their culture and language to construct the meaning making the world meaningful with communicating others.

Charles Sanders Peirce has formulated the typical type of sign system, which seems different from Saussurean model. Indeed, Saussure offers sign model of dyadic (signifier and signified) whereas Peircean has mentioned triadic model (*representamen*, interpretant and object). Accordingly, this model demonstrates that sign is “a unity of what represented (the object), how it is represented (the *representamen*) and how it is interpreted (interpretant)” (Chandler 29). Moreover, a sign is something, which stands for somebody for something, which is object. Saussurean ideas follow mainly linguistic system of sign whereas Ronald Barthes offers the semiotic system in the broad sense of different areas of cultural aspects such as, musical sounds, ritual context and public entertainment. That's why, Barthes argues that semiology “aims to take in any systems of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex association of all these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment” (9). Indeed, performing the sign system is purely social object that holds to systematize the necessary mode of communication. Likewise, Jonathan Culler opines that “semiotic investigation is possible only when one is dealing with a mode of signification or communication—the meaning objects and events have for participants

and observers” (53). Such observation of Culler reveals that performance of folk texts is a mode of communication, which provokes proper description of cultural and social meanings.

Consequently, audiences can identify the effects of signification of the objects’ meaning in their locality.

In most of the disciplines—for instances, psychology, philosophy, film and literary studies, media and communication, art and visual culture, politics and government, sociology and linguistic—, the “representation is examined as a way of teasing out (finding out by searching) the embedded, underlying meanings of texts”(Webb 1). Each of the individuals in particular community is the product of “a complex mix of background, tastes, concerns, training, tendencies, experiences of being world” (2). Thus, representation is “how we experience and communicate ourselves and the world we inhabit, how we know ourselves, and how we deal with others” (6). Indeed, representation encompasses the multiple components of the human survival as it “refers to clusters of ways of conceptualizing, organizing and arranging signs and concepts, and their relationships.” However, it is not only essentially the rendering and delegating, but also the organizing and arranging knowledge and ideas of the community, region and nation.

Spatiality

Spatial theorists have highlighted that how cultural activities of human beings are produced, reproduced and preserved through the performance of cultural and folk texts in the particular space. Moreover, they have focused that human interactions of cultural aspect are located in particular spaces that create a variety of social and cultural meanings in their folk life. Indeed, socio-cultural world is spatially organized with different types of human social activities. Of course, cultural space of human life is relatively constructed through the “interrelations of

objects” as social spatiality is also “relationally constituted out of the simultaneous co-existence of social relations and interactions” (Barker, *Cultural Studies* 292). Very interestingly, Setha Low argues that studies of spatiality “employ a social constructionist approach often examine differentially distributed meanings, experiences local knowledge and individual as well as collective understandings of place, spatial relations and representations” (68). Such notion of Low is very useful to interrogate the underlying assumptions and social process for the spatial analysis of performing folkloristic texts.

Similarly, Robert Tally Jr emphasizes the study area of spatial criticism that “examines literary representations not only of places themselves but of the experience of place and of displacement, while exploring the interrelations between lived experiences and more abstract or unrepresentable spatial network that subtly or directly shapes it” (“Series” X). Therefore, culture is inseparable part from the perspective of spatiality because cultural property and knowledge is created and produced on its spatial location, transforming the landscape in many ways that embodies the values and ideas of the particular community. Similarly, it seems that “spatial imagination and identity are closely linked” (Sapkota, *Spatial* 12). Regarding the spatial aspect of cultural knowledge and property, Michael Ryan et al highlight that ‘culture’ is a spatial in several ways. Firstly, cultural differences manifest “the differences of place” (13). So culture is essentially “information that is transmitted spatially. Moreover, cultural activity “diffuses over terrain, bringing the landscape within the reach of the ideas and conventions of that particular culture.” Secondly, culture is spatial as it enables power relations that include the imposition of one spatial region to another.

Thirdly, it is considered as a way of life of particular community and its ways of livelihood, attitudes and customs are varied according location. Fourthly, culture is spatial

because “it provides us with a mapping mechanism that allows us to move through space as we live” (14). Moreover, it also enhances “a means to assign meaning to events and things in the worlds.” Finally, the notion of cultural spatiality also shows in “an economic sense” that people can compete in a market for the cultural production in the local level. In this way, landscape of cultural texts and folklore can be read, reshaped and explored through its cultural embedded meanings and its power relationship in the particular space of the ethnic, caste and regional group.

Space and Power-Relation

Richard Johnson et al emphasize that spatiality is the particular area of cultural analysis in terms of heritage and tourism as it is the interface between geography and cultural studies that has become a significant metaphor of socio-cultural power relation. Taking account of the spatial embedded meaning, geography is one of the most significant disciplines to conceptualize the space and culture. The component of spatiality is concerned with a spatially located self that influences the locally based cultural knowledge and ethnography. Thus, Johnson et al have underscored that such “locatedness is the shared, culturally sedimented and implicit knowledge that frequently shapes and mediates everyday practice in highly localized ways” (105). Indeed, such cultural knowledges inform the customs and practices to one place to another and one generation to another. Consequently, the issue of cultural space includes the spatial constitution of cultural power, identity and knowledge that is interconnected with the actual relation of power politics. For them, spatiality is a metaphor for power and identity because space facilitates to address the multiple implications of spatial relationships to act out the productive identities and subjectivities.

Arjun Appadurai uses the idea of 'scape' to indicate 'landscape' for expressing the fluidity of social formations that enhances the global cultural interconnections. Moreover, Appadurai coins the term 'ethnoscape' to portray the emerging landscape of constantly moving people and social groups in the global cultural community. The theory of Appadurai has elaborated the postmodern and post-industrial society of indeterminacy and fluidity as it insists on "five dimensions of global culture flows: (a) ethnoscares, (b) mediascares, (c) technoscares, (d) financescape, and (e) ideoscares" (33). Indeed, the word 'scape' refers to the "fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital." Moreover, these landscapes have the deeply perspectival constructs to show the historical, linguistic, and political location.

However, Benedict Anderson calls 'imagined worlds' to identify the multiple worlds of national-states, multi-nations, diasporic communities and subnational groups (for instances, religious, cultural, political and economic). In fact, present time of transnational situation that most people live in the worldwide is such imagined worlds. Meanwhile, these worlds of communities are distinguished, not by the falsity or truthfulness, but by their living styles of local knowledge of cultures in which they are imagined and located. So the communities of their particular cultural artifacts have the deep attachment of local spatiality to show a great variety of social, political, ideological and historical constellations. In reality, spatiality of imagined community identifies the "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail" the nation "as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). Therefore, imagined community is the identity of global to local levels of national dreams of sovereign state. However, cultural roots of nationalism are imagined community of spatiality, which is related to the cultural construction. Moreover, the basic model of global cultural economy has the "deeply disjunctive relationships

among human movement, technological flow and financial transfers” (Appadurai 35). Therefore, modes of local spatiality have also the interconnected relationships in the context of such imagined world.

The perception of space is, indeed, the process whereby the people of community can locate their positions, identities and statuses. Moreover, the geographical mappings are not wholly neutral as they do not represent the space objectively. Understanding the ideological significance of spatiality can help us to grasp the objective of the location. Besides, cultural space is a physical reality that affects the action, production and political involvement of the human world. Ideologically, social space can reveal the means of asserting political and economic power as well as national and cultural heritage. Indeed, such space highlights the embodiment of cultural, political and economic phenomena. In the meantime, spatiality contributes to the mapping of individual lives and social relations.

For Foucault, geographical space explores “a place for geography world” that implies the “archaeology of knowledge” because it embraces a project of global, exhaustive coverage of all domains of knowledge” (*Power* 66). At the same time, the metaphor of geographical powers has the nature of “a juridico- political one: the area controlled by a certain kind of power . . . Soil is a historico-geographical notion. Region is a fiscal, administrative, military notion.” (68). Thus, the archaeology of knowledge can be examined in terms of region and spatiality that functions as a form of power, which disseminates the effects of power. Moreover, spatial discourse has the linkage with history, primitive knowledge, culture and geographical constitutive of the national and social discussion. The question of ‘marginal,’ ‘peripheral,’ ‘central’ and ‘metropolitan’ are specific use of terms in the case of spatial studies as these terms are embedded in the folkloristic texts of spatial metaphors that help to clarify the issues of power and powerless as well as

representation and underrepresentation. Accordingly, spaces are structured, reshaped and remapped by the power differentials that pave the path for productive type of identities and subjectivities.

Culture enables power-relations that enhance the transmission of one region's cultural knowledge to another. Therefore, Foucault argues that "space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power" ("Space" 170). Consequently, space identifies the spatial peculiarities of any society that involves a new and historically relative based exercise of power. Moreover, David Harvey highlights on "the potential connection between place and social identity" (*Condition* 302). The geographical spatiality is relatively empowered to organize in such a place that portrays the place-bound identity. Different types of regional resistances are emerged to enhance the "local autonomy, place-bound organization" for their political and cultural action (30). For Harvey, the slogan of 'think globally and act locally' is also the "assertion of any place-bound identity" to inspire for the "motivational power of tradition." Such traditional culture of spatiality reinforces often for preserving for the commodification and market demanding purpose. Thus, local history, local production and local tradition are essential spatial identity for the commercialization in the lifestyle of postmodern and post-industrial society.

Bill Richardson examines that "notions of space and place inform cultural products and processes, as well as symbolic expression more generally" (1). The phenomenon of a variety of aspects in human spatiality focuses on the spatial turn that can help to elucidate for the symbolic expression and cultural production. The spatial contexts require for the discussion of spatial dimension of the arts and creative activity to identify the commonalities and diverse analyses of cultural phenomena. The issue of spatial dimension includes the individual and collective "sense

of identity or the spatial zone” (3). As a consequence, spatial zone is a sense of share identity and cultural value of the particular community. Indeed, the perspective of spatiality reveals that individual realities are also essentially social realities as Richardson opines,

[T]he spatiality that is linked to persons as separate, “isolated” human beings, on the one hand, and that which is linked, on the other hand, to the shared, collective stabilities of the social realm. In relation to the latter, we might think, for instance, of aspects of cultural or national identity or the spatial element that is central to an understanding of social power and the lack of power, or of other manifestations of a sense of shared ownership and identity within a range of causes, interests, geographical territories, and so on. (4)

Consequently, spatial zone is associated with social and cultural power of the social relation, collectivity and shared identity. In other words, spatial identities and locations are essential conceptual elements of symbolic and cultural expression. Highlighting the social practice and political power knowledge discourse, location and communicative act, Lefebvre writes: “It was the space of common sense, of knowledge, of social practice, of political power, a space hitherto enshrining in everyday discourse, just as in abstract thought, as the environment of and channel for communication” (qtd in “Afterword” 425) Accordingly, space shows the multidimensional aspects of social practice, power, knowledge and communication.

Spatiality, Cultural Production and Experience

Lefebvre insists on various forms of space that take in the social life of human being. Each mode of production has specific relation of production that represents the typical type of social space. At first, the social relation of reproductions includes “the bio-physiological relations between the sexes and between age group along with the specific organization of the

family” (32). Moreover, the relation of production involves “the division of labor and its organization in the forms of hierarchical social functions.” Therefore, these two aspects of relations, production and reproduction are interconnected with each other in their social function.

Meanwhile, Lefebvre also argues that social space has specific representations to enhance the interaction between the social relations of production and reproduction. Thus, space encompasses the multitudes of intersections to portray the power relations through cultural practices of folk texts. Moreover, representations of space contains the “relations of the production and to the order which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge to signs, to codes and to frontal relations” (33). Therefore, representational space embodies the “complex symbolisms, sometimes codes, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life.” In other words, spatial practice “embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation.” Lefebvre, thus, provides us the significant conceptual idea to know how space works with reproduction of representation and under-representation. Similarly, Setha Low highlights that social production of space is a useful point as its “lens illuminates how a space or place comes into existence and opens up questions about the political, economic and historical motives of its planning and development” (34). For Edward Relph, space as the human being’s getting experience and knowledge as he contends, “To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know *your* . . . It is a profound and complex aspect of man’s experience of the world” (3). Thus, social space gives an emphasis to the power of social production, experience and knowledge because it is a means of control and domination of the social and political forces.

Spatial Ethnography

Low argues that social construction of space underscores the cultural memories and feelings that occur through people's social interactions and communicative act of their everyday life. Moreover, the cultural practice of spatiality has the "history, heritage and collective memories" in the particular territory of social construction (69). In his essay, "Invention, Memory and Place," Edward Said asserts that "every memory is a memory of a place" (qtd in Low 77). However, Low claims that such notion of Said assists to know the "spatiality of memory" because it "is part of the dynamic process of space production" (77). Historical experiences, memories and places reflect the ethnography of collective memory and place that often paves a path to examine the experimental aspects of place-making with the socio-political economy. Such materiality of cultural memories is the embodiments of social practices to underline the social force in the cultural production of the local space. For Said, areas of memory and geography are "specifically, the study of space" (78). Therefore, spatial attachment and memory has created a new arena of study in the context of identity, representation, power and nationalism.

Spatiality is, in general, geography and space for the ritual and cultural practice that underscores the social interaction and communicative act. Thus, spatial ethnography provides the research technique to examine the cultural and folkloristic text in the particular space and geography. Elaborating the use of ethnography in English studies, Rachel Alsop asserts that "ethnography is a research strategy that seeks to explore and interpret cultural behavior through prolonged and deep engagement and interaction with the subject, employing prospectively a variety of research methods, including participant observation" (129). Indeed, spatial ethnography does not only represent the potential fruitful type of inquiry, but also provides the

valuable examples of productive culture and power to examine the cultural and folk text in the light of multi-disciplinary approach.

Regarding the study of ethnography in social group, Sims and Stephens assert that it “is the process of studying and learning about groups of people as well as the written description and analysis of those observation” (202). In fact, ethnographic research enhances folklorists to go into a field or particular space for study the folk songs, stories, performance, ritual practices, beliefs and behaviors of the socio-cultural groups. Consequently, spatial ethnography helps to identify the multiple facets of folkloristic and cultural texts related to history, ritual, cultural myth and their representation.

Similarly, ethnographic study is “powerfully inculcated by initiatory research training and articulated in a professional socializing discourse that speaks around its subject” (Marcus 262). As a result, it exposes literary therapy of folkloristic texts to show the historical and mythological contexts of oral and ritual performance. At this backdrop, Norman K Denzin argues that ethnography is “a theory of social” part that enhances “a theory of interpretative (ethnographic work)” (xii). In fact, ethnographic texts are open for interpretative, ethnographic projects as they are always “dialogical—the site at which the voices of the other, alongside the voices of the author [or creator], come alive and interact with one another” (xiii). Thus, ethnographic studies and texts are product of spatial-ritual performance of the particular ethnic, regional, caste and social community.

Folklore, Reflection and Culture

Folklorist Alan Dundes has extensively contributed in the field of folkloristic study, particularly in its theoretical aspects and enactment of American folklore. Dundesian perspective asserts that folklore of any social group is “a mirror of culture, a lens for society, a key to

behavior, a projection of mind” (*Meaning* viii). Indeed, Dundes underscores on the notion of nineteenth century scholars about the folkloristic knowledge in the western society as they had understood that folk as a “savage or primitive (pre-or non-literate),” “peasant (illiterate, rural, lower stratum)” instead of “civilized or elite (literate, urban and upper stratum)” (*Interpreting* 4). At that time, the term ‘folk’ referred European peasants and their common life. But such definition of folk reveals the narrow perception as countries of modern Europe have the vast body of curious beliefs, customs and manner of the folkloric life. At the same time, folk is not only the mirror of the peasant, rural and illiterate belief and custom, but also the urban and metropolitan city of life in the present time. In this way, Dundesian viewpoint is different from nineteenth century definition of folklore as they called it “illiterate in a literate society” (16). People may be urban and middle class, but they also can use urban folk. Hence, Dundesian perspective highlights that folklore as the reflection or mirror of culture of any ethnic, regional and caste community that may exist in both urban and rural space.

Barre Toelken underscores that folklore has both “dynamic” (changing) and “conservative” (static) attributes that enhances the traditional adaptation as well as sense of continuity in modern time (37). Indeed, the conservative and the dynamic elements are “the twins of folklore process” (38). Thus, conservative aspect of the tradition is “all the factors within such a performance that are defined by the community” and, moreover, those factors are “more powerful than individual’s preferences” (Sims and Stephens 77). Such preference of the community is the expression of creativity in the particular context that Toelken finds “the dynamic, the factors that keep the tradition vital.” Both verbal and non-verbal folk arts have the quality of such changeable process. The values of the cultural expressions provide the sense of dynamism because “how when and by whom it is shared” of folk texts is an essential matter.

Most of the time, traditions are evolved naturally and also are adaptable in the process of folkloric practice and performance. According to Sims and Stephens, tradition is like a folklore that refers “the lore” (knowledge) of folk groups as well as the process of communicating that lore” (65). At the same time, tradition is “a sense of continuity and of shared materials, customs and verbal expressions that continue to be practiced within and among certain groups” (65). Moreover, the notion of ‘continuity’ in tradition implies the “importance of time and repetition in tradition.” Of course, repetition is considered as a crucial matter to establish the continuity of the tradition. Similarly, Nepali folklorist, Abhi Subedi opines that folk material uses “fetishes that change the characters according to the space and time” (“Folk Fetish” 56). Moreover, such fetishes in the folklore provides the continuity by the human agency as they even become outmoded and overused, but the agents or users of the folk text “revive them through a process of dialogue, which becomes a tradition, a continuum.” So the cultural mode of fetishization in the folk text highlights the dialogic process that involves the power of folkloric tradition.

Safeguard of Folklore in Modern World

With the emergence of disciplinary studies, folklore has been examined in different ways in the modern world. The concept of tradition is purely the sharing of something related to the cultural importance within the members of folk group. Moreover, the understanding of current approach to study the tradition is concerned with ‘lore’ what the folk group share each other as it “creates and confirms identity” of the particular community (Sims and Stephen 64). So the term ‘tradition’ encompasses the “lore of folk groups as well as the process of communicating that lore” (64). Likewise, the implication of tradition underscores “a sense of continuity and of shared materials, customs and verbal expressions that continue to be practiced within and among certain groups” (65). Indeed, the performance of folkloristic time, occasion and context makes the

continuity of folk texts according to the traditional based calendric pattern of any folk caste, ethnic and regional group.

The tradition of performing folk text is the repetition and continuity on the basis of annual calendar as it is repetitive and continued in every year, within a month or same period of cyclical time. The performing tradition of folk texts does not only refer to duplication, sameness and accuracy of particular context and time, but it gives an emphasis to “the threads of meaning and significance that connect traditions with groups” (66). Thus, continuity is the process of sharing folk knowledge. Moreover, it also enhances the folk performers to conceptualize the “transmission within a group, among its groups, as well as between groups.” Besides, performing the tradition of folk texts also incorporates the space, occasion and time across and within the folk groups of ethnic, region and caste.

The performing folk texts in modern time helps the folk group to connect with their past generation of what they are losing and disappearing of traditional knowledge. Meanwhile, Abhi Subedi highlights that “folklore evokes a texture in a culture that is made by people jointly and tacitly, in tangible or intangible forms, and the creative energy is constantly replenished by the inventiveness found within the fixed and age-old forms through the passage of times” (“Folk in Modern” 46). Besides, it is the process of getting to catch the nostalgia for past days’ that shapes their attitudes, customs and rituals. With the arrival of modernity, most of the folk texts and their ritual traditions are gradually declining and losing due to the lack of awareness in preservation. Sometimes the concepts of tradition and modernity have the contradictory relationship as modern values and practices are replacing the old-style of performing the attitudes and beliefs.

The modernity is, of course, the discourse of “changes in lifestyles and values, social organization, styles in artistic expression, technology etc. that have taken place due to

modernization, industrialization, enlightenment, the rationalization of society . . . Modernity is regarded as being fundamentally different from all previous times” (Anttonen 28). So the folklorists need to know the dynamic changes of folklore in the innovative concept for making new sense of formation in modern times. The traditional type of folk performing is waning process in new life under the huge impact of modern economy, social life and technology. In the context of modernity, folklorists need to explore the multiple realities of folklore in the setting of modern society as Dorson asserts that folklore in the modern world should be suggested under the following four fresh rubrics of inquiry: “Folklore and the city, folklore and ideology, folklore and industrialism, and folklore and mass media” (“Introduction” 3). So there needs to examine the broad spectrum of folklore in the modern world as the folkloristic representation has crossed the national, geographical and political boundaries of primitive societies.

At this backdrop, Dorson further asserts, “Folklore studies have been associated from their beginning with antiquities and primitive country folk. But another side to the story depicts folkloristic studies in quite a different light, presents them as contemporary, keyed to the here and now, to urban centers, to the industrial revolution, to the issues and philosophies of the day” (“Folklore” 23). Since its establishment, the innovative aspects of folkloristic performance in the modern world are also a constant process of cultural interpretation, reconstruction and revivalism with their advancement of multiple patterns and variations.

The opinion of Arjun Appadurai also highlights that “today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” (32). Consequently, the global cultural economy appears with the features of disjuncture and difference that portrays the five dimensions (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes) of

global cultural flows. Thus, it has become the immense challenge to safeguard the traditional cultures in the context of global cultural flows.

Hence, studying folklore in the modern process needs to broaden the inquiries of specific phenomena in the folkloristic preservation and promotion. Moreover, the protection of the folkloristic texts in modern world is necessary to “the lasting survival of indigenous people” as such safeguarding strengthens them “to preserve their cultural identity and pride” (Puri 97). Apparently, the proper safeguard of folklore helps to underline the potential of performing of folk knowledge in a particular context and also it “functions as social cement to help maintain cultural identity and cohesion” (97). Indeed, it shows that there needs to protect and preserve the folk texts and performing arts for the promotion of the cultural heritage, identity and national pride.

Chapter III

Performance, Spatiality and Representation in Thāru *Mahābhārata*

The first section of this chapter explores the performance of Thāru *Mahābhārata* in terms of its spatiality and representation of Thāru identity. Performance of Thārus *Mahābhārata* takes place in two ways: singing and dancing. Though, they cannot be separated clearly. Still performance of songs and dances demands learning skills of different kinds. As one sits to watch the performance of the *Mahābhārata* of Thārus one is struck by the gamut of songs the singers sing from twelve chapters (*paidhār*) of *Barkimār* on the occasion of *Ḍasyā* festival in their villages. Secondly, the watchers are also spellbound by the rich and epic forms of ritual dance of *Barkā Nāc* which are usually performed by around thirty five folk performers.

Instead of recording the narrative of the songs and the dramatic features of the dance, it looks upon how cultural performances of *Barkimār* especially on *Ḍasyā* reveals the power of social relationships, unity and togetherness in the spatiality of *Ḍaṅgaurā* Thārus. To explore the issue further, the research applies the theoretical perspectives such as 'communitas and normative communitas' developed by Victor Turner, and 'space the cultural production' developed by Henry Lefebvre. Based on these two thinkers above mentioned critical standpoints, it mainly analyses the twelve *paidhār* songs from *Mahābhārata* of Thārus.

As local Thārus set out to perform the twelve *paidhār* songs on especial occasion and especial venues, it becomes an opportunity for them to come together. Almost every member of all households (*ghardhurryā*) of Thāru villagers gather in the courtyard of *Maṭavā* house. This comes to watch performances of these songs with certain sense of festivity. They carry the mood. Moreover, since many of them have been watching them, many such songs are in their memory. Indeed, they are rich in their tradition of reciting such songs which recount the narrative of five

Pandavas. The audience here do not sit idle, they also enjoy singing it since they have sung it on several occasions through the year, this meeting at the house of *Maṭavā* brings the sense of collectivity, the especially of being Thārus.

On top of that at such occasion the communitas of Thārus underscores the modality of social relationship and unity of common people with the feeling of common living, comradeship and homogeneity. As they set out to prepare and watch the performance, the *gharḍhuriyā* of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus feel the communal bond. The performance of folk song of *Barkimār* gives a way to a more normative communitas as the performance is directed by the *Maṭavā*, who creates hierarchy and makes the compulsion to follow certain norms and values to the every household of Thāru villagers. In addition, the folk performers wear ethnic dresses and costumes as well as sing songs in their mother tongue letting the ethos of their cultural milieu dominate the atmosphere as well as the psychology of the participant Thārus.

The second section of this chapter examines how folk performers of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus use the socio-semiotic aspect to highlight the ethnic representation in the performance of *Barkā Nāc* in their space. On the basis of the perspective of representation as signifying object introduced by Stuart Hall, the study argues that performance of ethnic representation is the process of signifying the word/sign, its concept and meaning in its lengthy ritual dance of folk performers. For example, the *rāu* bird and five erected wooden poles in the dancing space have the socio-semiotic meaning, which is embedded narrative of Thāru *Mahābhārata*. Moreover, on the basis of Dundesian perspective of folklore as a reflection of culture, it explores how big ritual dance of *Mahābhārata* story reflects the peasantry life of Thārus. Indeed, such folk dance is a mirror of culture and lens of the ethnic society to identify their language, dresses, costumes and musical instruments in their spatiality. Relying on the notion of representational space, perspective of

spatial theoretician Lefebvre, this section of the chapter also asserts that performing space of the ritual dance embodies the socio-semiotic implication in the social life of Thārus. Finally, this section also attempts to encompass the descriptive analysis on the performing folk art of *Barkā Nāc* in the spaces of two villages, Jalaurā and Mahadevā, from the district of Dang-Deukhuri.

There are various versions of *Mahābhārata* found across South Asia. Such diversity provides one an opportunity to realize the distinct cultural and ritual practices of ethnic, rural and regional communities in this geo-cultural area. Despite all varieties, there is still a respect for the classical version of the *Mahābhārata*, which is regarded as the ‘Fifth Veda’ in the Vedic civilization (Meyer and Deuel, *Mahabharata* 7). People in this subcontinent accept it the “standard” as well as “originality and authenticity” associated with the classical Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* epic, which was composed by Vyāsa in the ancient time (Soni 26). Moreover, South-Asian context is such a space that oral tradition of *Mahābhārata* is common as its vernacular version is rife among various ethnic, provincial and rural group of the people. Many social communities like ethnic, caste and regional group take part in the telling and retellings of *Mahābhārata* tales in their own way. These tales are manifested through oral tradition and also is reflected through the performance of folk dances, sculptures and folk drawings of different characters.

In the process of local power of such cultural performances, the time and space makes the narrative events of epic forms of expression more tangible. Since the epics are performed in the form of rituals on given time and place among the people of certain cultural origin, such “precise data on the place and time of its occurrence” communicate several culturally and spiritually important messages (Bhakhtin 57). This means to say that telling and retelling of such classical narratives according to particular time and space enhances a “dynamic and interactive relation

between culture and literature” (Soni 26). In a similar line of logic, one can further say that vernacular performance of *Mahābhārata* in the spatiality of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus underlines the interactive and communicative process to identify the ethnic representation and cultural production.

Communitas and Spatiality in the Cultural Performance of *Barkimār*

The main concern of this section is to examine the sense of communitas that the Thārus live by become manifest in the given space for the cultural performance of *Barkimār*. Ritual performance, as Victor Turner claims, is the process of liberation from the constraints of ordinary life, which also has the departure from the structural level to “anti-structural” (“Liminality” 9). According to Turner, communitas distinguishes the modality of social relationship because it has the essential aspect of “inter-subjective reflectivity” (qtd. in Edith Turner 219). In this sense, the communitas of performing the *Barkimār* underscores the social relationship of Thāru people as they feel common living, fellow feeling, comradeship and homogeneity. Similarly, its cultural performance has the mutual understanding, harmony and togetherness in the sense that it provides the social relationship, a sense of solidarity, harmony and commonality among participants.

More importantly, *Barkimār* is performed on the occasion of *Ḍasyā* under the managerial leadership of *Maṭavā*, who “is the cultural and religious guardian of the village,” brings the reconciliation among community members to resolve the conflicts and who also leads their processes of festivals and the rituals through the process of decision-making (Khadka 69). Its cultural performance is more normative communitas as his managerial leadership imposes certain ritual norms and values. And performances are handled accordingly. However, the normative communitas gives emphasis to the “official” and “imposed,” which brings the

hierarchy among the performers and stakeholders (Schechner, *Performance* 70). Consequently, the *communitas* ruptures the structure based fixed norms. Moreover, Thāru people who are involved in the singing with playing musical instruments wear the ethnic dresses and costumes to follow the normative *communitas*. Every householder (*ghardhurryā*) of Thārus is mobilized to achieve the goal of seamless unity that paves the path for the solidarity and togetherness.

Mahābhārata in Folk Version

The Thāru word ‘*barki*’ means ‘big’ and ‘eldest female’ and next word ‘*mār*’ indicates the ‘war’ or ‘fight’ in English. Indeed, overall meaning of *Barkimār* is a ‘big-war’ of Kurukshetra region of ancient India. Therefore, this folk epic has been nominalized relying on feminine gender as the word ‘*barki*’ is related to eldest woman according to birth in the organization of Thāru family. *Barkimār*, in general, suggests the regional and ethnic variation based Thāru version of *Mahābhārata*. Despite such variation, its basic story has been taken from classical Sanskrit epic, *Mahābhārata*. Moreover, the substantial events of this folk text are mixed with ethnic adaptation.

Vyāsa composed *Mahābhārata* in the ancient time. His story of *Mahābhārata* is one of the most “noblest heritages” in the history of human civilization (Rajagopalachari viii). It is really a cherished belief to hear its narrative that “strengthens the soul” of every listener as its textual content involves the deep philosophical insight as well as the thematic aspect of justice and injustice in the human social order. Indeed, its narrative is so influential because various racial, tribal and ethnic communities also have adapted the oral tradition in their languages and cultures since ancient time. The story of *Mahābhārata* is still sung and retold in different regional, caste and ethnic languages. In the meantime, Thāru folk *Mahābhārata* is orally transmitted from one generation to another in their community with the ethnic and local

adaptation (Thāru, *Barkimār* 3). Moreover, the major characters are Ḍharmarājā Juḍhiṣṭhil (Yudhiṣṭhir), Bhevān (Bhīma), Arjun, Nakurān (Nakul) and Sahiḍeva (Sahadeva) as well as Koṭārin Māi (mother Kunti), Gangevā (Bhishma Pitāmaha), Ḍānbir Karna, Jiriḷoḍhan (Duryodhan), Ḍaunāgir (Guru Dronacharya), Rājā Bairāṭh (King Birat), Ḍurpaṭi (Draupadi) and Uṭṭarā Kuvānrā (Uttar Kumar) (Table 2). Among these characters, the symbolic signs of Pandavas are placed in the holy space in their village called *Bhuinyārthān*, where Thārus keep their wooden and stone-replica of their various deities.

Table 3 Major Characters in Thāru *Mahābhārata*

Name of Thāru Version	Classical Name
Ḍharma Juḍhiṣṭhil	Yudhiṣṭhir
Bhevān	Bhīma
Arjun	Arjun
Nakurān	Nakul
Sahiḍeva	Sahadeva
Jiriḷoḍhan	Duryodhan
Gangevā	Bhishma Pitāmaha / son of Ganga
Ḍaunāgir	Guru Dronacharya
Ḍurpaṭi	Draupadi
Koṭārin Māi	Mother Kunti
Rājā Bairāṭh	King Vairat
Uṭṭarā Kuvānrā	Uttar Kumar
Ḍānbir Karna	Karna
Ḍurpaṭi	Draupadi

Table 2 drawn by the researcher

Performing Context

Performance of folkloristic text on particular context enhances its continuity and reviving process as folk performers regularly practice its folk content and material on the particular but culturally important occasion. Since an ethnic community keep on repeating the performance of their orally transmitted epics and other folk forms of text on certain occasion, they find it easy and fun to keep their ritual tradition of folk literature and performing arts intact. More importantly, “broad elements of the performance context include those things that related to the group, community and culture within which the communicative expression takes place” (Sims and Stephens 139). It is such social components that the performers and stakeholders present their interact taking the expected roles within the members of the community.

Definitely, performing context of folk text is “an explanatory quest for universal principles to an interpretive exploration of situated communication” (Hufford 528). Such context of acting out folk literature is the underpinning of performance culture that also covers significant ground and situation for various kinds of interactions which construct a certain worldview among their members of the society. The performing context of the folk texts is more concerned with the cultural representation, shared knowledge and belief system. So the performance is staged behavior that enhances the ground for human world, which opens up in the framework of cultural production. Consequently, such context of folkloristic text is “constituted through performance” (544). The context of festival creates the creativity of cultural phenomenon to show the folk artistic and aesthetic event. Indeed, the performance context of folkloristic text on the occasion of the particular festival brings a peace, harmony and tranquility among the members of *Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus*.

Besides singing songs of *Barkimār* on such time and place, Thārus also perform it when they plant paddy seasonally during the rainy season. At such moment, they do not use musical instrument while singing (Acharya, *Rāptiko* 131). Even then people enjoy listening to such songs. It is common to all that *Barkimār* covers the story of fight and enmity between two families of Pandavas and Kauravas. But its contents are sung in the open field in the rainy season amid the greeneries around, and the rainy cloud up in the sky, the mood and atmosphere provide a distinct kind of natural grandness to the song. Regarding this, Govinda Acharya narrates that the thick black cloud in the sky, thunders and their echoes in the rainy season quietly match with the content of *Barkimār*, which is related to war and fighting.

In some Thāru villages, Thārus males sing *Barkimār* since they have to play musical instrument on *Aṣṭimki* to *Devāri* festival. They are culturally permitted to play the musical instruments only after they perform a particular ritual associated with *Hāryā Gurai*, a festival that falls by the end of the rainy season when paddy plantation also comes to an end. On the other hand, Thārus stop playing musical instruments after *Dhuryā Gurai*, a festival that falls just before the rainy season, due to hectic function in their agricultural occupation especially in the monsoon. One can also see the logic that singing *Barkimār* with musical instrument is not acceptable while planting paddy in the field during the rainy season. Practically, it seems that *Barkimār* is especially song of Thāru males rather than females as their males are only performers during the *Ḍasyā* festival. The *Sakhyā* song and *Paiyā Nāc* is popular among young females, but males participate in playing the tom-toms in *Sakhyā – Paiyā Nāc*. But females do not participate in the singing of *Barkimār*, but they join as active and important audience of the performance.



Figure 1: Thāru female preparing food item, *dhikri*, for celebrating *Ḍasyā*.
Photo: Kuldip Neupane

The festival of *Ḍasyā* plays a vital role in energizing cultural memories that the Thāru community live by. Indeed, this festival is likely to go back to their past as they recall what their ancestors did in the bygone days. This means to say that the gathering and recalling the past event is their especial folk way of life. The performing folk text shows a channel of expressing and consolidating a sense of the community as they have always believed and given continuity through social and cultural practices. The folk text on the specific occasion of such festival highlights the “aesthetic modes of communication” within the member of their community (Giorgi 1). *Ḍasyā*, one of the most important and auspicious festivals of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus, is celebrated differently from the community of *pahāḍe*, the migrants from hill region to the Tarai area of Nepal. According to Rajaure, the word ‘*Ḍasyā*’ is derived from the Nepali name of ‘*Dasai*’ as it suggests the Nepali festival of Vijaya Dashami (*Anthropological* 387-8). The festival falls in September or October. It starts from the *shukla-pakṣa* (bright lunar fortnight) in the month of Ashvin and ends on the day of *ḍurnimā* (full-moon day).

For Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus, the most important day is the ninth day as they put *ḍikā* on their forehead whereas *pahāḍe* or non Thārus Hindus celebrate *ḍikā* on the tenth day. At the dawn of

ninth day, they prepare a white flour of *ṭikā* from grinding rice, *jiurā* (the maize shoots or *jamarā* in Nepali) and *bebri* flower (a local flower like basil). The women of each Thāru household prepare special meals for *shrādhha* or *piṭṭar denā* (offering to the ancestor) (KC 35; Rajaure *Anthropological* 395). *Terrā* and *Dahit* clans of Thārus make offering to the *piṭṭar* on the fifth day of *Ḍasyā*, but other clans of Thārus make such offering on the ninth day. So they also prepare *ḍhikri*, a steamed item made from rice flour (Figure 1) and varieties of vegetables and pickles. Moreover, Thārus offer different food items as well as offer pig and hen sacrifice to their ancestors, gods and goddesses. Thārus plant *jiurā* of maize on the first day of *Ḍasyā* (*ghaṭasthāpanā* in Nepali) in the house of every family. During the *Ḍasyā*, they cleanse the wall, floor and yard of their house. They colour the walls of houses that fascinate every new comer in the Thāru village.

In the afternoon of ninth day, Thārus gather in the house of *Maṭavā*, the head of the Thāru village. It is the day to respect him as he leads and coordinates the social, cultural and developing issues of the villagers. For this reason, they bring special gift (*koseli*) of local brewed-wine in the *karrai* (a mud made small pot), *jiurā* and *bebri* flower. Customarily, *gharḍhuriyā*, the head of every household in the Thāru village, brings such *koseli* to honor the head of the village. At first, *Maṭavā* worships to local gods and goddesses in his home as well as in *Bhuinyārthān*. Then he starts to put *ṭikā*, *jiurā*, and *bebri* flower on the foreheads and heads of all male participants from different *gharḍhuriyā*. At the same time, all participants also put the prepared *ṭikā* on the forehead of *Maṭavā*. Meanwhile, participants of male villagers exchange the *ṭikā*, *jiurā* and *bebri* flower putting on their heads and foreheads of each-other (Figure 2). They use white *ṭikā* on the occasion of *Ḍasyā* (Figure 3), which is the symbol of patience and peace whereas hilly people put the red *ṭikā* on their forehead. While putting the *ṭikā* each-other, all

participants collectively sing a *paidhār* (chapter/*parva*) of *Barkimār*. The first song, *samrauṭi*, is sung in the opening phase according to the traditional rule. The first song is praying and remembering to all their gods and goddesses as given below:

*Puruba mai sāmiraui suraja bharār,/Pachiu sāmiraui ḍevi ra auṭār/Uṭṭara mai sāmiraui
Harikabilās,/Lankāri pavan sāmiraui Hanuman . . . Sarasoṭi sāmiraui jyukā ra jyoṭi, Suno
māṭi piṭa ek binaṭi hamār/Paṇḍo kaṭhā ra kahān laijāu* (Our humble greeting to the Sun
God of the east/And to many avatars of the Goddess of the west/And our salute to Hari of
Kailash (Shiva), lord of the northern Himalaya/We salute Hanuman, the destroyer of
Lanka . . . Goddess Saraswati, you are the light of life./Listen, oh elders, where shall we
take our tale of the Pandavas . . . So please accept our reverence, oh, Goddess Bhagavati).
(Thāru, *Barkimār* 5-6)

In the chapter of *samrauṭi*, Saraswati, Bāsuki Nāg, Pandavas and different local gods and goddesses are recited and revered. After performing the prayer song, they select songs from other eleven *paidhār* to perform collectively. Other chapters are *Lakhagirak Paidhār*, *Jāṭiyak Paidhār*, *Rāu Beḍhak Paidhār*, *Pashawarak Paidhār*, *Gharabāsak Paidhār*, *Haṭhayak Paidhār*, *Banabāsak Paidhār*, *Kichakak Paidhār*, *Susharmak Paidhār*, *Barkimārko Paidhār* and *Swargaroha Paidhār* (Table 4). After the completion of *ṭikā* ceremony, the performance of singing of *Barkimār* from different *paidhār* is continued. Particularly, the male Thārus are engaged in performing different types of *paidhār*. So *Ḍasyā* is the occasion of singing such long narrative song. Moreover, it also becomes the greeting and receiving of the blessing from gods and goddesses. At this backdrop, they assume that all songs based on Thāru *Mahābhārata* are the voices of divinities. So performing folk song on the specific festival shows the celebration with

great vigor and enthusiasm that binds emotionally the community of Thārus among their *gharḍhurryā*. At that time, they share common living, fellow feeling and homogeneity.



Figure 2: Thāru performers singing *Barkimār* and putting *tikā* each-other on their forehead on the ninth day of *Ḍasyā* in the village of Sisahanyā, Dang (2019). Photo: Kuldip Neupane



Figure 3: The style of putting *tikā*, *jiurā* and *bebri* on the occasion of *Ḍasyā*. Photo: Kuldip Neupane

The folk performers present the twelve *paidhār* songs of *Barkimār* during the specific occasion of *Ḍasyā* festival. The opening song, *samrauṭi*, is the pray song of the performers (singers and tom-tom players) who pay their honor to the local gods and goddesses. In the same

way, the second song, *Lakhagirak Paidhār*, includes the narrative of how did Kauravas contrive to kill the five Pandavas by scorching them alive in the house of wax. It was the intrigue of Duryodhan and Sakuni, who wanted to destroy all five brothers of Pandavas as Thāru version mentions, “Let’s build the house of wax now; let’s build the house of wax! / King Yudhiṣṭhir is a pious king, /And the Pandavas’ kingdom must be returned.” (Meyer and Deuel, *Mahabharata* 18). But Vidur planned to protect Pandavas from the intrigue of Kauravas. Pandavas were saved by the strategy of Vidur and they walked underground into the jungle and they remained there in the disguise of Brahmins.

Third song, *Jātiyak Paidhār*, is the narrative on the encountering Ḍānu the Giant with the Pandavas on their path of Jaitapur after their fleeing from the burning house of wax. When Pandavas reached to a remote dense forest, they suffered from hunger and thirst. They wanted to take rest in the peaceful environment of the jungle. Nakul went to take water in a golden kettle from a pond. At that time, a giant demon named Ḍānu threatened to swallow all five brothers if Yudhiṣṭhir does not sacrifice a brother before taking water. So Nakul returned without taking water. When he reported the threaten of Ḍānu to his eldest brother, Yudhiṣṭhir found himself in a critical situation. When he decided to offer Bhīma as a sacrifice, Ḍānu opened his mouth to swallow the physical body of Bhīma. Bhīma easily became the meal of Ḍānu, but it was difficult to digest his body. Finally, Bhīma came out slitting the stomach of the Giant. Indeed, Kunti felt very happy when Bhīma returned safely and she said, “I must have done good deeds in my previous life, A hundred good deeds come back to me/ Now my five sons are together again, My five sons are together again” (29). In this way, re-union of five brothers and their mother Kunti became possible due to brave attempt of Bhīma .

The fourth song, *Rāu Beḍhak Paiḍhār*, covers the story of how did Bhīma succeed to make Draupadi, the daughter of king Drupada, wife of five brothers at the pageantry of *swayamvara* in the kingdom of Panchala. However, the classical version highlights the strength and skill of Arjun in the shooting of the targeted eye of a fish, but Thāru version describes Bhīma had a key role to win the contest at the ceremony of *swayamvara*. Indeed, king Drupada had invited many bachelors to participate in the *swayamvara*. A competition was held to test their skill in the archery of targeting the *rāu* bird. Many valiant princes of different countries were gathered to show their archery skill. At that ceremony, king Drupada declared, “I will give my daughter’s hand in marriage to the great man, who hits the beautiful *rāu* bird to win Princess Draupadi” (31). All participated contenders were interested to marry Draupadi. When the ceremony started, competitors one after another became unsuccessful to hit the target. Even Duryodhan missed the target and felt pessimistic.

When Draupadi saw the failure of Duryodhan and all reputed valiant Princes of many countries, she became frustrated as she said that she would never get a suitable husband. After hearing the complaining words of Draupadi, Bhīma wanted to compete in the ceremony and hastily asked to his oldest brother Yudhisṭhir for the permission. Bhīma was allowed to participate in the contest and he became successful to hit the *rāu* bird. Thus, Thāru version highlights valiant act of Bhīma as it mentions, “Looking at the *rāu* bird’s reflection in the water, Bhīma shoots his arrow and hits the *rāu* bird When Princess Draupadi hears that she will be married to Bhīma /she climbs into his chariot, gently escorting her, Bhīma holds her arm/And proclaims, “Now Princess Draupadi is mine!” (40). In this way, archery skill of Bhīma is the major cause to win Draupadi for the wife of five brothers at the ceremony.

The fifth song, *Pashawarak Paiḍhār*, is related to the event of ‘a game of dice’ in *Sabhā Parva* of classic version. When Bhīma won Draupadi at *swayamvara*, the news reached to Dhritarastra of Hastinapur. At that time, the Pandavas were spending the year incognito. Actually, Dhritarastra was unknown about the Pandavas’ being alive by escaping from the wax house. Yudhiṣṭhir became the king of Indraprastha. Duryodhan was jealous in the success of Pandavas. To seize the authority of the kinship, Duryodhan and Sakuni conspired ‘a game of dice’. Vidur wanted to avoid such stratagem as he thought that it might promote hostility between the two families. But Duryodhan forcefully arranged the game of dice. As a result, Yudhiṣṭhir not only lost jewelers and gold, silver, chariots and horses, earrings, shirt, robes, waist belt, slippers and rings, crown of the head and the kingdom, but also wealth and beloved Draupadi. Moreover, Pandavas had to go to exile in the forest for twelve years. Thāru version has focused such exile of twelve years as it includes, “You have lost the game of dice! You have lost the entire wealth of the treasury . . . Now you must live in the jungle for twelve years” (51). At that time, Kunti complained and cried. But all her complains were meaningless in front of the strict religious code of conduct and Yudhiṣṭhir’s morality and honesty. In this way, this song encompasses the causes behind the exile in the forest.

The sixth song, *Banabāsak Paiḍhār*, includes the period of Pandavas’ exile in the forest of Pandavas. Classic version describes this significant event of exile in ‘*Vana Parva*’. During their exile, Pandavas encountered various obstacles and difficulties. They suffered due to the dearth of suitable settlement and edible things in the dense forest. Anyway, they felt “the gods within them go with them” to get the strength and confidence in their troubled living (53). They tried to garner the fruits from the faraway forests for their survival. The seventh and eighth songs (*Gharabāsak* and *Haṭhayak Paiḍhār*) include the events of Pandavas’ incognito living and

getting shelter in the palace of King Bairāṭh in Thāru version, whereas such events are included in ‘Vairāṭ Parva’ in the classic version. Indeed, there was uncertainty in the life of Pandavas in the jungle. But the physical strength of Bhīma was tested by King Bairāṭh fighting an elephant. When Bhīma won over the elephant of Bairāṭh, then they were permitted to stay at his palace. Bhīma did not only show his strength, but King Bairāṭh also provided the shelter as he said to Bhīma, “You are welcome to stay here in my kingdom/ And you are welcome to eat at the King’s table” (70). After the victory of Bhīma over an elephant, they began to reside there taking the responsibility of different jobs. Nakul served as a cowherd and Sahadeva took the responsibility of milking all the cows in king’s cowshed. In the same way, Arjun taught dance and music to the princess and her friends. Draupadi served to queen caring and combing her hair. Yudhisṭhir taught the sons and daughters of King Bairāṭh.

The ninth song, *Kichakak Paiḍhār*, describes the ill-intention of Kichaka towards Draupadi. The uncontrollable passion of Kichaka aroused by the beauty of Draupadi has been mentioned in ‘Vairāṭ Parva’ of classic version. When Kichaka turned uncontrolled, he also felt that his “life is worthless without her” (72). But Draupadi was feeling unsafe from him and reported it to Ballava (incognito name of Bhīma). One night, Bhīma and Draupadi planned to make him a trap in the barn. Bhīma wore the dress of Draupadi and went there. Bhīma ruthlessly killed Kichaka in the barn. Indeed, Kauravas were unknown about the death of Kichaka, but later they knew this bad news of his death and also participated in the funeral rite at the bank of Ganga River.

The tenth song, *Susharmak Paiḍhār*, mentions about the fight between Susharma, a king of Trigarta, and army of King Bairāṭh. There was long enmity between Susharma and King Bairāṭh. Duryodhan wanted to win Bairāṭh to know the identity of Pandavas so that Pandavas

could be sent to exile for next twelve years. So Duryodhan was provoking Susharma to fight with King Bairāṭh. This episode of conflict between Susharma and King Bairāṭh has been described in 'Vairāṭ Parva'. The son of King Bairāṭh, Uttar Kumar, was young and he had possessed hundreds of cattle. Pandavas devised a plan to plunder his cattle by attacking from four directions. Susharma was convinced by Kauravas. Ahirs were defenders and protectors of those cattle and they were attacked as Kauravas declared, "Let's kill the Ahirs and bury them! Let's lock them and the cattle inside seventy-five farms" (80). Indeed, Ahirs lost all the cattle of Uttar Kumar.

When they lost the cattle, Ahirs requested to get the help from Bhim as they cried, "Oh, worshipper of strength, we have lost everything. We have lost all of King Bairāṭh cattle!" Uttar Kumar was helpless in front of Kauravas. But he wanted to fight till his death for the sake of own kingdom. At first, Arjun rode a chariot adorning like the dress of woman. Then Bhīma also used his strength to return the cattle of Uttar Kumar. Finally, Susharma begged in front of the physical power of Bhīma as he said, "Bhim, spare of my life! Bhim, please spare my life . . . Save me, oh Bhim, please save me" (101). Such surrender of Susharma was against the religious code of Kshetriya. But Bhīma was stringent to follow the Kshetriya religious rule. So Bhīma cursed him to be lowly a blacksmith. In the classical version, King Susharma has been shown as a prisoner, but Thāru version portrays him as a lowly blacksmith after his surrender to Bhīma. Due to his wickedness, Susharma was lowered from his high rank of King, from the caste of Kshetriya to blacksmith.

The eleventh song, *Barkimārko Paiḍhār*, involves the final battle between Pandavas and Kauravas in the field of Kurukshetra. The Kurukshetra war continued for eighteen days. The classical version includes this terrible war in 'Bhisma Parva,' 'Drona Parva' and 'Salya Parva'.

During the war of many days, the following different types of arrows (i.e. *bān*) were used:

Chandar Bān, Megh Bān, Nāgan Bān, Sakath Bān, Kaulā Bān, Nid Bān, Kulath Bān, Churā Bān, Jagat Bān, Sui Bān and Chedan Bān. Bhīma and Arjun were great warriors from the side of Pandavas whereas Karna was very powerful from Kauravas as Thārus version mentions, “Whose arms were as big and strong as his thighs/Whose chest was wider than eight yards” (108).

Duryodhan had great confidence to win Pandavas in Kurukshetra war as he rejected the appeal of Krishna, Vidur, Bhishma and Dhritarastra to end such dreadful war. Karna and Dushasan were killed. Duryodhan was killed on the final day of the war in the mace fight with Bhīma. Finally, Bhīma was appointed as the commander-in-chief in the kingdom of Hastinapur whereas Yudhisṭhir was crowned with the responsibility of the king. The unidentified and downgraded Karna was identified after his death in the war. Kunti became quite depressed and remorseful when she heard the news of demised Karna. Kunti had not identified Karna until his death due to the socio-cultural restriction as he was born before her marriage. So he was born with her relationship with the Sun (Suryadeva). Despite the death of Karna, five sons were saved and altogether with their mother at the end of the war.

The twelfth song, *Swargaroha Paiḍhār*, is the epilogue of *Mahābhārata* story in the Thāru version. This is the final chapter entitled ‘Swargarohan Parva’ of classical version. Yudhisṭhir was not satisfied in the life of materialistic world and sought to begin the journey to heaven through the lengthy pilgrimage of the Himalayas. In other words, Yudhisṭhir and his brothers handed over their kingdom to the grandson of Arjun, Parikshit, and commenced their journey of pilgrimage. In the farewell of Pandavas, villagers joined together with the prize of rice and milk to give them according to the order of their village leader, *Maṭavā*. All five brothers were served of cooked rice-pudding before the farewell. After taking the meal of rice-pudding,

they walked to the heaven through the path of Himalaya. Indeed, Pandavas desired to live in the heaven as it is “a place with no room for malice, jealousy or anger” and also Pandavas and Kauravas were “finally reconciled” in the same place (112). In fact, Pandavas reached to the heaven after different trials taken by the gods and only then they were allowed to reside the ascetic life.

Table 4 Diagram of *Barkimār Paiḍhār/Parva*

<i>Paiḍhār/Parva</i>	Name of <i>Paiḍhār</i>	What About
First <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Samrauṭi</i> (Opening /Invocation Song)	Performers pay their respect to their local gods and goddesses
Second <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Lakhāgirak Paiḍhār</i>	Kauravas intrigue to kill the Pandavas by burning them alive in a wax-made house
Third <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Jatīyak Paiḍhār</i>	Bhīma fights with the Ḍānu the Giant to save Pandavas on their way to Jaitapur
Fourth <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Rāu-Bedhak Paiḍhār</i>	The ceremony of Draupadi swayamvara for selecting a husband and also Bhīma becomes success to hit the target of <i>rāu</i> bird
Fifth <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Pasāwarak</i> (dice game) <i>Paiḍhār</i>	Yudhiṣṭhir loses a game of dice and Draupadi is humiliated by Kauravas
Sixth <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Banabāsak Paiḍhār</i>	The twelve years of exile life in the jungle of Pandavas
Seventh <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Gharabāsak Paiḍhār</i>	After the completion of twelve years of exile life, Pandavas spend thirteen year of incognito life in the house of King Bairāṭh
Eighth <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Haṭhayak</i> (elephant) <i>Paiḍhār</i>	King Bairāṭh allows to stay the Pandavas in his kingdom , but the condition is that Bhīma must fight with an elephant and win it
Ninth <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Kichakak Paiḍhār</i>	Kichaka, commander-in-chief of army of Matsya kingdom, falls in love with Draupadi and he is killed by Bhīma

Tenth <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Susharmak Paiḍhār</i>	Susharma (king of Trigarta) and Duryodhan pursue to attack King Bairāṭh for stealing his cattle, but Bhīma and Arjun became success to revenge them. Then, Susharma is cursed to become a lowest caste blacksmith due to his surrender with Pandavas
Eleventh <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Barkimārko Paiḍhār</i>	The episode of bloody and final battle at Kurukshetra between Pandavas and Kauravas
Twelfth <i>Paiḍhār</i> Song	<i>Swargaroha Paiḍhār</i>	The journey to heaven of Yudhishtir and his brothers after the wisely ruling for many years until the desire to leave earth

Table 4 drawn by researcher

The performers of *Barkimār* are significant folk members of Thārus. In other words, they are not professional artists as they share something in commonality of the cultural heritage of their local space that makes them distinctive. Among the performers, *Mohryā* is the head of the singers. Second, *Pachavā* are the assistants of the head singer as they repeat the lines of song what *Mohryā* sings in the opening. Moreover, *Maḍaryā* (or drummers) play the tom-tom in the collective performance. Meanwhile, audiences are common people from Thāru villages as they enjoy from the artistic performance of the folk performers. The songs of all *paiḍhār* in *Barkimār* continue in the pattern of artistic show of *Mohryā*, *Pachavā* and *Maḍaryā*. The performing of folk text by the performers binds them together with cultural implication of their common feelings and emotions (Figure 4). They know the singing of the stories with the use of musical instruments like tom-tom and cymbal from the old generation. As the value of societal creatures, performers are the pillars of their community to revive the cultural heritage because they perform on particular occasion of annual day of *Ḍasyā* in the house-yard of *Maṭavā*. According to traditional system of Thāru community, *Maṭavā* is the leader of their village who is elected by

the community in every *Māghi*, a new year of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus that falls around the mid-January. Moreover, *Maṭavā* also handles the social and cultural function in the village. So the performing space of *Barkimār* reveals the significant spatiality for the cultural identity, value and representation.



Figure 4: The performers of *Barkimār* after *ṭikā* in Sisahanyā Dang. Photo: Kuldip Neupane

The folktale of five Pandava brothers is conveyed in the mode of communication, which shows the attitudes, beliefs, values and worldview of Thārus. Such performance is the way of cultural memory of their ethnic identity. In other words, the content with local flavor becomes a way of learning and way of communicating among the performers and the members of the community. Thārus often share its content, which reflects the significant relationship, values and traditions among the participators on the occasion of celebrating *Ḍasyā* festival.

Performance of Ethnic Representation and Spatiality through *Barkā Nāc*

This section of the chapter attempts to examine how the performance of *Barkā Nāc* is associated with the socio-semiotic implication of the cultural root of the Thāru world. The study applies the theoretical perspective of Hall's representation and signifying object, which underscores the "process of signifying of the world/sign and its concepts and meaning" (Nayar 21). In the process of performance of the folk text, different expressive elements like sounds,

words, notes, gestures, clothes and objects are used to signify the certain socio-cultural implication as Hall writes, “They operate as symbols, which stands for or represents (i.e. symbolize) the meaning we wish to communicate” (5). Indeed, folk performers, *rāu* bird and five erected wooden poles are different persons, objects and expressive elements, which have the socio-semiotic meaning as they have the embedded meaning in the *Barkimār*.

The examination of this section also tries to examine how the performance of such lengthy ritual dance reflects the multiple folk types of cultural dimensions of the ethnicity. Folklore, as Alan Dundes argues, as “a mirror of culture, a lens of society” that reflects the peasantry life and vernacular custom of ethnic group (*Meaning* vii). Therefore, reflection of culture is identified with language, cultural conviction, festival, dresses, jewelries and musical instruments because “community, tradition, rootedness and solidarity” of ethnic community are expressed and reflected in the social activity and way of life (Eagleton 13). However, cultural critic Raymond Williams gives emphasis to a point that culture is more ordinary than elitist expression as he means to “a whole way of life—the common meanings” (Barker, *Making* 66). In this way, reflection of peasantry and vernacular custom and expression through the performance of the ritual dance also reflects the vernacular type of Thāru way of life. Similarly, the study also reflects upon the perspective of Lefebvre, who asserts that representational space embodies the “complex symbolisms, sometimes codes, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life” (33). As a consequence, performing space of *Barkā Nāc* also opens up to know the socio-semiotic implication of folk life in the community of Thārus.

Lengthy Song and Big Ritual Dance

The *Barkā Nāc* is a lengthy ritual song and big dance performed by the folk performers of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. Furthermore, it can be performed between the festival of *Hāryā Gurai* and

Dhuryā Gurai. By tradition, they start to perform in the festival of *Ḍasyā*. If the circumstance is not favorable, it can be performed any time except the period between *Dhuryā Gurai* to *Hāryā Gurai* because “musical instruments are not allowed to play” in their community during this time due to the monsoon as well as it is the season of planting the paddy seeds (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 255). Moreover, this performing ritual dance compulsorily involves some of the musical instruments such as, drummers and cymbals. This dance is also expensive and time-consuming as it needs more than thirty five performers. Its performance can be continued from a week to several months. By tradition, it is performed in every five year. In other words, the system of performing such ritual dance in each five year is called ‘*Paṭṭi-phernā*’ in their community. When it is inaugurated, it must be ritually ended before *Dhuryā Gurai*. If it is performed next year, all rituals from opening to closing are required to be performed. In other words, all rituals like *Gurai pujā*, offering of animal sacrifice and concluding ceremony are required to be performed if any village, government, social-cultural institution is interested to fund and organize the dance in the next year. From the perspective of rituality, *Barkā Nāc* is just like the theoretical opinion of Sims’s and Stephens’s “high-context ritual” because it needs very particular dress, codes, musical instruments, music and other folk materials (99). Usually, the high context of rituals requires particular dress codes for the participants and they must wear ceremonial jewelries and uniforms for the purpose of completing the ritual action. However, low context of rituals are less formal and they are not designated in advance.

In Thāru language, the word ‘*Barkā*’ means ‘Big’. So overall meaning of ‘*Barkā Nāc*’ is ‘Big Dance.’ There are several reasons to name it a big dance in their community. At first, it is comparatively large scale dance as it needs nearly forty performers. During its ritual performance, particular village members of Thārus take on the roles of several characters like

Dharmarājā Yudhisthīl (Yudhisthir), Bhevān (Bhīma), Arjun, Nakurān (Nakul) and Sahiḍeva (Sahadeva), Gangevā (Bhishma Pitāmaha), Daunāgir (Guru Dornacarya), Ḍurpaṭi (Draupadi) and Svāñe (Krishna or Bramhā). The performers are selected from the village farmers. In other words, they are not the professional artists as we see in the modern dances and songs. The performers learn the song and dance from the senior folk singers, dancers and drummers of their village. So that audience do not find the professional artists in their team as the *Barkā Nāc* is customarily and “strictly a local event” (Meyer and Deuel, *Mahabharata* 9). Its performance of dancing, singing and playing roles are transferred from one generation to another in their own folk way of life as Meyer and Deuel write, “The role assignments are heredity: the drummer’s son will become a drummer, a dancer’s son a dancer, and so on. The first drummer is the choreographer and controls the dance sequences with the beat of his drum” (9). In fact, such performance of ritual dance is not only an entertainment, but it also reflects their folk faith and conviction to assure good harvest as well as blessing to the villagers wherever they perform the ritual dances.

Second, the performance of *Barkā Nāc* takes several days as its story content is long and ritual activity also takes several days. The root of *Barkā Nāc* is classic Sanskrit epic, *Mahābhārata*, which consists “of 110,000 couplets” that tells the story of the struggle for supremacy between two family branches, Pandavas and Kauravas, of the royal clan of Kuru (Meyer and Deuel, *Tharu Barka Naach* 4). In the case of folk version, there are no fix couplets. However, Chandra Prasad Chaudhari published twelve chapters in Thāru language in May, 2002. His collected version is titled as ‘*Baḍkimār*.’ It consists of more than five hundred couplets. Its naming varies according to different villages. So some performers name it as *Barkimār* and some of them call it *Baḍkimār*. Such variation is due to the dialect difference of regionality of different

villages of Thārus. The collection of Chandra Prasad is based on the manuscript of parchment of his father, who “walked from village to village in search of the missing segments” and made the final manuscript (4). When Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel came to Dang in 1993, they encouraged him to revive the forgotten and left folk dance. Indeed, Chandra Prasad has been practicing the song of *Barkā Nāc* on the manuscript of his father as he elaborates, “Meyer and Deuel inspired me to revive the historical and cultural status of my father” (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 253). Therefore, his attempt of revitalizing such dance is essentially based on inspiration of American folklorists and his social status in the society.

Third, Thāru performers, particularly drummers (*maḍaryā*) can perform variations of rhythm playing tom-toms while performing the ritual dance of *Barkā Nāc*. Such rhythm variations in the musical instrument of tom-toms are known as *khvāt* in Thāru language. According to different types of *khvāt*, the dancers also perform different steps and styles with their bodily gestures. Consequently, it involves the rhythmical and aesthetical allurements for the audience in the dancing space. It is assumed that there are twenty two kinds of *khvāt* in the community of Thārus as Chandra Prasad opines, “Among twenty two *khvāt*, less than dozen rhythms of tom-toms can be performed in the village of Jalaurā in present days” (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 258). According to him, the following types of *khvāt* are some of them which are still practiced in his village: ‘*ḍāun ghar ḍāun ghar*’, ‘*ḍaṭak ḍāun ḍāun ḍāun ghar ḍāun ḍāun nā*’, ‘*ḍhappar ḍhappar ḍāiyak ṭain bhaḍāiyak tai*’, ‘*jhvāng jhuinyak ḍhyāl jhvāng ḍhyāl*’ and ‘*ḍāiyak ṭaiyak ḍāin ḍāin ḍāin ghyālḍaun nakṭaun ghyālḍaun nakḍaun.*’ In this way, the inclusion of such rhythmical styles by the performers in the dances makes the performance interesting and extraordinary.

Fourth, *Barkā Nāc* is very inclusive in nature as it does not only encompass twenty two *khvāt* (rhythms) based musical dances, but it also can include *Bhevān Nāc* (*muṅgrā Nāc*/ wooden-hammer dance), *Ḍurpaṭi Nāc*, *Hurḍīnyā Nāc*, *Jhumrā Nāc*, *Sanjhyā Nāc* (evening dance), *Aḍharaṭyā Nāc* (mid-night dance), *Bihāniyā Nāc* (morning dance) and *Din-nacavā Nāc* (day dance). Lastly, *Barkā Nāc* is comparatively expensive to perform as it requires large number of animal and chicken sacrifice such as, eight pigs, three young-goats, two sheep, two she-goats and around forty five chickens. Indeed, these animals and chicken are obligatory to be offered to their local gods and goddesses. In addition, it also requires different types of dresses and jewelries of performers, musical instruments, *tārbān* (bamboo/wooden poles), *rāu* bird, foods and drinks for the participators during the days of acting out. Similarly, the audience are gathered not only from their own village, but also from the nearby of several villages and districts. Its performing spatiality seems like a great festive due to the large crowd of audience. They enjoy after watching different steps of dances as well as celebration of performing *pujā* (worshipping). From its local managerial viewpoint, performing its ritual dance is lengthy and expensive. Actually, it is a big performance of ritual dance which seems like a carnival enactment in their spatiality.

History of Performance

Different rural versions of *Mahābhārata* are performed in various regions of South-Asia for thousands of years. For instance, *Pāndavalilā* has been performed in the central Himalayan region of Garhwal, state of Uttarakhand in India for a long time. The performance of *Pāndavalilā* is the “play of Pandavas, the five heroes from the epic—Yudhisṭhir, Arjun, Bhīma, Nakul and Sahadeva” (Alter 58). Indeed, *Pāndavalilā* is a “lengthy ritual performance” that is performed in different villages in many ways as the “dancing and drumming are parts of all events” (60). In

the same way, local people in Thailand also have the adaptation of *Mahābhārata*. It seems the “impact of *Mahābhārata* in art and literature in Thailand” since the first century AD to the present context (Srisuchat 105). The Brahmins from India went to Thailand around the first century and they brought the knowledge of ancient literature and art from India. Consequently, the story of *Mahābhārata* has greatly impacted there as many Thai literary works have also substantially used *Mahābhārata* as their source. As a significant character of *Mahābhārata*, “Draupadi cult” is very popular among Hindus in South-Africa (Diesel 65). Moreover, the “elevation and worship of Draupadi as a Goddess in South India” is pervasive since about 1400 CE (66). Meanwhile, Tamil version of *Mahābhārata* was compiled by Villiputtur around 1400CE that also highlights the Draupadi cult.

At this backdrop, the performance of Thāru *Mahābhārata* is unique in the South-Asian context. However, the pertinent query is: When did Thāru villagers first perform the *Barkā Nāc* in Dang-Deukhuri region? There is no clear evidence about its beginning, but Chandra Prasad Chaudhari opines that his father had first begun its performing art in his locality as he claims, “Late my father Rup Lal Thāru led this folk dance from 1922 to 1970. When he died in 1971, since then *Barkā Nāc* was not performed until 1993” (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 253).

According to Chandra Prasad, his father walked from village to village to collect the couplets of *Barkimār*. He had compiled some segments of *Barkimār* from Uttar Teghara and other segments from different villages of Dang valley. During the collection, Rup Lal was assisted by Top Narayan Chaudhari from Hekuli, western region of Dang valley. Moreover, he preserved the collected couplets of *Barkimār* in the parchment. After collecting the couplets of *Barkimār* in the

form of parchment, Rup Lal established a rule for worshipping (*pujā*) for initiating the big dance, which is known as the ‘*Barkā Nāc Biḍhān*’ (Rules for *Barkā Nāc*)⁴.

At first, Rup Lal began the ritual performance of *Barkā Nāc* in 1922 with the help of Narayan Prasad Chaudhari, who was the renowned head of *maḍaryā* group from the village of Mahadevā Deukhuri. Narayan Prasad could also play twenty two *khvāt* of the tom-tom. However Rup Lal was the leader of *Barkā Nāc* whereas Narayan Prasad was the head of the drummers. At that time, its ritual dance was limited to Deukhuri valley, but it was begun in Narayanpur Jalaurā Dang in 1953. Narayan Prasad came to Jalaurā from Deukhuri to teach playing the tom-tom. Rup Lal led the ritual dance until his death in 1970. After his demise, the *Barkā Nāc* was not performed for many years. Most of the people were afraid of participating the dance as they considered it as “the *Bhuṭāhā Nāc* (ghost dance)” and local people also were “in confusion to revive in the beginning” (Appendix I, C “Interview” 253). Consequently, it was really challenging to revive the performance in new situation of their spatiality.

⁴ I had talked with Chandra Prasad Chaudhari during the performance period of *Barkā Nāc* in his village. He had also showed me the evidence like handwritten parchment of his father about its collecting form of couplets.



Figure 5: Chandra Prasad and Jaggu Prasad Chaudhari consulting the song of *Barkimār* from their late fathers' parchment before performing ritual dance of *Barkā Nāc*. Photo: Researcher

In 1993, American folklorists Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel came to Dang to do research on *Barkā Nāc*. Chandra Prasad began to revive this tradition in 1998 with the fund given by Meyer and Deuel. In 1993, it was performed on the playground of Siddhi Ratnanāth Secondary School, Chaugherā Dang. At that time, all rules were not followed. In 1998, Meyer and Deuel again supported financially to revive the tradition of its ritual dance. Consequently, *Barkā Nāc* was also performed according to due provision. Remembering those difficulties of its starting days, Chandra Prasad further proclaims, “I felt little bit confusion to begin, but Meyer and Deuel inspired me to revive the historical and cultural status of my father. After their encouragement, I took the risky game of leading this dance” (Appendix I, C “Interview” 253). After that, he led this folk dance in many social, cultural and political ceremonies in local spaces.

According to Chandra Prasad, Dangisharan Celebration in 2006, Tharuhat Movement in 2014 in Dang, Banke and Bardia, Narharinath Religious Program of Ratannāth Temple of

Chaugherā in 2005, Dang Cultural Celebration in 2006 and *Barkā Nāc* Celebration of Samṭhena in 2014 were prominent performing episodes of *Barkā Nāc* in his life. In 2019, TWS Dang held the *Barkā Nāc* program for the visual documentary in the fund support of Ghorahi sub-metropolitan (Tourism and Cultural Program), Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan ward no 10 and Gadhava rural municipality ward 2 in Jalaurā and Mahadevā. Chandra Prasad had led that team of performers. In this way, such ritual dance has become a familiar in the national and international level under the leadership of Chandra Prasad in the present time.

Space and Cultural Communication

The cultural performance of Thārus underlines their spatial awareness for their communicative action through the performance of *Barkā Nāc*. Spatiality, in general, is concerned with geographical term, but it encompasses the deep socio-cultural value of particular community. So the spatiality of performing such folk dance reinforces the communicative action among performers and audience. In fact, the ritual space of any folk dance is “a performance space,” which is relying on the basis of “practicing ritual” (Nejad 12). So their identity negotiation is possible through the performing space of ritual dance. In this respect, performing space of such ritual dance is such a category that represents identity, cultural and ethnic value of Thārus.

On the one hand, the holy and religious space is required for its performance as it is the symbolic dance based on the deities of Pandavas. For them, *Bhuiyārthān* in the village is an obligatory for achieving the religious and cultural purpose. If *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* system is running in Thāru village, it becomes easy to complete its different ritual practices. If migrants from the hilly regions request to perform this ritual dance, it can be performed near the temple as Chandra Prasad states openly, “If the non-Thāru people invite to perform the dance, Hindu

temple protected area can be chosen to perform” (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 257). Similarly, house-courtyard, threshing floor and open ground of villages are also appropriate space to perform the dance. To conclude, the concept of performing ritual of *Barkā Nāc* can be seen as the ideological projection of Thāru rites, relationships and cultural values.

Performance and Socio-semiotic Implication

The ritual dance of *Barkā Nāc* remarkably possesses symbols and signs, which reflects Thāru socio-cultural world and society at large. Daniel Chandler, as a critic of semiotics, presents the concept of semiotic implication, which reinforces to analyze the signs and symbols in performing *Barkā Nāc*. Regarding the socio-semiotic reflection, Chandler emphasizes that “semiotic is about visual signs” that depicts the sign system and “take the forms of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects” (1-2). Indeed, the ethnic culture “is genetic inheritance that embodies itself physically . . . is also a sign with cultural meaning” (Ryan 72). Thus, performance of ethnic folk text comes into a being when Thāru people bring in a practice with the socio-cultural implication.

From the semiotic perspective, all performers who are involved in this ritual dance represent different characters of *Mahābhārata*. Indeed, Dharma Juḍhiṣṭhīl (Yudhiṣṭhīr), Bhevān (Bhīma), Arjun, Sahiḍeva Paṇḍit (Sahadeva), Nakurān (Nakul), Ḍurpaṭi (Draupadi), *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* (Dornācārya), *Kesaukā Gurvā* (Bhishma Pitāmaha), Svāne (Krishna and Mahadev), *Maṭavā* and *Maṭinyā* are involved and also they have different roles in the performance of the ritual dance. Interestingly, *Maṭavā* and *Maṭinyā* are additional characters in the Thāru version as they are not found such characters in classical *Mahābhārata*.

Table 5 Socio-semiotics of Performers and Objects

Lists of Performers	
1	Dharma Yudhisthil (Yudhisthir) = Eldest of the five Pandava brothers. Five male dancers in the dress of <i>jāmā</i> , which symbolizes the uniform of King. They play the role of dancing.
2	Bhevān (Bhima) = Six males represent Bhevān. They bring the wooden-hammer in their hands. Such hammer symbolizes the weapon of mace used by Bhīma during the war of Kurukshetra. They perform the <i>muṅgrā</i> dance.
3	Arjun = Master in the archery during the war of Kurukshetra. Five males have the role of singing the song of <i>Barkimār</i> from its different <i>paidhār</i> in the folk dance.
4	Sahideva Pandit (Sahadeva) = Five males are the representative of Sahideva Pandit as they wear the shirt, dhoti and half coat. They perform the typical dance.
5	Nakurān (Nakul) = Three to five males are Nakurān as they wear the special dhoti and half coat. They have the role of playing the <i>mandrā</i> (tom-tom).
6	Ḍurpaṭi (Draupadi) = Five females represent Draupadi and they wear the <i>lehangā</i> , <i>meṭaki</i> and feathers of peacock. They perform <i>Ḍurpaṭi Nāc</i> .
7	<i>Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā</i> (Dronacharya/ Daunāgir) = A male represents Ḍaunāgir (Dornacarya) who has the role of <i>Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā</i> in the ritual dance.
8	<i>Kesaukā Gurvā</i> (Bhishma Pitāmaha) = A male represents Bhishma who has the role of <i>Kesaukā Gurvā</i> .
9	Svāṅe (Krishna and Shiva) = A male represents both Krishna and Shiva. He wears the penis of the bamboo in the area of pelvic cavity and also wears the wooden-made up of skull in the head. Penis bamboo refers to the Shiva <i>linga</i> (penis) and <i>khappar</i> (skull)

	symbolizes Krishna. He makes a peace space for the performer from the crowds and noise.
10	<i>Maṭavā</i> = A leader of Thāru village and he worships in the <i>bhuinyārṭhān</i> and dancing space of the courtyard.
11	<i>Maṭinyā</i> = A wife of <i>Maṭavā</i> . She sets the <i>akhaṇḍa-jot</i> (a light) and worships the penis of Svāne in the inaugural of the dance.
12	<i>Mohryā</i> = A male who leads the performance of <i>Barkā Nāc</i> .
<i>Rāu</i> bird and Erected Wooden Poles (<i>tārbān</i>)	
13	<i>Rāu</i> bird = <i>Rāu</i> bird is made up from the wood and rope. It represents the hitting target to the competitors for getting wife Draupadi at her <i>swayamvara</i> in the kingdom of Panchala. Bhīma was winner to target <i>rāu</i> bird instead of Arjun.
14	Hinauṭā king pole = It represents ancient king of Himalayan region. It is a central and longest pole and its cloth is red color and black yak-tale in the peak.
15	Yudhiṣṭhir pole = White yak-tale is tied in the peak of Yudhiṣṭhir pole. White color symbolizes his purity of thought and deed in the tale.
16	Ḍurpaṭi pole = Black yak tale is tied in the peak of Draupadi pole and brass-water pot is put in its peak.
17	Jirijoḍhan pole = It symbolizes the representative of Kaurav side. It is given black tale of yak in its peak.
18	Vairāṭ king pole = King Vairāṭ gives the shelter to Pandavas during the exile time. It has white cover of cloth. Moreover, black yak-tale is put in its peak.

Table 5 drawn by researcher

However, Arjun is regarded as a master in the archery. In the same way, classical version mentions his skill at the ceremony of *swayamvara* to make Draupadi the wife of Pandavas as he successfully shoots the target of a spinning golden fish in its eye. In the Thāru version, Bhīma plays the major role to win Draupadi by shooting the target of *rāu* bird at the formal procedure of *swayamvara*. Anyway, “five persons are Arjun and they have the role of singing song of *Barkimār*” from its different types of *paiḍhār* (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 254). Thus, the representatives of Arjun in the ritual performance have the significance in the role of singing.

Ḍharma Juḍhiṣṭhil in Thāru version is Yudhiṣṭhir of classical version. Yudhiṣṭhir was the eldest of the five Pandava brothers in the folk tale of *Barkimār*. As its story unfolds, Yudhiṣṭhir was challenged by Kauravas. Moreover, Yudhiṣṭhir lost the kingdom of Hastinapur and all properties in the dice game with Duryodhan. In the same way, Pandavas were forced to go to exile for twelve years. During the exile time, they encountered numerous problems. But he successfully solved to save the life of all five brothers and Draupadi. Accordingly, the role of Yudhiṣṭhir in the folk epic is to display the right duty of Kshetriya people to protect and rule honestly over the country. In other words, Yudhiṣṭhir is the symbolic character of righteousness and dutifulness as he strictly follows twelve years of exile and substantial responsibility during the war of Kurukshetra as well as accountability of a king in Hastinapur after defeating the Kauravas. So Yudhiṣṭhir is performed in the appearance of five dancers in the dress of *jāmā*, an old fashioned long cloak worn by Thāru male. Thus, five persons are Ḍharma Juḍhiṣṭhil (Yudhiṣṭhir) as they perform the dance in wearing the traditional dress of *jāmā*. In other words, “the cultural dress of *jāmā* indicates the uniform of king” in the folk way of Thārus (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 254). It shows that Yudhiṣṭhir has the ruling authority in the kingdom of Hastinapur despite the needless claim and conspiracy of Kauravas.

The Thāru world of historical and cultural root reveals the admiration of bodily and martial power as Thārus valorizes the aggressive and martial nature of Bhīma in their folk epic⁵. After reading *Barkimār*, James Laines opines that this folk text is “a truly martial epic rather than an epic modified by Brahmanic religious concerns, and consequently, neither Arjun nor Yudhisthir is given prominence” (50). Moreover, Thārus are known as the *bhumiputra* (native people) as they transformed the mosquito-infested jungles of Tarai lowland into the fertile land. At that time, they used much more muscular power to produce the grain in the region of Tarai. So the worshipping of the martial and physical strength shows their historical and cultural root. At this background, they valorize Bhīma according to their natural and cultural nature. His martial features of heroic adventures can be seen in different episodes of *Barkimār*. Among those events, conspiracy of Kauravas by making the *lakhāgriha* (i.e. house of wax) and his dauntless act of protecting brothers and mother from the highly flammable house is a significant episode. Bhīma fled putting his mother and brothers on his shoulders through the safe path of a tunnel. In the same way, Bhīma also defeated Ḍānu, the Giant, by cutting its stomach and made the possible of re-union of five brothers and mother Kunti.

Very interestingly, Thāru version unfolds the remarkable bravery of Bhīma in the episode of *swayamvara* of the princess Draupadi, a daughter of King Draupad in the kingdom of Panchala. Accordingly, Bhīma successfully hit the *rāu* bird and won Draupadi at the ceremony of *swayamvara*. The classical version describes the skill of Arjun in shooting the target on the

⁵The valorization of Bhīma in the community of Dangaura Tharus gets reflected on the occasion of their festival *Barkā Atwāri*. *Barkā Atwāri* is one of the most significant festivals, which occurs in the first Saturday of the bright fortnight of August. In their region, Bhīma is worshipped every year in the honor of his victory over Kauravas. Bhīma was physically strong and he had played significant role in war. All hundred Kauravas were killed during the war of Kurukshetra. According to Tharu legend, Bhīma prepared meal in the evening time for next day. Before early morning, Bhīma ate that meal and went to fight against Kauravas in the battlefield. He also won to Kauravas in the battlefield. To honor Bhīma, Tharus take fasting before the evening time. After worshipping Bhīma, they take half cooked bread as a deity offering (*prasād*). In this way, Tharus are great worshippers of Bhīma that is reflected in the folk dance of *Barkā Nāc* as there can be seen in its *Bhevān* or *muṅgrā nāc*.

eye of the golden fish. But Thāru version highlights the valiant nature of Bhīma for making Draupadi the wife of all five brothers. Moreover, his threat to Dusasana in a game of dice, fighting with elephant to get a shelter in the incognito time in the kingdom of king Virata, killing Kichaka and saving the truthfulness and devotion with five Pandavas of Draupadi, heroic war with the force of Kauravas during the Kurukshetra war and getting the responsibility of commander-in-chief in the kingdom of Hastinapur after defeating the Kauravas are the key heroic events, which also justify the martial features of Bhīma. To signify such valiant actions of Bhīma, *Barkā Nāc* encompasses the *Bhevān* dance or *muṅgrā* dance. Indeed, “six persons are *Bhevān* (Bhīma) and they bring the wooden-hammer in their hands as it represents the mace used by Bhīma in the Kurukshetra.” (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 254). Thus, a wooden-hammer in the hand of Bhīma has the semiotic meaning of his martial strength.



Figure 6: Six young males in the appearance of Bhīma performing the dance taking the wooden-hammer in their hands on the third day of ritual dance at threshing ground in Mahadevā Deukhuri. Photo: Researcher

Draupadi, the most prominent female character in the narrative of *Mahābhārata*, represents the symbolic meaning of dedication and duty-oriented woman for her husbands, five brothers of Pandavas. Thāru version names ‘Ḍurpaṭi’ instead of Draupadi and she was the lovely

daughter of King Drupada from the kingdom of Panchala. ‘Rāu Beḍhak Paiḍhār’ in Thāru version describes that Bhīma became successful to hit the target of *rāu* bird and made her wife from the ceremony of *swyamvara*. So it highlights the role of Bhīma in the competition instead of Arjun, “When Princess Draupadi hears that she will be married to Bhīma/She climbs into his chariot; gently escorting her, Bhīma holds her arm/ And proclaims, “Now Princess Draupadi is mine!” (Meyer and Deuel, *Mahabharata* 40). However, Bhīma already had promised with mother Kunti that whatever he had achieved would “share all of the fruits of life” (30). As a consequence, Draupadi became the common wife of five brothers as Pandavas were obedient to follow strictly whatever they had already promised.

Similarly, Draupadi was dragged by Durasan when Yudhisṭhir lost the kingdom and all properties in the game of dice with Duryodhan. Despite such insult, she was dedicated and devoted to follow the chastity and religious duty with five Pandavas. Consequently, the valorization of Draupadi is an essential characteristic in the performance of ritual dance in *Barkā Nāc*. To signify her sacred, dedicated and duty-oriented female, five women perform the dance wearing ornament and dress. In other words, “five females are Draupadi and they wear the *lehangā* (a female dress), *meṭaki* (a female dress) and the feathers of peacock to show their dance” (Appendix I, C “Interview” 254). Indeed, the dance of five women in a group of Draupadi is known as Draupadi dance, which is also one of the allured components in the ritual dance.



Figure 7: Five females performing *Durpaṭi* dance on the second day of ritual dance at the courtyard of *Maṭavā* house in Jalaurā. Photo: Researcher

Among the five brothers, Nakul and Sahadeva are twin brothers. Indeed, Thāru version describes Nakurān to Nakul and Sahideva Pandit to Sahadeva. Nakul has expert in knowledge about caring of horses during the thirteen year of exile while they were in the job of King Vairāt. In the same way, he was also expert in using sword in the war of Kurukshetra. Accordingly, “three to five males are *Nakurān* (Nakul) as they wear the special dhoti and half coat” and, likewise, they use to play the *mandrā* (tom-toms) (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 254). In other words, the drummers (or *maḍaryā*) are the representatives of Nakul in the performance of *Barkā Nāc*. Indeed, his characteristic shows great intelligence as he is talented in the learning of Vedas and economics. It is considered that the kingdom of Indraprasthan was rich at that time due to the economic knowledge of Sahadeva. The representatives of five males are Sahadeva Pandit who wear the shirt, dhoti and half-coat and also perform the typical dance.

Dronacarya taught the Vedas and the art of war to both Pandavas and Kauravas as he was a guru to all of them. Moreover, Drona was by birth a Brahmin, but also competent in the weaponry science. So the role of Dronacharya seems as a *Desbandhyā Gurvā* in the ritual dance

of *Barkā Nāc*. Indeed, Dronacharya is known as ‘Daunāgir’ in Thāru version. In the same way, Bhishma Pitāmaha, the grandfather of Pandavas and Kauravas, is named as ‘*Gangevā*.’ Indeed, Bhishma was respected as an ascetic and he also taught the lesson of *dharma* to both Pandavas and Kauravas. But his moral lesson of *dharma* became futile while he was powerless to end the war between Pandavas and Kauravas in the field of Kurukshetra. Despite his failure to avoid the war, Bhishma is esteemed and revered in the Thāru version. Indeed, “Dronacarya and Bhishma Pitāmah are two unique characters and they play the role of *Desbandhyā* and *Kesaukā Gurvā* in the ritual performance of *Barkā Nāc*.” (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 255). In the appearances of *Desbandhyā* and *Kesaukā Gurvā*, they wear the yellow dress and recite the mantra in *Gurai pujā* and play the role of folk doctors of females during the performing of the dance. In other words, they have the duty like a priest and shaman in their practical life.



Figure 8: Two *Gurvā* performing the role of Dornacarya and Bhishma. Photo: Researcher

Among the performers, Svāne is the representative of both Mahadev and Krishna in the ritual performance. Indeed, the God Krishna was the protector of five brothers of Pandavas against the injustice of Kauravas during the Kurukshetra war. To signify such symbolic features

of Krishna, Svāne uses to get-up a *khappar* (i.e. wooden-made up of skull) in the head. In the same way, he wears the penis shaped bamboo in the pelvic cavity. Such penis bamboo refers to the Shiva-*linga*. In this way, Chandra Prasad contends that penis of Svāne “refers to Shiva-*linga* and *Khappar* symbolizes Krishna” (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 254). While performing the ritual dance, Svāne makes a peaceful space for the performers from the disturbance of crowd. Indeed, he is a protector of entire team of the performers and audience. Moreover, the bamboo made-penis of Svāne is honored by *Maṭinyā*, wife of *Maṭavā* /*Barghar*, during the inauguration of the dance.



Figure 9: *Maṭinyā* welcoming the team of performers with worshipping *Shiva-linga* in his own village at Mahadevā village on the second day of ritual dance. Photo: Researcher

The folk characters like *Maṭavā*, *Maṭinyā* and *Mohryā* are additional in *Barkā Nāc* because such characters are not found in the classical *Mahābhārata*. As a leader of the Thāru village, *Maṭavā* worships the *Bhuinyārṭhān* and dancing space of the court-yard, where both *Ḍesbandhyā* and *Kesaukā Gurvā* recite the mantra. *Maṭinyā*, as a wife of *Maṭavā*, worships the penis of *Svāne* during the inaugural time. In the same way, *Maṭinyā* of next village also plays the role of welcoming the team of performers by worshipping *Shiva-linga* in one’s own village

(Figure 9). Moreover, the next worth mentioning character is *Mohryā*, who leads the song of *Barkimār* during the performance of *Barkā Nāc*. Chandra Prasad Chaudhari (72) himself has played the responsibility of *Maṭavā* and *Mohryā* since 1993 in the team of Jalaurā. Since its beginning in 1922, his father led this dance until his death in 1972.

The *rāu* bird is made using wood and rope to represent “the hitting target to the competitors for getting wife Draupadi at her *swayamvara* ceremony in the kingdom of Panchala” (Appendix I, C, Interview” 256). Indeed, the *rāu* bird was not a live bird, but a target which looks like a bird as princes and reputed young personalities from various countries were gathered to compete for the marriage of Draupadi. However Thāru version describes such episode of Princess Draupadi *swayamvara* in ‘Rau Beḍhak Paiḍhār.’

Draupad was a powerful king, but he was worried for not getting any suitable bridegroom to his daughter. Dismayed king held a ceremony of *swayamvara* in his Panchala kingdom. As expected hundreds of young Princes and other competitors participated but were unable to shoot the target, a *rāu* bird. So much so Duryodhan too became unsuccessful. This caused Draupadi worried as Thāru version describes: “Princess Draupadi stands up and scolds/Duryodhan, the eldest Kaurava brother. / “Because you failed to hit the target, symbol of my beauty, /You leave me unmarried forever!” (Meyer and Deuel, *Mahābhārata* 38). But to her luck, there and then, the five Pandavas arrived in disguised forms to compete the ceremony. At last, Bhīma hit the target of *rāu* bird and won her as his wife. In fact, Thāru version challenges the description of the classical Mahabharata as Arjun was skilled archer to hit the eye of golden fish running in the sky at the *swayamvara* ceremony. The symbolic *rāu* bird is made to dance by the performers when *samrauṭi* is sung while in the ritual dance (Figure 10). So the image of *rāu* bird is the symbolic implication of victory of Bhīma to make Draupadi as the wife of five brothers. The target is

symbol of her beauty at the ceremony of *swayamvara* that underlines the triumph of Bhīma to be the suitable bridegroom in her life. So the episode of Draupadi *swayamvara* is symbolized in the artistic way of dancing steps of *rāu* bird by the folk performers.



Figure 10: The performers are performing dance of the *rāu* bird in their hands as they reach in Mahadevā on the second day of ritual. Photo: Researcher

An especial *samrauṭi*, an appealing song to their deities, is sung in the opening of ritual dance. As they sing this song, the performers come to gather at the space of dancing court-yard of *Maṭavā*. After the performing of *samrauṭi*, they erect different colors of bamboo/wooden poles (*tārbān*) in front of the dancing space of court-yard. At the same time, *Maṭinyā* puts near the *akhaṇḍa-jot*, the lighting lamp that should not be wiped out during the ritual dance. The central and longest pole represents Hinautā, ancient king of Himalayan region. Moreover, the cover cloth of Hinautā pole is red and the black yak-tale is tied in the peak. God Shiva resides in the region of Himalayan. So the Hinautā pole embodies the residence of God Shiva. On the eastern side of central pole, Yudhiṣṭhir pole is erected. However, Yudhiṣṭhir, the eldest brother of

Pandavas, denotes honesty and dutifulness and, consequently, white yak-tale is tied in the peak of Yudhisṭhir pole. Moreover, white color symbolizes purity of thought and action.

On the eastern side of Yudhisṭhir pole, Draupadi pole is erected with the black yak-tale tied in the peak. In other words, Draupadi is the common wife of Pandavas and brass-water pot is put in the peak of Draupadi pole. On the western side of Hinautā pole, Duryodhan pole is erected that represents Duryodhan, the eldest brother of Kauravas. Duryodhan pole is given black tale of yak in its peak as his nature shows the stratagem to bring the royal power from the side of Pandavas. So this pole is the symbolic implication of Kaurav side in the war of Kurukshetra. On the western side of Duryodhan pole, there is the pole of King Vairāṭ, who gives shelter to Pandavas during their exile. It has white cover of cloth and black yak tale is put in its peak (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 256). In this way, five wooden poles of different colors are erected in the dancing court-yard (Figure 11, Figure 12).



Figure 11: Chandra Prasad Chaudhari, the headman of *Barkā Nāc*, speaking about this ritual dance on the second day at the performing space of his courtyard in front of erected wooden poles in Jalaurā. Photo: Researcher



Figure 12: The performers singing *samrauṭi* and catching in their hands of different five colors of erected wooden poles (*tārbān*) before leaving for next village. Photo: Researcher

Vignette of *Barkā Nāc* in Jalaurā and Mahadevā (October 16-19, 2019)

As I reach and wait to watch the performance, I am told that *Barkā Nāc* this year is to take for four days in two villages, Jalaurā and Mahadevā, of Dang-Deukhuri valley. It is limited to four days even though it can be spanned more than several weeks to months. This dance is not only concerned with “a production for entertainment, but the highlight of *pujā* designed to assure good harvests and to bless the villages” (Meyer and Deuel, *Tharu Barka* 8). When Meyer and Deuel had supported the performance of this ritual dance, it had been performed “approximately 21 days”. This means to say that the prolongation of the ritual dance depends on the interest and demand of the villagers as well as fund support to the program. Detail of performing schedule of four days (October 16-19, 2019) has been given on the following table 6:

Table 6 Four Days’ Schedule of *Barkā Nāc*

SN	Performing Ritual and Dance Activities	Date	Time	Space
	<i>Gurai puṭā</i> in <i>ṭhanvā</i> or <i>Bhuinyārṭhān</i> ,	October 16	10am to 5pm	Narayanpur,

1	<i>manainā</i> (permission worshipping for their local gods in <i>thanvā</i>), erection of <i>tārbān</i> (bamboo/wooden poles), setting of <i>akhaṇḍa jot</i> , <i>samrauṭi</i> in dancing court-yard, make to dance the <i>rāu</i> birds, <i>Maṭinyā</i> 's <i>linga puṣā</i> of <i>Svāṇe</i> , <i>samrauṭi</i> singing in <i>thanvā</i>			Jalaurā
2.1	First, <i>samrauṭi</i> in dancing court-yard, offering holy water and alcohol, make to dance the <i>rāu</i> birds, Second, <i>Gurvā</i> scattering the holy rice-grain (<i>akṣatā</i>) in the dancing ground, <i>Svāṇe</i> jumping on the ground where <i>Gurvā</i> scatters the <i>akṣatā</i> Third, collective performance of <i>Maḍaryā</i> (Nakurān), <i>Ḍurpaṭi</i> , <i>Juḍhisthil</i> , <i>Sahiḍeva</i> Pandit and <i>Bhevān</i> Fourth, performing different <i>khvāt</i> (rhythms) based dances Fifth, performing of <i>Bhevān</i> and <i>Ḍurpaṭi</i> dances Sixth, singing <i>Barkimār paidhār</i> by five Arjuns Seventh, performance of singing <i>Paidhār</i> based dances Seventh, <i>chokrā nāc</i> of <i>Gurbābak Jarmauṭi</i> Eighth, <i>samrauṭi</i> in dancing court-yard and <i>thanvā</i> Ninth, farewell to the performers from Jalaurā	October 17	8 am to 2 pm	Narayanpur, Jalaurā
2.2	Welcoming performers in Mahadevā, <i>samrauṭi</i> in <i>thanvā</i> , worshipping Shivalinga by <i>Maṭinyā</i> , <i>samrauṭi</i> in court-yard of <i>Barghar</i> and dancing court-yard. Erection of bamboo/wood poles in dancing court-yard and setting of <i>akhaṇḍa-jot</i> . Then, eating, drinking and resting of the night.	October 17	6pm to 8 pm	Gaḍhavā, Mahadevā
3.1	Folk treatment by <i>Gurvā</i> in the morning	October 18	7am to 9 am	Gaḍhavā, Mahadevā
3.2	First, <i>samrauṭi</i> in dancing court-yard of ward chairman, offering holy water and alcohol, make to dance the <i>rāu</i> birds. Second, <i>Gurvā</i> scattering the holy rice-	October 18	10 am to 3 pm	Gaḍhavā, Mahadevā

	<p>grain (<i>akṣatā</i>) in the dancing ground, Svāne jumping on the ground where <i>Gurvā</i> scatters the <i>akṣatā</i></p> <p>Third, collective performance of <i>Maḍaryā</i> (Nakurān), <i>Ḍurpaṭi</i>, <i>Juḍhiṣṭhil</i>, <i>Sahiḍeva</i> <i>Panḍit</i> and <i>Bhevān</i></p> <p>Fourth, performing different <i>khvāt</i> based dances</p> <p>Fifth, performing of <i>Bhevān</i> and <i>Ḍurpaṭi</i> dances</p> <p>Sixth, singing <i>Barkimār</i> by five persons i.e. Arjun</p> <p>Seventh, performance of singing <i>Barkimār</i>'s <i>paidhār</i> based dances</p> <p>Seventh, <i>chokrā nāc</i> of <i>Gurbābak Jarmauti</i></p> <p>Eighth, <i>samrauṭi</i> in dancing court-yard and <i>ṭhanvā</i></p> <p>Ninth, farewell to the performers from Mahadevā</p>			
3.3	<i>Samrauṭi</i> in <i>ṭhanvā</i> and dancing court-yard	October 18	7pm to 8 pm	Narayanpur, Jalaurā
4	<p>First, all performers take bath in stream</p> <p>Second, <i>lugābār biḍhi</i> in dancing court-yard</p> <p>Third, five <i>Ḍurpaṭi</i> s cook rice pudding and they provides rice pudding, betel leaf and nut to the Pandavas</p> <p>Fourth, five Arjuns singing <i>Sworgārohan Paidhār</i> (epilogue of <i>Barkimār</i>),</p> <p>Fifth, ritual of <i>jwājā</i> in front of bamboo /wooden poles</p> <p>Sixth, offering animal and chicken sacrifices to their deities in <i>ṭhanvā</i> and to the erected bamboo poles in the dancing court-yard, also uprooting the bamboo poles</p> <p>Seventh, all performers carry <i>rāu</i> birds in front of <i>sainik briḱṣa</i> and they tie up those birds with the ropes around that tree. After tying up those <i>rāu</i> birds there, entire ritual dance of <i>Barkā Nāc</i> is ended.</p>	October 19	6 pm to 8 am	Narayanpur, Jalaurā

Table 6 drawn by researcher

On the first day of the ritual dance, the performances are held in two spaces: courtyard in front of house of *Maṭavā* and *bhuinyārṭhān* (or *ṭhanvā*). Before the inauguration of the dance, *Gurai puṣā* is held in the *bhuinyārṭhān*. It is an obligatory that one should worship and take the permission for ritual dance from the local gods and goddesses in *ṭhanvā*. The ritual of ‘*deuṭā manainā*’ or ‘*bhākal puṣā*’, a promise with the local deities, is held. Accordingly, they promise to offer sacrifice of animal and chicken after the successful completion of the ritual dance. The participants observe all the required tasks of the worshipping. In the same way, the singers, dancers and tom-tom players get assigned the role and practice for various dances and songs to perform in varied contexts of performances from opening to the ending. In the meantime, many costumes and musical instruments are prepared for the performers. After the *Gurai puṣā* of the first day, all performers gather at the courtyard of *Maṭavā* wearing their dresses and taking required musical instruments and other folk materials (Figure 13).



Figure 13: The performers preparing for *Barkā Nāc* on the first day at the courtyard of *Maṭavā* house in Jalaurā. Photo: Researcher

At first, *Maṭinyā* worships the bamboo *linga* or sacred phallus of *Svāne* considering as *Shiva-linga* and also lits continuously burning lamp (*akhaṇḍa-jot*). Their folk conviction is that *akhaṇḍa-jot* should not be wiped out during the ritual dance. Accordingly, the lamp is covered with the leaf-plate to protect it from the wind blow. Then, all performers sing the *samrauṭi* song.

In the meantime, *Samrauṭi* is repeated in *ṭhanvā* by all performers. The presentation of first day ritual begins at 10am in morning and is continued until 5pm. At first, they have to perform *Gurai puḷā* before the beginning of the dance (Figure 14).



Figure 14: *Desbandhyā* and *Kesaukā Gurvā* performing *Gurai Puḷā* and inaugurating the ritual dance of *Barkā Nāc* on the first day at *Bhuinyārṭhān* of Jalaurā. Photo: Researcher

On the second day, performers gather at 8 am in the morning and continue performing dance until 2 pm in the courtyard of *Maṭavā* in Jalaurā. In comparison to the first day, the number of visitors, neighbors and other audience is increased. At first, they perform the *samrauṭi* in the morning. And then, performers have had the *rāu* bird in their hands and also make it dance. In the meantime, *Desbandhyā Gurvā* scatter *akṣatā* on the dancing ground of the courtyard. Subsequently, three *maḍaryā* (or drummers) begin to play their tom-toms. When they start playing tom-toms, the separate groups of Draupadi, Yudhiṣṭhir, Sahadeva and Bhīma also perform their dances and arts.

In the meantime, dancers and drummers perform different *khvāt* of tom-toms and steps of dances (Figure 15). By tradition, twenty two rhythms of drummers and dancing steps can be performed. At that time, only six to eight *khvāt* are performed. These are mainly performed: the ‘*ḍāun ghar, ḍāun ghar, ḍāun ghar*’ ‘*faṭak ḍāun ghar, ḍāun ḍāun nā*’ ‘*ḍhappar ḍhappar ḍaiyak tai bhaḍayak tai*’ ‘*jhvāng jhuiyak jhvāng ḍhyāl*’ ‘*ḍaiyak ṭaiyak, ḍai ḍāi ḍāi* and *gyālḍau nakṭau*

gyālḍau nakṭau'. Similarly, the dances of Bhīma and Draupadi are performed. After the performances of separate groups of Bhīma and Draupadi, five appearances of Arjun begin to sing the '*Barkimār*' from twelve *paidhār*. Due to the short-time schedule, they are enforced to sing few part of its *paidhār*. Similarly, performers present the *chokrā Nāc* using the song based on the *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*. Finally, all the performers sing the *samrauṭi* before the farewell to go to the village of Mahadevā.

On the second day of evening at 6pm, all performers reach to Mahadevā of Deukhuri valley. They are welcomed by the villagers of Mahadevā. After their greeting, the performers sing *samrauṭi* in the courtyard of *Barghar*. They also repeat the *samrauṭi* in the space of *ṭhanvā* and *khenvā*. Similarly, the process of erecting the bamboo poles and setting of the *akhaṇḍa-joṭ* in the common courtyards is completed. After that, eating, drinking and interacting among the Thāru people of Dang and Deukhuri continue around 10 pm. At that time, they do not only enjoy the sipping and eating the drink and food items, but they have also an opportunity to share the cultural memories, practices and relationships of the ancestral time.



Figure 15: The performers performing the *khvāt* on the second day of ritual dance in Jalaurā.
Photo: Researcher

On the third day of ritual dance, *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* begins the program by treating different sick women reciting mantra in the morning from 7am to 8am. At that time, two women

come to ask for the treatment as they suffering from the fatal disease such as miscarriage. *Gurvā* does not only use the recitation of the mantras, but also provide some medical herbs. Day by day, such folk treatment in Thāru village is vanishing, but theatrical performance of such folk treatment reminds them the traditional system of medication. After this step of the folk treatment, they take the meal.

The performers begin various styles and steps of ritual dances at 10am in the morning. They also continue multiple sides of performing activity until 2 pm. In the beginning, drummers perform different steps of *khvāt*. Similarly, Bhīma dance, Draupadi dance, *chokrā* and *jhumrā* dances are performed. At that time, various types of audience from common villagers to provincial parliamentary members, village municipality representatives and leaders of Thāru Welfare Society Deukhuri arrive to watch the performance. When local people of Mahadevā had heard that the origin of *Barkā Nāc* is from their village, they get surprised. But their forefathers who practiced such carnival dance are no more living in the present time in their village. It is like a story as the practice discontinued since more than eighty years. When the team of Jalaurā villagers performs, they feel like a cultural renaissance. So they also heartily welcome and promise to revive the dance in their village in the coming days. Moreover, few old age people rejoice cultural memories of the folk ritual, dances and collective performances of the past days. New generation of local Thārus also watch the live performance of what they had only heard from their seniors.

After different segments of the performances, *rāu* bird is made to dance by the performers as a farewell dance. Lastly, *samrauṭi* is carried out by the performer for their protection from the deities before they go away from the invited village. The team of performers returns to their village Jalaurā from Deukhuri at 7pm in the evening. In the meantime, they also

presented *samrauṭi* in the *ṭhanvā* and dancing courtyard of *Maṭavā* house in Jalaurā. In this way, the playing of musical instruments is stopped from that day.

According to the schedule, the fourth day is final day for worshipping and making farewell to the ritual dance. On that day, all performers go to take bath to nearby stream from their village in the early morning. Afterwards, as they are ready to eat the cooked rice, *lugābār* ritual is performed as a wish of sound health and free from disease, evils, witches and ghosts. Accordingly, the performers bring the cooked rice from their home. Such cooked rice is sanctified from the mantra of *Gurvā* in the courtyard of ritual performances. After that, five women of Draupadi cook the rice-pudding and provide it to the five brothers of Pandavas. They also provide betel leaf and nut to the Pandavas. In the meanwhile, five Arjuns sing the portion of *Sworgārohan Paiḍhār*, Epilogue of *Barkimār*. The performers also prepare the bundles of dried grass. Moreover, they make an elephant shaping from those bundles of dried grass in front of wooden poles and also burn such shaping.

At this moment, *Desbandhyā Gurvā* sits over the fired grass. The performers offer cow milk, holy water and alcohol to *Gurvā* and they return without looking back. Later on, they begin to offer the sacrifices of almost forty five chickens, eight pigs, three young goats, three she-goats and two ships to the deities of wooden poles in the courtyard and deities of the *bhuinyārṭhān* (Figure 16). Then the erected *ṭārbān* is uprooted from the courtyard. Finally, the performers carry up the bundles of *rāu* birds in front of *sainik brikṣa* and they tie up those birds with the ropes around that tree (Figure 17). After the sacramental procedural of *sainik brikṣa*, entire ritual dance comes to the end. Then, all the performers, villagers, visitors and guests enjoy on local food and drinking items. At this time, they also share and interact about their ancestors and their works.



Figure 16: The picture of offering animals and chickens sacrifice at the courtyard of dancing place where wooden poles and *rāu* birds are erected on the final day of ritual dance in Jalaurā. Photo: Researcher



Figure 17: The performers tying up the *rāu* birds around *sainik briḡṣa* at the end of ritual dance in Jalaurā. Photo: Researcher

Conclusion

The cultural performance of *Barkimār* on the occasion of *Ḍasyā* festival reflects the power of *communitas* of *Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus*. However, *communitas* in the particular spatial context underscores the fellow feeling, comradeship and homogeneity among the *gharḍhuriyā* of the Thāru villagers. Likewise, the socio-semiotic features on the ritual dance of *Barkā Nāc*

embody the embedded meaning of Thāru *Mahābhārata*. Indeed, the performance of performers, *rāu* bird and five erected poles in the ritual dance highlight how Thāru people use the socio-semiotic aspect to reflect the representational space of their cultural identity and values.

Moreover, these semiotic sides are also the significant medium for their communicative action as well as the social action. All in all, both performing styles, particularly collective singing of *Barkimār* and ritual dance of *Barkā Nāc*, reflect the cultural dimension of peasantry way of life in their spatiality. The cultural reflection of ordinary way of peasantry life emphasizes the performance of folklore in social communication, clusters of relationship, order and identity with the variety of the structural ties.

Chapter IV

Spatial Performance of Folk Dance and Rituality in Rama Story and Creation Myth

In the first section of this chapter, the study analyzes how the spatial performance of ethnicity has the reflection of folklore through the folk dances based on the Thāru *Rāmāyana*. The narrative of Rama, the king of Ayodhya in the ancient time, is popular in their folk way of life as they perform the story in many ways. Moreover, the performing styles of Rama story are different folk dances such as, *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā nāc* in their spatiality. In the meantime, the performing contexts of such folk dances usually are the time of their marriage, birth, grain harvesting and other socio-cultural events. The performance of such socio-cultural contexts is traditionally suitable according to its structural patterns of time-duration like the evening, night, mid-night, early dawn, morning and day time. Similarly, the research has tried to encompass its descriptive analysis of live observation of my field visit at Sisahanyā village in Dang valley. Apart from spatial performance of Rama story, the second section of this chapter also attempts to examine the ritual process and folk dance of creation myth in the space of Thārus. Furthermore, the study also involves the descriptive analysis on my field visit observation based on live performance of its ritual recitation and *chokrā* dance in the chosen area of two villages, Bhānpur and Chakhaurā in Dang valley.

The research basically applies the theoretical perspective of Richard Schechner's performance as a 'mark identity' and Alan Dundes's folklore as a 'reflection of culture' to examine how the performance of folk dances based on the folk text of Rama story and creation myth, are the reflection of Thāru culture. The folk text of creation myth is performed as a ritual mantra of *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* on the occasion of *Hāryā* and *Dhuryā Gurai*. Similarly, the ritual performance of creation myth by *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* is also examined in the light of Catherine

Bell's 'the power of ritualization' because its *Gurvā* recitation of the folk text reflects the togetherness, unity and solidarity of the common and peasantry way of Thāru life in their space on the occasion of the festival of *Gurai pujā*.

Reflection of Folk Song and Dance

Folk song and dance based on Thāru *Rāmāyana* reflects the sense of cultural value and identity. Apparently, such performance of folk song and dance is one of the substantial genres of folklore in the community of Thārus. Regarding the reflection of the folkloristic knowledge, Alan Dundes opines that "folklore as a mirror of culture" because it "reflects the value configurations of the folk" life (*Meaning* 55-9). Accordingly, such performance of folk song and dance is related to "historical and cultural information about a group, with the presumption that is also a marker of a particularistic social identity" (54). Thus, the performance of such folk text highlights the story, historical and cultural memory, which reinforces the social identity and value of the ethnic group of Thārus.

While performing the folk text, the body of the dancers and singers tells the widespread type of folk narratives and their ethnic recalls as Richard Schechner argues, ". . . performances mark identities" (*Performance* 28). Then, the social identity of ethnicity through the folk performance comes into being when Thāru peasants carry out the oral narrative, song and music in a fore. Their performance of folk songs and dances reflects the ordinary ways of cultural life, which "tends a commonality of thought and behavior" (Ryan IX). Furthermore, ordinary way of their spatial life reflects the costumes, speech, behavior and musical sound, which are manifested through the folk songs and dances on the particular occasion of festivals and socio-cultural events.

Rāmāyana in Folk Version

The *Rāmbihagrā*, performed in the community of Daṅgaurā Thārus, is a prominent folk epic on the ancient Rama story in the circumstance of multicultural and multiethnic country of Nepal. Indeed, it is a distinctive type of regional, local and ethnic version of *Rāmāyana* in the circumstance of Nepal. The folk performers of Thārus have created the folkloric text in their own way of folk-life for the purpose of teaching its mythological based ideal character of Rama to their upcoming generation (Thāru, “Rāmbihagrā” 181). It is the story of king Rama of Ayodhya, the capital of Koshala, the ancient kingdom of Indian continent. Moreover, Thāru version shows the folk ways of conceptualizing the Rama story throughout the Thāru culture. In fact, such Rama story enhances the cultural identity, shared value and representation of the particular group in specific context and situation.

Clearly, the story and performances of folk version in South-Asian context of social and regional society go beyond the classical text and highlight the “nontraditional perspective on characterization” about the dominant features in the telling of Rama (Richman 15). At this situation, the vernacular version of Thāru *Rāmāyana* also portrays the regional and ethnic literary tradition of folklore in the sphere from South-Asian circumstance, particularly Nepali society. However, this performing folk epic is the product of retelling the classical story of *Rāmāyana* by the Thāru folk singers. But the folk text is retold in particular context of ethnic way of folk life that upholds to revive the past memories as well as the “cultural memory” and life of the past generation (Buckland, “Dance” 29). So the folk text is performed with singing and dancing in the Thāru community.

The Thāru concept of *Rāmāyana* constitutes an interesting folk literature that is distinguished from the mainstream Sanskrit belief of *kāvya*, set by Valmiki in the ancient time.

The Valmiki *Rāmāyana* has the identity of great ancient epic in Sanskrit and it has become “a source of inspiration and enchantment” to pinpoint the modification in different regional, ethnic and rural versions of Rama story to the people in India and the Southeast Asia (Kariyawasam, 91). Indeed, “regional literary vernaculars of South and north India exercised great freedom” that promoted “a multiform oral and literary tradition” on the storytelling of Rama (Tulsidas, vi). From the regional perspective, Kakawin in Bali occupies the “central place of the Ramayana tradition” as it has “richness of its multi-faceted representations “ in the narrative of Rama (Creese 93). The study of Rama-*kathā* or Rama story was first started by Cammille Bulke in 1956 in his work, *Rāma-kathā*. Further, his research on the topic of Rama story encompasses

the plethora of regional, vernacular, oral and folk tellings found in India, Tibet and Khotan, East Asia and most countries of South-East Asia, of which Buddhist and Jaina versions are an integral part. Local history, individual artists and the changing tastes of patrons and communities also left visible marks on the plural nature of these interpretations. Thus, the alternate tellings indicate stories that were often noticeably different in form and content from the Valmikian paradigm. (Saran 68)

At this backdrop, Thāru version of *Rāmāyana* also includes the local identity, new taste, local flavor and new pattern, which underlines the unrecorded body of oral lore in the existence of Thāru community. Thus, the performing the Rama story in the community of Thārus is an alternate tradition of Valmikian and other manuscripts such as Jainian, Tulasidas’s

Ramacaritamansa, Indonesian and Bhānubhaktian. Bhānubhaktian version of *Rāmāyana* is very popular among Nepali people and it gives emphasis to the story of ancient Rama in Nepali language (Gyawali 8). Indeed, *Rāmāyana* of Bhānubhakta has “the highest esteem by the people of Nepal” as it is recited in many households on the occasion of “marriage ceremony” and many

people by the heart of thousands' people (Munshi II). Similarly, *Rāmāyana* rendition in the vernacular tradition of Thārus is an entirely local product of the orality in their community.

Indeed, its performing event is “re-enactment of mythic events, few who participate” in the singing and dancing, which has “a fragmentary knowledge of those myths” on the classical tale of Rama (Ellen 75). Moreover, such practice of performing ethnic and regional version of Rama story is obviously the transcreation of Thāru folk performers who have heard from the previous generation and transmitted orally in their folk way of life with “the flavor of Thāru culture” (Diwasa 164). In the meantime, the performance of *Rāmāyana* story is concerned with “perennial philosophy” in the sense that its “lessons in the presentation of motives, actions and reactions” paves way for “applicable for all time and for all conditions of life” (Narayan 6-7). Anyway, performing episodes in Thāru version is entirely different from various manuscripts of the classic versions and other traditions of *Rāmāyana*.

The folk epic *Rāmbihagrā* consists of two words, ‘*Rama*’ and ‘*bihagrā*’. The first word ‘*Rama*’ means the first son of Dashrath, king of Ayodhya in Ancient India. In the same way, Thāru word ‘*bihagrā*’ is ‘*viyoga*’ in Nepali means ‘separation’ that brings suffering and pain in his life. So, overall story of *Rāmbihagrā* includes the misery and sorrow of Rama when his wife Sita was abducted by the demon Ravan. Moreover, Thāru folk singers have created the story of Rama as they practice in the form of a folk song and a dance in their folk way of life. Indeed, the classic *Rāmāyana* encompasses the story of Rama’s life as it is believed to have been composed by Valmiki in the ancient time, but the Thāru version retells that story in the rural, local and ethnic way. So this version is one of many regional variations of *Rāmāyana* in the Asian, South-Asian and Nepali context.

Thāru culture of Rama story is a storytelling of Rama in the form and pattern of folk epic in a farming community of Daṅgaurā Thārus where illiterate people can sing its content in their own way. The knowledge of Rama-story is imprinted in the memories of rural community based narrators. Consequently, it is transmitted orally from one generation to another. However it is an inevitable nature of folk storytelling as it is different in many episodes from the classical Sanskrit version. It should be clear that Thāru singers have retold the classic story of *Rāmāyana* with their native and local flavor. They heard it from the traditional storytellers. The retelling of episodes of Rama revives the traditional time as folk performers have heard many stories in the rural area, particularly from their grandfather, grandmother and other older relatives. Indeed, their folk way of life upholds for ardent listener and singer of rituals with traditional activities.

Although Thāru version of Rama story shows definitely the affinities with the classical version, but the fact of certain episodes have been localized according to the Thāru folkloric way of life. In other words, the local narrative of Rama portrays the specific form with local flavor in the community of Thārus. Indeed, the ethnic and local adaptation is remarkable to underline the specific features of folk way of life at the local level. First, Thāru performers apparently perform the content of Rama story in different structural patterns from the classical story. The Valmiki Ramayana consists of “24,000 *shlokas*” and is divided into following seven *kāṇḍas* (chapters/segments/cantos): *Bala Kāṇḍa* (segment about youth), *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* (segment about Ayodhya), *Āraṇya Kāṇḍa* (segment of the exile and forest), *Kishkindha Kāṇḍa* (segment about Kishkindha), *Sundara Kāṇḍa* (segment of beauty), *Yuddha Kāṇḍa* (segment about the war) and *Uttara Kāṇḍa* (segment of the sequel) (Debroy 16). But there is a drastic difference in the structural pattern between the classical *Rāmāyana* and the Thāru version. My field visit observation shows *Rāmbihagrā* has different nine *paidhār/kāṇḍa*/chapters (Table 7). It is popular

among the Thārus as it is sung and danced in the courtyards of Thāru villages. Certain episodes in the story can be seen in different patterns.

Table 7 Structural Patterns of *Rāmbihagrā*

SN	Name of Chapter/ <i>Kāṇḍa</i> / <i>Paidhār</i>
1	<i>Samrauṭi</i> (The Opening Song) : Invocation prayer in form of opening song
2	<i>Sanjhyā Gainā Giṭ</i> (Evening Song): Descendants of King Sohan Ḍasaraṭh <i>Giṭ</i>
3	<i>Rāṭ Kaṭnā Giṭ</i> (Night Spending Song) : <i>Rāmbihagrā</i> (Lamentation of Rama)
4	<i>Aḍharatyā Giṭ</i> (Mid-night Song): <i>Siu Phulvār</i> (Beautiful garden located in the area of <i>Shivālik</i> range of mountain)
5	<i>Aḍharatyā Giṭ</i> (Mid-night Song) : <i>Phul Pujainā</i> (Floral worship)
6	<i>Aḍharatyā Giṭ</i> (Mid-night Song): One person departed, but I didn't know...
7	<i>Bhinsaryā Giṭ</i> (Early Dawn Song) : Rama spent night in the forest whereas she is quite worried while passing night in the garden of Ravan
8	<i>Bihāniyā Giṭ</i> (Morning Song) : Foreign land song
9	<i>Ḍin-nacavā Giṭ</i> (Day-Time Dancing Song)

Table 7 drawn by the researcher

Second, all performers collectively sing the invocation pray in the beginning as they say ‘*samrauṭi*’ in their language. Indeed, the purpose of performing *samrauṭi* is to appeal to their deities for seeking permission and blessing from the local deities for the enactment of different segments of the folk text. Moreover, their folk belief is that they cannot get success in performing the text without the blessings of local gods and goddesses. In the segment of *samrauṭi*, they not only pray Hindu gods and goddesses (such as Brahmā, Bishnu, Mahesh, Saraswati), but also Thāru deity Gurbābā—the first human creator as well as religious, spiritual and enlightened personality in the Thāru myth. However, its *samrauṭi* runs like this:

Goddess Bhavāni! We seek your blessing.

Lord Ganesh! Help us to accomplish all our attempts.

We pray all five deities (Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Ganesh and Bhavāni) to protect us . . .

I will control the moon, sun and four directions.

If Gurbābā is positive and blesses me,

I will be able to control even the outbreak of fire. (*Rāmbihagrā: Folk Ramayana* 18)

Third, performers, in the segment of “Evening Song: Descendant of King Sohan Ḍasarath,” sing narrating the three kings, Sohan Ḍasarath, Āvasan and Jambar. All these three kings were the father of Ḍasarath, Ravan and Janak respectively. Among them, Āvasan had the power in using the chariot as the text describes, “I am king Āvasan, I will keep my chariot with the divine power of mantra. So nobody can move this chariot” (22). Likewise, Jambar was renowned for his use of bow and Sohan Ḍasarath was well-known as a wise king. Such mythical ancestry of singing content in Thāru version questions on the classical version of Rama story.

Fourth, Thāru *Rāmāyana* remarkably includes *Gurvā* system, priest/shaman in Thāru community, for the treatment of childlessness of King Dasarath. Indeed, the childlessness of Dasarath made him so worried though he had three wives. It is not only the problem to the king Dasarath, but also the cause of unhappiness of the people in the kingdom of Ayodhya because it is the case of either the continuity of his descendant to handle their state or not. The classical version mentions the context of his advice with Valmiki and other Rishis to resolve the problem, but Thāru version includes the story of Dasarath going to Gurbābā, Ḍhanpat *Gurvā* and many others as it mentions,

I am human.

Why was I born as a human?

I am king Ḍasarath and very happy on the basis of money and wealth.

But very sad not having a son. Where shall I go?

Where should I not go?

Gurbābā may create a plan and give blessing of a son.

Therefore I will be happy. (130)

According to Thāru creation myth, Gurbābā was an enlightened person who had the spiritual power in the ancient society. Consequently, Thāru people have such a folk conviction that all humans in the universe are the descendants of Gurbābā. So Thāru version tries to incorporate following various aspects of Rama story. The mythological lineage of King Dasarath, his unhappiness in not having child, birth of Rama and Laxman, Sita *swayamvara* and her marriage with Rama, exile in the forest of Rama, Sita and Laxman, Sita kidnapped by Ravan, assistance of Hanuman to rescue Sita from the kingdom of Lanka, miserable life of Sita in the hut of Rishi in the forest, her birth of two sons (Lav and Kush), war between the armed forces of Rama and his sons, reunification of Rama and Sita with their sons and the disappearance of Sita on the crack of earth. All these significant episodes of Rama story are covered in different nine segments of *Rāmbihagrā*. Sometimes such storylines are repeated and also disrupted in different *paidhār* (*kāṇḍa*/chapter). In the same way, those stories are also in the chronological order while singing many couplets. Moreover, identical events are also often repeated in later parts, but the rhyme, rhythm, singing and dancing style of performances differ according to time-context of performance of *paidhār*.

Fifth, the performers of *Rāmbihagrā* have the social relations and values that emphasize the solidarity among the Thāru villagers. The performances of folk text reinforce the process of mutual understanding of their actions, including the bodily orientations and movements of performers. Furthermore, folk performers of ethnic group embody “strong regularities” for the “reciprocal awareness” within the participants (Jr, 22). Indeed, Thāru performers perform the *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍinyā* dances in the semicircle of two groups. *Mohryā* is the head singer

who begins to sing the couplet and other assisting singers (*pachavā*) repeat the same lines of the couplet. The drummer and dancer practice *chokrā*, *jhumrā* or *hurḍīnyā* dance, which reflects their process of social interaction as well as artistic pleasure.

Sixth, performance of *Rāmbihagrā* in the dancing forms of *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā* is not only prominent and distinctive in its nature, but their dresses and ornaments are also equally worth mentioning. Indeed, their particular folk melodic instruments are *maṇḍrā*, *kaṣṭār* and *jhāli*. Likewise, female dancers use to wear *lehangā*, *kurṭhā* in Deukhuri, but *lehangā* and *colyā* are popular in Dang valley. Besides, the *maḍaryā* wears *kachauṭi* and *ṭenihā jhulwā*, but *mohryā* and *pachgīnyā* or *pachavā* wear the *kachauṭi* and *ṭenihā jhulwā*.

Tradition of *Chokrā* and *Jhumrā* Song and Dance

Rāmbihagrā is performed in the style of *chokrā* and *jhumrā* song and dance as *Mohryā* Bejhlal Chaudhari emphasizes, “It is sung and danced during the occasion of various festivals and cultural events. Its performing style is especially in *chokrā* and *jhumrā* song and dance. Sometimes it also can be performed in the *hurḍīnyā* song and dance” (Appendix I, D, “Interview” 258). Moreover, Daṅaurā Thārus in their locality gather and make a group to perform the song and dance. The concept of performing the tradition of any folk text is “many interpenetrating-converging worlds” such as, cultural practice, folk song and dance, popular entertainment, local and ethnic identity that underscores the “fundamental unity” of ethnic community (Schechner and Hess 82). The *chokrā* and *jhumrā* songs and dances are folk song and dance as the performers make a folk group to narrate the “major events of folk *Rāmāyana*” (Bandhu 130). Such style of song and dance underlines the core cultural values of Thārus that reinforces the social process in their folk life. The conception of song and dance is regarded as the folk of the ethnic, region and country that promotes “a racial and rural unity” (Buckland,

“Definitions” 316). However, Theresa Buckland argues that folk dances are the “integral part of the community,” “religious belief,” “improvised rather than set forms” and “transmitted by the whole community” (322). This is also in the case of *chokrā* and *jhumrā* style of dances of Thārus.

Why do Thārus perform the content of that folk epic in the style of folk song and dance? To elucidate the point, it can be argued in different ways. At first, the style of *chokrā*, *hurḍīnyā* and *jhumrā* song and dance on the content of Rama story is a vernacular custom and belief, which is performed as a significant part with the great tradition of Thāru society and their cultural root. Indeed, such styles of song and dance are in practice for a long time. So Thāru people consider that these performances of songs and dances are the affective mode of expression of particular time and space. It is closely linked with the definite feature of the folk content of music and dance. For them, it is an easy to become accustomed with its content, music and dance steps due to their traditional-root of cultural practice.

Second, Rama story can be performed whole day and night as it has been divided according to time-period of twenty-four hours. In other words, “it is performed according to time-duration because it has been divided into following sections: *Samrauṭi* (opening song), *sanjhyā gainā* (evening singing), *rāṭkaṭnā* (night spending), *aḍharatyā* (mid-night), *bhinsariyā* (early dawning), *bihāniyā* (dawn) and *din-nacavā* (day-time) song” (Appendix I, D, “Interview” 259). If the time is evening, the performers sing and dance its segment of *sanjhyā gainā* (evening song). In the same way, *aḍharatyā* segment is performed during the mid-night time. Moreover, the folk performers sing and dance the *bhinsariyā* section in the early dawn time. The units of *bihāniyā* and *ḍingainā giṭ* are also sung and danced by the performers according to the time-period of morning and day. Thus, the performance in the modification of its content according to

time context is very substantial in Thāru version of Rama story. In other words, time division based singing of the folk content is remarkable as music and dance steps are different on the basis of day and night period.

The third argument is that it is not easy to perform the content according to time context, but also do not follow the strict rules and regulations for its enactment. The ritual of the folk performance is not very rigid like *Barkā Nāc*. Folk text of Rama story among Thārus is just like an opinion of Sims's and Stephens's low context ritual because it is less formally designed to perform in various occasions of socio-cultural events. It can be performed any time except the period between *Dhuryā* and *Hāryā Gurai* of Thāru people. During the mid-period of *Dhuryā* to *Hāryā Gurai*, the musical instruments are used according to their rituals. Otherwise, Thāru people can perform its content of different segments in the form and style of folk dances of *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā nāc* with specific local musical instruments.

Lastly, the performance of *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā* dance with singing the major episodes of *Rāmāyana* reveals their non-professional practice but regular in Thāru community. Indeed, performance of such styles of songs and dances in different time contexts shows the unregulated structure as they perform it in the improvised way rather than fixed setting forms and professional training. It is improvised type of folk dances in the sense that the narrations of song and dance are orally and customarily transmitted by their members of family and community as Bejhlal opines, "Indeed, my family environment was encouraging to learn the singing and dancing in the age of my teenage. In such environment, I felt easy to sing comparatively long folk song *Rāmbihagrā*" (Appendix I, D, "Interview" 260). So it is the conscious revitalization of cultural memories.

Performing Space

Performance of folkloristic text is spatial in many ways as it is transmitted spatially and brings the cultural ideology in a fore of the social relations. While performing folklore in the ethnic community, their space is taken as the “forms of spatial negotiation” because it reinforces the social communication among similar and non-similar ethnic force (Rijal 282). The spaces of performing dances are open spaces that bring the past memories in the present days of life. Such folk spaces of Thārus are tied with the rural life for communicative and social action for the public relationships and interactions. However, it has the reflective nature of folklore because the space “embodies the values, ideas, needs of the particular community” (Ryan 12). Moreover, the spatiality of any ethnic group is “truly a cultural geography, in which places are defined in culturally specific ways” (Sax 134). Accordingly, the folk text of Rama story in Thāru life is performed in the open spaces.

The courtyards of *Maṭavā* and *gharḍhuriyā* as well as *khenvā* (*khaliyān* in Nepali) of common people are open spaces for the negotiation of the people as Bejhlal states, “For gathering and dancing of performers and audience, the wide courtyard, threshing floor and open spaces are appropriate space in our Thāru community.” (Appendix I, D, “Interview” 261). Indeed, two spaces are culturally significant for the performing dances on the Thāru *Rāmāyana* in the community of Thārus. At first, broadly speaking, Thāru village is quite relevant for performing of such folklore of literary text as their locality is traditionally and ethnically welcoming for the insiders and outsiders. Secondly, in specific sense, courtyards of every household in Thāru village, their threshing floors as well as yard of *Maṭavā* house are major spaces for the spatial communication through its performance.

Remarkably, the folk space of performing dance in the Thāru community is defined as a way of human, cultural and social expression through the performers' bodily gestures and musical environment. Likewise, the Thāru space is a center of aesthetics with embodiments of cultural practice and social ritual in the diversity of the country as its socio-cultural site upholds the performing arts of *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā* dance. Thus, the space of their folk dances is an essential component of their expression and communication. In other words, Thāru community has developed a unique style of performing art of *Rāmbihagrā* that helps preserving and revitalizing the performing spaces for cultural purpose. Without performing the oral tradition of Rama in the local space, they cannot revive and preserve the past memories of such folk text. So the performing space is the basic place for the communicative, aesthetic, social and cultural purposes in their folk way of life.

The performance of different chapters and sections of the folk text, which are performed with singing and dancing, represents “the specific setting and culture of those participating in the act of the communication” (Sims and Stephen 133). Indeed, the performance of folk text embodies the cultural value and shared identity in the site of the local space. For their recognition with other community, the distinctive type of cultural and folk way of life is necessary as performers feel easy and comfortable for their relationships and interactions. Consequently, the space of their *agnā* (courtyard) and *khenvā* (threshing floor) becomes the basic space to promote their past memories and lifetime. Besides, such space of the performance carries an artistic dimension with specific situation and locality to enrich their cultural identity and representation.

The performers are also from the folk group of Thārus. They sing songs, tell stories and share different contents of Rama story. The specific content of the folk text is collected and

transmitted from old generation to new age group from the space of their situated region. Moreover, their cultural prosperity and protection is enhanced by using those spaces from the performers. So the space of performance in Thāru community for such folk text is the expression of tradition, folk group and ethnic identity. Besides, physical setting of performing the folk text is concerned with the social situations and community-based tendency of entire folk literature. As a result, performing space is a process that Thārus create and participate for the purpose of cultural and social communication in their community.

Performing Context

The contextual analysis in the performance of *Rāmbihagrā* seeks to offer the cultural meaning in their folk way of life. Indeed, performing context of any folk text is concerned with “orally performed verbal art” that underlines “the entire cultural, social and situational context” (Ben Amos 210). Moreover, Thāru folk performers perform *Rāmbihagrā* on different occasions in socio-cultural contexts of their folk-life. So its transference portrays different literary, historical or cultural context that provides a new meaning in their space. Besides, the performance of contextual meaning promotes for various “levels of communication or as a series of forms embedded in each other and in culture and society” (211). So the performing folk *Rāmāyana* in particular context is concerned with social and communicative action as such text is apparently “a metaphor for context.” However, the cultural event is very substantial as both the textual stability and contextual dependency of folk texts has direct relationship each other. In other words, performing context of the folk text is “equally bound by the ideological, historical knowledge, modes of thoughts, value system, aesthetic principles and principles of behavior that comprise the context of culture” (213). Thus, the relationship between rural *Rāmāyana* of Thārus and performing contexts in their community has the specific meanings from the perspectives of

the cultural analysis. Consequently, it will be better to discuss the performing contexts of Thāru *Rāmāyana* as such contextual perspective highlights the social interaction while narrating, singing and dancing of the text. Moreover, the contextual analysis of Thāru *Rāmāyana* may be useful as Richard Bauman, in his essay “The Field Study of Folklore in Context,” proposes six types of elements: (1) context of meaning, (2) institutional context, (3) context of communicative system, (4) social base, (5) individual context and (6) context of situation (qtd. in Ben Amos 215). In fact, performing cultural event of Thāru *Rāmāyana* is noticeably socio-cultural context that underscores their cultural system of communication.

Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus practice their folk story of Rama on various occasions like seasons, rituals and festivals. At first, this folk text is performed on the social and cultural context of marriage ceremony. In their community, wedding ceremony generally takes place as “a noteworthy cultural event” because musical event is needed to provide the entertainment for the participants (Appendix I, D, “Interview” 259). Indeed, marriage ceremony symbolizes that boy and girl are going to be unified as they are becoming husband and wife. Moreover, it is not only unification of bride and bridegroom, but also familial, social and cultural relationship within their community. So performing the song and dance becomes essential in their community while they gather and share the past memories.

In fact, gathering between the parents, relatives and intimates of both bride and bridegroom is needed to complete the ceremony. On the occasion of marriage ceremony, musical performance of different segments of folk *Rāmāyana* is unique aspect of their way of life as they need musical entertainments and pleasures as well as they want to share the past merriments. Ashok Thāru, a renowned Thāru scholar, asserts that the tradition of performing different couplets of *Rāmbihagrā* according to time-periods at wedding in the Thārus community was

popular before the Maoist insurgency as most of the marriage ceremonies were used to be held both at night and day time, but now it is mostly confined to daytime. So the singing and dancing practice of *Rāmbihagrā* is declining day by day as he further opines, “It was tried to prohibit performing their traditional culture during the Maoist insurgency period” (Appendix I, B “Interview” 248). In Thāru culture, *Barāṭ-gainā*, *jantijāne* in Nepali, is used to the members of bridegroom family going to the house of bride for the ritual ceremony of marriage. So the *Barāṭ-gainā* was popular at night time before the ten years of Maoist insurgency. But during the insurgency period, night time ceremonies and rituals were prohibited. However Thāru version of Rama story includes different time-duration contents like evening, night, midnight, early morning, morning and day-time based songs and dances. Consequently, it becomes easy to the folk performers to perform the singing and dancing content according to time-duration.

Second, the harvesting period is very noteworthy for Thārus as they are by tradition of farmers. Indeed, they mostly live with the profession of food production in the lowland of Tarai in Nepal. So harvesting time according to different seasons is very important to them. The harvesting is a process of gathering different variety of ripe crops in various times from the field. Thus, the completion of harvesting the crops in various seasons marks their celebrating the seasonal context. While celebrating the harvest time, they use to perform different couplets from Thāru *Rāmāyana* according to time-duration. Third, arrival of new child as a member of their family is a propitious time in the community of Thārus. Indeed, a child birth in any family is continuation of the dynasty in their society. So it is a concerned with societal power and status. During the birth ritual, their relatives, family members, neighbors and friends have an opportunity to be together. Moreover, they use to eat different food items and also wish the

betterment life of new child in their family and community. At that time, they also may use the folk text of *Rāmbihagrā* as a musical event for celebrating the birth ritual in public life.

Fourth, the physical progress in rural area in Thāru community is a basic advancement of the modern sophistication. Indeed, the public road structure, construction of school building and public tapes as well as well-digging are markers of development for rural people. Indeed, such progressions are auspicious events for Thāru villagers. After the completion of physical infrastructure in their rural area, it makes life an easy and a better. At that time, they may perform the folk text for the public amusement. Fifth, Thāru community living in the low-land of western Tarai districts has the tradition of *Maṭavā* or *Barghar* system. Such system is concerned to promote the collective culture and tradition of Thāru people. Besides *Maṭavā* is the leader of Thāru villages that reinforces to continue to be a significant mechanism for maintaining the community bonds and groups integrity, restoring harmony and unity among the Thārus. Accordingly, the traditional *Maṭavā* system tries to “manage conflicts and maintain indigenous institutions, rituals, ceremonies and practices” in their community (Khadka 3). Moreover, *Maṭavā* is a village chief to handle the socio-cultural and familial problems that helps to maintain harmonious relationship and communal harmony. In other words, *Maṭavā* spends his time in social work of the villagers to resolve the problems of Thāru villages. So every *gharḍhuriyā* of Thārus should help him on the domestic works of planting and harvesting the crops. It is called the *beṭh-begāri* in traditional sense⁶. After the planting and harvesting the crops, participators in the households of *Maṭavā* celebrate the social work collectively. At that time, the folk material of *Rāmbihagrā* becomes very useful to perform for amusements.

⁶. Mangal Chaudhari, who is a political activist in Dang-Deukhuri, opines that *beṭh-begāri* is related to feudalistic system of Tharu community and, consequently, it would be better to say social work and help of the villagers to the *Maṭavā* in his household.

Sixth, Thārus, by tradition, are living harmoniously in their villages as they trust on the collective social work. They help any *ghardhuriyā* of their village if anybody needs to construct a house-building, plant and harvest the crops. The word ‘*parma*’ is very popular in their community for such social work while collectively support to any household in their family. At that time, physical and mental labor makes them tired and they need to be released from such load through the performance of different couplets of *Rāmbihagrā*. In this way, marriage and birth rituals, social and collective functions, planting and harvesting the crops in their folk way of life are significant events that uphold to revive the cultural memories and past events of ancestors. Moreover, “Folk epic like *Rāmbihagrā* is the heart throb of the Thārus” because such folk text has “a source for amusement . . . becomes the cultural, ritual and traditional identity marker of Thārus” (*Rāmbihagrā: Folk Ramayana* 16). Therefore, Thāru folk performers like singers, dancers and actors collectively use it for the musical events on the context of various socio-cultural events.

Vignettes of *Chokrā Nāc* in Sisahanyā (September 26-27, 2019)

To observe the performance of various nine chapters (*paidhār*) of *Rāmbihagrā*, I had chosen a model Thāru village named Sisahanyā in Ghorahi sub-metropolitan ward 7 Saudiyār. Sisahanyā village is almost eight kilometers far away from Ghorahi market and it is located in the west-south direction. It is a model village of Thārus in the sense that around two hundred *ghardhuriyā* belong to Thārus community. Still migrants from hilly region have not reached to reside in this village. Mostly people from different districts like Pyuthan, Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Arghakhachi and Gulmi are migrated and their new settlement is increasing day by day in Dang valley. As I had collected folk *Rāmāyana* last year under the mini-research of Nepal Academy (Children Literature and Folklore Department), I went there to collect the performing visual clips

and photos of performing events on September 26, 2019. Furthermore, Bejhlal Chaudhari, sixty seven old, can sing orally nine chapters of the text (Figure 18). Indeed, he leads the enactment of *Rāmbihagrā* in his village.

The villagers of Sisahanyā start to gather from 4pm, early evening time. They feel cheerful in the preparation of *Rāmbihagrā* in the house courtyard of a close neighbor of Bejhlal. The yard is chosen due to its large size for the performance. At first, they collect the dresses, ornaments and musical instruments. So they manage music instruments such as, *kaṣṭār*, *mandrā* and *jhāli*. For female dancers, they bring the *lehangā* and *colyā* from some *gharḍhuriyā* of their rural community. Likewise, they also collect *kachauṭi* and *ṭenihā jhulwā* for the male performers. The feathers of peacock are also brought to wear for the dancers. Some set of dresses and musical instruments are managed from the office of Thāru Model Village, Sisahanyā. Those things are sponsored to the villagers by District Development Committee (DDC) Dang for the promotion of Thāru culture and ritual some years ago⁷. After collecting the dresses, ornaments and musical instruments, all folk performers use to wear costumes according to their role in the performance.

⁷.I talked with Bejhlal Chaudhari, a resource person of Tharu *Rāmāyana* and a resident of Ghorahi submetropolitan-7 Saudiyār Dang, during my field visit. He sang different chapters *Rāmbihagrā* and I also collected his oral form of this folk text as a part of mini-research project of Department of Children Literature and Folklore, Nepal Academy in the fiscal year of 2074/075 BS.



Figure 18: Bejhlal Chaudhari (67), a renowned folk singer in Dang valley at Sisahanyā village, can still sing orally nine chapters of *Rāmbihagrā*. Photo: Researcher

It is on the Thursday, 26 September, 2019. The time is just few days before *Ḍasyā*. Local people are excited for the performance. Before performing the *chokrā* dance based on *Rāmbihagrā*, all performers start to sing *samrauṭi*, opening pray or invocation prays (Figure 19). Indeed, *samrauṭi* is a ritual song that seeks to take the blessing and benediction of their deities before actual performance of different segments of Thāru version of Rama story. Their honoring of the local gods and goddesses is obligatory in the enactment. Without praying to deities, actual enactment of the folk text is not allowed as they esteem those local deities through the prayer,

Saḍā Bhavāni ḍāhina re/Siḍḍhan kare Ganesh

Hari he panco deuṭā rakṣiyā ra karahi/Barmā, Bisnu, Mahes (Goddess Bhavāni!

You are always favorable to us.

Listen, always protect us.

Ganesh! Fulfill our all wishes and functions.

Safeguard us by all five gods and goddesses

(Bramha, Bishnu, Maheshwor, Ganesh and Bhavāni)

Meanwhile, they invoke to Bramha, Bishnu, Maheshwor, Ganesh and Bhavāni and also Sarasvati and Gurbābā. Sarasvati is the goddess of *vidhyā*. Without her sanction of knowledge, it is impossible to play, sing and dance by performers. According to the creation myth, Gurbābā is the creator of the human beings in the universe. Without his blessing, the performing of their artistic creation based on Rama story does not become auspicious. So their folk belief of locality is a substantial for praying the gods and goddesses. To perform the segment of *samrauṭi*, almost half an hour time takes place.



Figure 19: The folk performers of Thāru Model Village Sisahanyā in Dang valley performing the segment of *samrauṭi* of *Rāmbihagrā*. Photo: Researcher

Evening song is known as ‘*sanjhyā gainā giṭ*’ in Thāru language. This segment is the second stage after the *samrauṭi*. The performance is done between 6:30 pm and 8 pm. The performers start the performance of *chokrā* dance based on singing second segment song, *sanjhyā gainā*. At first, they sing, “*a paiyā ṭohi cāṇḍa suraja gorasaiyā/ kabhu nahi chuṭ ehā ṭinahu sāṭhi* (Oh, moon, sun and my guru! Our best wish is that unity of three persons will never be detached in the upcoming days).” That *sanjhyā gainā*, song and dance is continued until 8 pm.

Third segment of *Rāmbihagrā* is *rāṭ kaṭnā giṭ*. It is night spending song in general sense. The performance of this segment is started from around 8 pm and continues until early 12 pm (Figure 20). This section basically focuses on the suffering of Rama when Ravan abducts Sita

from the forest. Rama and Laxman have gone to chase the golden deer in the jungle. In the disguise of a yogi, Ravan comes and asks to take the alms from Sita in the forest cottage. In fact, the section of *bihagrā*, suffering or misery, starts in the life of Rama when Sita is kidnapped by Ravan. About this event, folk performers make heart-touching presentation as they sing, “*ḍharala rāhābana jogiyākā sarupa/ ḍihaṭa bhichhiyā ṭapasi nahi liye* (Ravan appeared in the form of a yogi, he does not take given alms by Sita)”. Without crossing Laxman line, yogi does not take alms. When she crosses the line, Ravan abducted her and took to the flower-garden of Lanka, his kingdom. So the performers present the song and dance of *chokrā* on relying the suffering of Rama in his exile life in the forest.



Figure 20: The folk performers of Thāru Model Village Sisahanyā in Dang valley performing the *rāṭ kaṭnā giṭ* segment based *chokrā* dance of *Rāmbihagrā*. Photo: Researcher

The midnight song is known as *aḍharatyā giṭ*. The *aḍharatyā* song has three segments: *Siu Phulvār* (beautiful garden located in the area of Shivalik range of mountain), *Phulpujainā* (floral worship) and *Ek bichural mai nai jānu kaisin ho* (One person departed, but I didn't know). The first segment begins from 12pm and, at first, they dance on the following song, “*Ek bichural jānu sonkahi mirigā ki bichural mai Siṭa rāni/Bichural mai nai jānu bichural kaisin ho* (I knew that cause of golden deer made me separation with queen Sita. I am unknown on the

departure of one person).” The second and third segments of *aḍharatyā giṭ* are also performed after the first segment. This continues until 3pm.

The Nepali meaning of ‘*bhāle bāsne samay*’ is known as ‘*bhinsariyā*’ in Thāru dialect. This song is concerned with the early dawn as the folk singers sing and dancers dance this segment in the early dawn. Consequently, the performers start to perform this section around 4am and continue until 5:30am. In this segment, the pessimism and depressed mood of Sita in the flower-garden of Ravan can be perceived as the singers sing the song, “*kaisin Siṭa hoṭa he/jhankhaṭā jhrokhaḍā re jhankhaṭā Siṭa jiu jaranā/ A ho jhankhaṭā jhrokhaṭā* (How is Sita? She is worried and also makes others worried).” Indeed, the separation of Sita from Rama and Laxman has made her very anxious and distressed.

The morning song in Thāru dialect is called *bihāniyā*. The performers start to present around 5:30 am and continue until around 10:00 am. It is performed on the day of September 27, 2019 (Figure 21). This segment emphasizes the depressed and pessimistic mood of Sita. She looks solitude as singers sing, “*ṭohi mai araju re ṭohi mai Rama bāsan murugā/ Ājhuk rāṭ ra murugā ṭuhu jinni bolyo* (Oh, crowing rooster in the early dawn! I request you, don’t crow in the early dawn of today night).” In this way, the subject-matter of this segment is started from the gloomy and pessimistic mood of Sita.

The day time song in Thāru dialect is known as *ḍin gainā*. Definitely, they start this segment after the lunch around 12 am and continue until 5pm. The narrative of the song initiates with the sorrow of king Dasarath as he has no son despite having sufficient property as well as three wives. In the same way, they also focus on singing and dancing on his folk treatment with the saints, Gurbābā and Ḍhanpaṭ Gurvā for the purpose of having a baby. At that time, the performers sing and dance,

Anna dhana rājā asaraṭh tai bari sukhi/ek puṭrā binā tai bari dukhi (Oh, king Dasarath! You are happy from the plenty of grains and money, but very sad not having a son). *Eha leo rājā Dasarath caurākahi akṣiṭā/ jāhā bāṭa raja Gurbābā uha cali jāo* (Oh, king Dasarath! Go to Gurbābā wherever he resides *akṣatā*).



Figure 21: The folk performers of Thāru Model Village Sisahanyā in Dang valley performing *bihāniyā* segment based *chokrā* dance of *Rāmbihagrā*. Photo: Researcher

Indeed, their performance is unique in the sense that they narrate many episodes of Rama story in their innovative and creative folk way of life. Sometimes their narration subverts the story of classical version as the characters like Gurbābā and Dhanpaṭ *Gurvā* are not found in classical text. The day time song and dance is also significant as people from neighborhood and relatives get involved and enjoyed in the performance. The performers also make sipping alcohol of *chāki* to get new energy for continuing the long performance of *chokrā* song and dance.

Ritual and Folk Dance in Thāru Version of Creation Myth

This section of the chapter deals the ritual aspect and *chokrā* dance in the performance of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*, Thāru folk version of creation myth. On the one hand, the study attempts to explore how the folk dances of Thārus based on the content of creation myth reflect the cultural identity and value. Such performance shows the cosmological worldview, which is an ethnic and a cultural identity marker on the basis of the traditional belief that represents their collective and

shared value. Moreover, such performance of folk text through the folk songs and dances gets embedded meaning of the creation myth. Their folk songs and dances are the product of cultural root and reflect the “ethnocentrism” of their costumes, speech and musical instruments (Dundes, *Meaning* 55). Similarly, such performance also reflects how they live and where they live. However, the performing context of such narrative in their spatiality is basically on the occasion of marriage ceremony, festivals and other cultural events. Moreover, folkloristic materials and properties “reflect the manners and customs of the people” (Shatalsky 3). Likewise, performances are local, contingent and relational.

On the other, the study also examines the ritual act of the folk text in the Thāru community. Relying on the Foucauldian perspective of subjugated knowledge and its spatial power, Catherine Bell asserts that the power of ritualization is rooted in the social nexus because “the roots of the network of social relations goes deeper than the social body itself” (*Ritual Theory* 202). However, social body of the community “is the micronetwork of power relations” that reflects the construction of the particular relationship in the social situation of the ethnicity. However, *Desbandhyā Gurvā* recites the folk text on the occasion of *Hāryā* and *Dhuryā Gurai* and such recitation is repetitive act of folk community in every festival of *Gurai pujā* because it has been rooted in the folk conviction of having fortune on farming and crops’ harvesting in their villages. The ritualization of such folk text is more local, relational and organizational in the sense that it brings unity, commonality and attachment in the community of Thārus. Finally, this section also tries to involve the descriptive analysis of my field visit observation of two villages, Bhānpur and Chakhaurā, in Dang valley.

Creation Myth in Folk Version

Gurbābak Jarmauti encompasses the local myth of Thārus about the origin of universe, including different human and non-human beings. In Greek language, *mythos*, refers to the ‘word’ in English. Moreover, “myth is the ‘word’ that announces the true state of things, what is factual, what really happened” (Baumgartner et al 195). In other words, the myth of ethnic community involves “a story, narrative of the deeds of the gods and spirits, whether in heaven or on earth or in the nether world.” Moreover, mythical thinking is the way of life in Thārus, which underscores the divine and human spheres, which is related with the prehistoric time.

While discussing the classification of myths, William G. Doty opines that myth study reveals the following three types: “the *cosmogonic*, *cosmological* and *theogonic*” (16). Moreover, Doty opines that the first ‘*cosmogonic*’ refers to the “origins of the universe,” the second ‘*cosmological*’ implies to the “more philosophical explication of its existence and structure” and third ‘*theogonic*’ means “the coming into existence of supra-human (traditionally ‘divine’) powers” (16). Accordingly, creation myth of ethnic group highlights the “primarily to earlier or primal times, the times and occasions of absolute beginnings, and hence they are often myths of establishment, origin, creation, initial occurrences, or, in a large number” of their community (16-17). Definitely, the performance of the creation myth unveils their cultural value and ethnic identity through the cosmological worldview.

Gurbābak Jarmauti, in general, describes how the universe, earth and Gurbābā, the first Thāru male deity on the earth, were created. Indeed, it includes the detail account about the origin and evolution of the universe as well as how human beings first came to inhabit on the earth. Moreover, it is regarded as conveying their metaphysical and symbolic sense. It is their central worldview to know about the origin and evolution of the universe, earth, plants and

human life. In fact, the creation myth of ethnic, social and regional group tries to seek the issue of “how this universe was formed, how the earth and sky were made, or how the land or the people or the society was fashioned” (Sproul, “Introduction” 6). Furthermore, performing the issue of creation myth in its broadest sense deals with the “relation of the known to the unknowable” of the cosmological worldview (7). Moreover, the most notable feature of Thāru creation myth is that it reveals the religious concern apparently as its narrative not only involves physical, but also metaphysical and divine power of the Almighty God and his creation of the human beings and many creatures. The basic feature of metaphysical idea is that it describes the universe beyond the spatial and temporal limit of the physical reality.

Moreover, the creation myth of locality provides us the “underlying framework for their traditional outlook” about the origin, creation and evolution of the universe, human and non-human beings on the earth that “shapes a more self-conscious sense of Thāru culture and identity” (McDonaugh, “mythology” 192). Besides, Thāru title ‘Gurbābak Jarmauti’ means ‘the birth of Gurbābā’ in English. In fact, it underscores some features of Hindu *Bramahand Puran*, but it has “a credential of Thāru’s original, primitive and innovative opinion on the origin of universe” (Acharya, *Thāru Jāṭiko* 85). Their creation myth “embodies a cosmology which orients the Ḍaṅgaurā in their worlds, giving meaning to the very landscape which surrounds them” (McDonaugh, “mythology” 198). Therefore, their creation myth “represents a crucial part of their cultural capital” as it encompasses the relationship of the identity and social practice in Thāru own way of folk life.

According to the narrative, cloud surrounded the sky and made the earth dark in the beginning. In the second time, there was the rainfall of dung-drop. In the third phase, there occurred the rainfall of coal’s smoke. Consequently, the earth was converted into burning coal.

There was only fire and smoke everywhere because there was no indication of any plant and creature in the entire space of cosmos as the creation myth includes, “*han han re pahile ta barsai re dhundi re kuhi ra/ aba dāiyā chauḍisa piraṭhi dhundi re kuhi ra* (In the beginning, the cloud in the sky took place. The earth became dark as the cloud surrounded the sky) (Chaudhari, *Gurubabak* 1). The fire started to burn after the rainfall of coal’s smoke. The fire increased around the earth. Step by step, the water replaced the fire and smoke. All the trees of forest were burnt and they turned into ashes. Consequently, entire earth looked like a barren land as it mentions, “*han han re cāri kona piraṭhammi khankhār ujāra/ hare chāila agiyā ra miraṭi bhavan* (The four directions of the earth became barren. The earth was surrounded by the fire)” (Chaudhari, *Thāru Cinhāri* 33). Then, there was only heavy rain fall.

The first divine person, Gurbābā, was created by the Janga Rajā (king) and Janga Rāni (queen). Both the queen and the king lived in Indrāsan, the residing world of Indra. Before giving birth to him, Janga King and Queen transformed themselves into a bird to see either any trace of land is available or not in the earth. But they did not see any mark out of land in the universe, but only saw water around the earth. Then the king sowed a lotus seed and the leaves of a lotus plant came above the water. At that time, the king and queen put the bundle of flesh and drop of blood in the leaf of a lotus plant. In this way, Janga King gave birth to Gurbābā, who is the first Thāru God on the earth. So it seems that Gurbābā was the son of Janga King and Queen. So Janga King is the Almighty God who gave birth to Gurbābā. After giving birth, they left their son in the earth and returned to the Indrāsan. In the words of Gisele Krauskopff, Gurbābā is the “premier of Thāru” (qtd. in *Thāru, Loksāhityamā* 2). In the meantime, Ashok Thāru defines that Gurbābā is “the first historical and mythological person on the earth” and, consequently, his figural image is worshipped in the holy-space of their household. Anyway, he was the first

person on the earth and also is understood as the mythical credential of deity from the perspective of Thāru cultural world.

The body of Gurbābā and his different organs were not developed accurately in the beginning phase. In other words, his body had no leg, hand, eye, ear, mouth and other organs. Indeed, he was completed in fifteen months as creation myth describes, “*han han re paṇḍra mahinā Gurbābā huila sarpuna/hare koharaka ḍala Gurbābā lihala auṭāra* (The body of Gurbābak was completed in fifteen months. He was incarnated in the appearance of an ash-gourd) (Chaudhari, *Thāru Cinhāri* 41). Besides, he had no nose for breathing, mouth for eating and leg for walking, but had only round of ash-gourd. In fact, Gurbābā had no limbs and sensible organs. Indeed, Kubariyā Maḍāgin, mother goddess, had proper role to provide all necessary organs for making him a complete man. She had unique type of marvelous influence in her voice as whenever she appealed to unseen god power for the growing a body part, automatically his organs were completed.

At first, she requested for his ear, Almighty God provided him that organ. In the same way, she called for his nose, mouth, teeth, tongue, hand, ear, chest, leg and feet sequentially. Then, Gurbābā got those organs and became a complete figure. When his physical organs were made, then he sat on his seat. Then mother Madāgin became very happy as creation myth narrates, “*Han han re sabahu jāṭ Gurbābā hoila sarpuna/ hare baiṭhala Gurbābā āsana māra* (All the bodily organs of Gurbābā completed and he sat on the seat). *Han han re kara ṭa jori Mayari Madāgin Gurbābā kahi pāsa/ Hare Mayari Madāgin uṭhani haharā* (Mother Madāgin went near by greeting with two palms joining)” (49). After the growth of body organs, Gurbābā gave birth to a white Dove. Then he ordered it to observe round the earth.

Accordingly, white Dove fled to go in the earth and walked six months spending day and night. Moreover, Dove did not see any land anywhere. When it returned after seeing the earth, Dove said to Gurbābā that he gave birth but did not give him the land to live. In the third phase, Gurbābā gave birth to a crab. Then he ordered the crab to bring the *ammar-māṭi* from the *pāṭāl*, underneath world. The crab entered into the flower-garden of Basuki, a supreme ruler in the underworld. The crab was threatened by the demon there. The crab went into the underneath world to bring the soil, but it became a victim of fire's flame. Different species of crab such as, Phetuli, Chauvā, Hariyā, Paṭhara, Langāṭi, Lajmuni, Ṭurhi and Ḍuḍhi were tested by Gurbābā to bring the soil, but all failed in their endeavor. Indeed, *ammar-māṭi* was secured by sixteen hundred soldiers and it was also surrounded by *mainibār*, a thorny block. All species of crabs were afraid of those soldiers and also such obstacle of thorny block. Basuki was influential ruler of the underneath world. Therefore, it was very challenging to bring the soil from his empire.

When various species of crabs did not get success to carry *ammar-māṭi* from the underneath world, Gurbābā gave birth to different types of earthworms such as, Gautam, Agiya, Ḍuḍhi and Hillāmmai. He thought that earthworm could eat the soil and put own stomach. That's why, the soldiers and thorny block could not disturb to the earthworm. Indeed, these earthworms went and tried to bring *ammar-māṭi*. Finally, Ḍuḍhi type of earthworm became successful to go to and bring the soil as its Thāru myth includes, “*han han re paṭthal Ḍuḍhi khechuniyā ammar phulvār/ hare peṭ bhara khaila khecanā muha bojhi lehala* (Ḍuḍhi earthworm entered in the phulvār, garden flower, of underneath and ate full stomach and also put the soil in its own mouth) (87).” In the meantime, the demon tried to hinder the earthworm, but his obstructions were futile to stop. Then the earthworm requested Gurbābā to bring golden plate for putting that soil.

When Gurbābā managed a golden plate, earthworm put the *ammar-māṭi* on that plate. Moreover, Gurbābā mixed the soil with the water of Ganga River in the golden plate. In this way, the mixture of *ammar-māṭi* and Ganga water made the nine regions of the earth and land as this folk text describes, “*han han re sinkaka ḍova Gurbābā Jāvana ḍarā/Hare lau khaṇḍa ḍharṭi hoila sarpuna* (When Gurbābā mixed the soil using the thin piece of bamboo stick, the nine portions of the earth became complete)” (89). At first, the land of earth was created in the universe. Second, the green *kush*, sacred grass for religious purpose for Hindus, sprouted because the text involves, “*han han re pahile ṭa siri ṭa gaila jalathala ḍharaṭi/Hare siriji ṭa gaili ra kailā kush ḍāva* (The earth was created in the beginning. Then, the green grass was created in the land of the earth) (89)”. In third phase, the *bebri*, a local flower, was created. After the *bebri* flower, the piece of grain corn was produced in the fertile land.

Later, Gurbābā gave birth to a female named Semari Labariyā when he felt alone. After her birth, Semari Labariyā walked to see the sphere of the earth. She walked and wandered around the earth for fourteen months. But she was cursed by Gurbābā as she did not observe a suitable way of the earth after the creation. Afterward, Gurbābā gave birth to a next female named Piyari. Then he ordered Piyari to go to the earth to observe its condition. She walked around the earth and saw greenery of various plants and sprouting flowers. She returned and reported the green plants in the earth. After Piyari, Gurbābā also sent Sarari Bahini to discover various green trees there. She also informed him whatever Piyari had already reported. However Gurbābā felt alone and, then, he gave birth to Mayari Madāgin for making his wife⁸. In this way,

⁸.Ashok Tharu talks about the close and friendship between Gurbābā and Mayari Madāgin in their beginning period. Later, Gurbābā married to Mayari Madāgin and made her wife. See Tharu, Ashok. “Gurbābak Jarmauti (Tharu Lokbrahmānda Purān.” *Thāru Loksāhityamā Itihās, Kalā ra Darshan*. Tulasipur, Change Agent’s Forum, Nepal Dang, 2006 pp . 1-37. Likewise, Drone Prasad Rajaure mentions that the wife of Gurbābā is Maiyā. Accordingly, Gurbābā gave the birth to her and later made a wife. She is a female deity, who is worshipped as an important goddess in the households of Tharus. See Rajaure, Drona Prasad. “Tharus of Dang.” *Kailash: A Journal of Himalayn Studies*. Vol IX No.1. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1982, pp. 61-96.

Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus believes that all men and women on this earth are the descendants of Gurbābā and Mayari Madāgin (or Maiyā).

After their visit to the earth, Gurbābā thought to create son and daughter. So he pressed his thigh, blood came out from that organ of the body. Indeed, the dharma daughter, Dhiyāri, another name of Gauri, was born from that blood. To complete her organs, it took fourteen months as its myth mentions, “*han han re cauḍha mahinā Gurbābā hathiyā jalam/ hare cauḍha mahinā Gurbābā Ḍhiyari hoili sarpuna* (The elephant is born in fourteen month. Oh, Gurbābā! Ḍhiyari was surely completed her bodily organs in the fourteen months)” (98). Day by day, Dhiyari,⁹ became young. She went to see Ghani Phulvār, a mythical garden flower, using the horse. She played with various birds in the flower-garden. The daughter searched Gurbābā, but she did not find him after visiting of Ghan Phulvār. Indeed, Gurbābā wanted to make marry to his daughter Gauri and Mahadev were selected to be husband and wife as the folk epic mentions, “*han han re Gari Mahādev bhaila bibāha/ Hare hāsi hāsi ḍuniyā re ḍāyaja ḍarā* (Gauri and Mahadev married. The villagers provided the dowry happily)” (164). Indeed, the daughter of Gurbābā, Gauri, performed her divine and physical power in different activities as she broke many Himalayans such as, Dhaurāgin, Lohāgin, Sisāgin, Rupāgin, Lakhāgin, Rangāgin and Summi.

Finally, there is a dialogue about *saṭjug/ḍevjug* and *kaljug* as follows, “*han han re ḍevjug jāi kaljug manavā lihi auṭār/ Hare kaljug manavā bahini saṭya re sarāpa* (After the end of *ḍevjug*, human beings will not live by truth and will be cursed) . . . *han han re ḍevjug jāi kaljug*

⁹. Ashok Tharu describes that Tharu folk epic includes Ḍharmak Ḍhiyari as a daughter of Gurbābā and Mayari Madāgin. She is named in different ways such as, Ḍharma Ḍhiyari, Gauri and Parvati. See Tharu, Ashok. “Gurbābā Jarmauti (Tharu Lokbrahmānda Purān.” *Tharu Loksāhityamā Itihās, Kalā ra Darshan*. Tulasipur, Change Agent’s Forum, Nepal Dang, 2006 pp .1-37

lehi auṭār/ hare kaljug rahabo bahini puja ra tuhāra (After the termination of *devjug*, *kaljug* will emerge. Oh, sister! People will begin to worship you)” (237-38). In this way, the story of creation myth ends.

The birth tale of Gurbābā encompasses the Thāru worldview about the oral history of cosmos and earth that provides the narrative of two ages (*jug* in Thāru): “the first age of *saṭ* (or *dev*) and the contemporary *kaljug*” (McDonaugh, *Thāru* 312). Indeed, such two ages are Thāru “view of the history of the cosmos.” Moreover, it seems different from classical model of Hindu Puranic division. It is clear that Hindu Puranic model has four ages: *saṭya* (or *ṛta*), *tretā*, *dwāpar* and *kaliyuga* (Tagare xxxviii-xi). Accordingly, the present cycle of world history (*kalpa*) will end when one day of Brahma ends. Moreover, each *caṭuryuga* is made of one cyclical pattern of four ages (*saṭya*, *tretā*, *dwāpar* and *kali*).

Unlike the theory of Hindu cosmology, Thāru cosmological viewpoint only involves two ages of *saṭ* (or *dev*) and *kaljug*. In addition, the *saṭjug* refers to the time of creation and origin about the universe, earth, human and non-human beings. For Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus, *saṭjug* was the period of Almighty God “who created the world and first performed the different kinds of agricultural work and ritual . . . *Saṭ* is thus the age of the deities and myth. Ultimately, then, all traditions concerning the deities belong to the age of *saṭ* and thus constitute myth” (McDonaugh, *Thāru* 312). In other words, both *saṭ* and *kaljug* have their different identification of truth of deity versus dishonest and evil of humanistic life.

The age of *kal* in the Thāru folk perspective means the departure from the authority of deity as it is “one of imperfection, of disease, death and scarcity” (312). It shows the gloomy portrayal of the human contemporary life for the reason that men and women have become characterless and wicked as creation myth of Thārus includes, “*hān hān re ḍeu juga jāi kaljugā*

mana juga lehi auvāra/ hare kaljuga manavā lehi satya re sarāpa (After the termination of *dev* (or *sat*) *jug*, man will take the avatar. Such incarnation of humans will take the truth as a curse instead of benediction)” (Chaudhari, *Thāru Cinhāri* 234). In other words, *satjug* is the age of ruling of the deity and truth, but the *kaljug* is the governing of the dishonest and evil attitude of human life in the world. At this backdrop, “the relationship of *sat* and *kal*, and thus of men and the deities, is a fundamental theme in ritual” (McDonaugh, *Thāru* 312). Consequently, ritual performance of Thāru songs based on their creation myth is “a continual attempt to reach back to *sat*, to bring the deities into the world and thus through contact with *sat* to achieve renewal and fertility” (312). So singing and reciting the couplets of their creation myth is concerned with their communicating back to the content of *satjug* from the contemporary *kaljug* of chaos and disorder condition. Such glorification of *satjug* in contemporary life also provides the ethical value and ideal thinking in their community.

Performing Context

The creation myth of Thārus is performed in different contexts in their community. The context of performing such text underscores their specific festivals, religious and cultural events. Indeed, their festivals are celebrated in different ways according to their locality, economic and social status, religious and family background. The community of Thārus basically depends on collective feeling as they perform and share the value of folk text during various festivals, ceremonies and cultural events. During their festivals, folk dances of *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā* are performed narrating the major events of *Gurbābak Jarmauti*. They make a group of performers and collectively perform in the folk dance styles of *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā* . Examining the performing its context and style, Christian McDonaugh opines that their creation myth is “sung, either in ritual or dances . . . It is sung in various forms: It is chanted in a major

annual village (*Hāryā Gurai*) when it is called *Barnakhnā*, but it can also be recited or sung in the rhythmic form appropriate for the usual type of men's dance, *chokrā nāc*" (*Thāru* 310).

Moreover, the couplets of their creation myth are significant content for the recitation of *Gurvā* on their particular ritual period of *Gurai pujā* as well as for the dancers and singers of *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā* song and dance during the time of festivals, ceremonies and cultural events.

Gurvā is a significant person to manage and lead in Thāru village by treating the sick persons. He also helps *Maṭavā* with proper advice and suggestion for improving their village. Thāru folk community is guided by such folk belief that tradition of *Gurvā* system helps to institutionalize the society in proper way as he cures sick people in the traditional way of folk and herbal treatment. Moreover, the fatal diseases and snake biting like troubles are treated by *Gurvā*. So *Gurvā* system is strong and influential in their cultural and ritual system as it promotes to preserve the indigenous knowledge, culture and ritual in their spatial context. In the meantime, Krishna Raj Sarbahari underscores that *Gurvā* is "a protector of the common people" in Thāru world against the "evil sicknesses and syndromes" (*Thāru Gurvā* 2). On the one hand, *Gurvā* recites the mantra to cure the sick people who are suffering from certain diseases.

On the other hand, he also provides the herbs based medication to cure those individuals. Consequently, he is known as an expert on the folk treatment and reciting mantra. His social status as a priest, a healer and a shaman. At this backdrop, Sarbahari discusses on different types of *Gurvā* in the community of Thārus such as, *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā*, *Kesaukā Gurvā*, *Bhuinyār Gurvā*, *Barkā Gurvā*, *Dhuhriyā Gurvā* and *Ghar Gurvā*. In the case of performing ritual of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* on the occasion of *Gurai pujā*, *Ḍesbandhyā* and *Kesaukā Gurvā* play the significant role to recite the mantra. Definitely, *Ḍesbandhyā* has the quite major role to recite this text as he recites its mantra and *Kesaukā* helps him in the ritual performance of such *pujā*.

Relying on my observation of the field visit, I found that their folk epic, *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*, is performed in three contexts in the community of Thārus. At first, it is ritualized on the occasion of *Gurai Pujā*. Indeed, *Gurai Pujā* of Thārus is very important ritual performance in their community for achieving religious and cultural purpose. Moreover, the ethnicity of ritual is repeated and standardized communicative action as the ritual activity is repeated in every year or six month in the festival of *Gurai Pujā*. In fact, ritual performance is connected with “compelling” functions of the community as its both participants and audience “highly formalized” (Feuchtwang 281). The ritual performance of creation myth is not based on “logical or propositional” but it shows the “manifestation of traditional authority” of driving force. The role of *Gurvā* seems more leading and authoritative on the occasion of *Gurai pujā*. The prescription of *Gurvā* deliberately becomes the ultimate of integrity during the performing ritual as their community follows his recital performance and guidance. Moreover, ritual is itself “remembered” and Thāru social institution portrays “an institution of transmission” as *Gurvā* manipulates his knowledge to the new comers in their community (285).

Thārus, by tradition, live the rural life and they are mainly depended on agricultural occupation. So their folk conviction is basically relied on for the purpose of upholding the farming and harvesting. In other words, their conviction is that if they worship the “deities placed in the local shrines,” the divine power is flourished and, consequently, their local gods and goddesses become happy “to prevent the endemic diseases” in their space of farming and crops (Diwas 131). If they make happy to their gods, the plentiful of crops is produced in their zone¹⁰. For the objective of reinforcing the prosperity of farming and crops as well as combatting

¹⁰. We also find the folk myth about the ritual performance of *Gurai pujā*. Accordingly, Goddess Parvati discussed about the farming with Lord Shiva. Moreover, Parvati taught him the proper way of cultivation. Shiva was also fascinated by the good harvesting in the field. He enjoyed in the spending way of cultivation and farming and also forgot to take the launch (*kalwā* in Tharu language) in the day time. Such Shiva’s behavior made her angry. Parvati

infection in their field of village, Thārus performed regularly *Gurai puḷā*. Indeed, this *puḷā* is performed by *Gurvā*. Actually, Thāru *Gurvās* are like *acārya* or guru in Sanskrit. Accordingly, it has been also named as a ‘*Gurai*’ (Sarbahari, *Thāru Gurvā* 8). Moreover, the couplets of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* are mantra of *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* as he recites those couplets on the occasion of performing ritual of *Gurai puḷā*.

With prosperous wishes for the crops’ growth and harvesting of their farming, Thāru people perform the ritual of *Gurai puḷā*. Indeed, there are two kinds of *Gurai Puḷā*: *Ḍhuryā* and *Hāryā Gurai*. *Ḍhuryā Gurai* is performed in the month of April and May. This performing *puḷā* is held before the start of farming in the period of rice-plantation in the rainy season. At that time, they also stop playing musical instruments due to their hectic time for rice planting in the field. So the musical instruments are not allowed until the ritual performance of *Hāryā Gurai*. In the same way, *Hāryā Gurai* is performed in the month of August and September after they complete the planting of rice paddy in their area of village. When they complete the rice-plant in monsoon season, Thāru people worship their deities appealing for the making prosperous growth of rice and harvesting. They also appeal their deities to combat the insect- infection and different diseases in their agricultural life. During the *Gurai Puḷā*, they also offer sacrifice of chicken and pigs. Actually, this *puḷā* is performed in the *bhuinyārṭhān* or *ṭhanvā*, where Thāru deities are kept safely for the purpose of common worshipping for villagers. Moreover, males are participators in the *ṭhanvā*, but females have no special responsibility in the ritual performance. So *Gurai puḷā* is

asked to scatter the dust- ashes in the field of rice plant. After some days of scattering the ashes, the rice plant was infected by the insects. Consequently, Shiva felt the frustration and pessimism from the event of such infection. At that time, Parvati suggested to perform the ritual of *Gurai puḷā* by *Gurvā* for the purpose of combatting the infection. Then, Latau Mahadeva also performed the ritual according to the suggestion of Parvati. In this way, Tharu community had started the cultural and ritual performance of *Gurai puḷā* in their spatiality. See Diwasa, Tulasi (Project Director). *Tharu Folklore and Folklife*. Kathmandu, Nepali Folklore Society, 2009. pp, 131-132.

concentrated on ancestor worship as they worship to Gurbābā and other local deities of their community.

Second, the folk dances of ethnic life are essential part of collective feeling in Thāru community. So their dances are performed in the social groups in different socio-cultural contexts. Ultimately, the performing contexts of folk dances are their festivals (such as, *Māghi*, *Ḍhuheri Hori*, *Atvāri*, *Aṣṭimki*, *Ḍasyā and Ḍevāri*) and other socio-cultural occasions (such as, birth and marriage). In other words, “rituals and festivals” of the ethnic and particular group “embody the process of reconciliation; garner community participation and acceptance through dialogue and inclusion” (Khadka 182). During the occasion of the festivals and other socio-cultural events, performance of the folk dance becomes their integral part because they demonstrate tolerance, compassion, emotional feeling and aesthetic enjoyment. In other words, the major episodes of the texts are narrated in the style of folk song and dance

The episodes of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* become the significant part for performing folk dances with singing in the narrative style of mytho-poetic form. Indeed, those “folk songs and dances have their roots in nature” because every Thāru member is grown up with such cultural root and environment (Diwas 170). Moreover, the performing folk art of creation myth in the style of folk dances and songs like *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍiṅyā* shows their socio-cultural identity and representation as they have spiritual, ethnic, cultural and regional roots. However, Krishna Chandra Sharma asserts that “the song and dance of any society is connected with the concerned community of geography” (128). When Thārus perform such songs and dances on the occasions of festivals and different socio-cultural events, such performing folk art surely reinforces for the cultural revival and memories of the past days. More importantly, any folk performances of creation myth creates the “specific occasions like the birth of a child, marriage,

harvest and festivals” of ethnic rituals that “possess certain common qualities shared by the whole” of nation (Pillai 32). In this regard, such folk dances and songs display the ritualistic, festival and seasonal performances according to their socio-cultural condition.

Third, the beginning parts of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* are sung by Thāru young females while performing *Aṣṭimki* song on the occasion of *Aṣṭimki* festival. Moreover, *Aṣṭimki* song is particularly concerned with Thāru females as males do not participate in singing the content. Indeed, the festival *Aṣṭimki* is a day of Krishnastami or the birthday of lord Krishna that falls on the eighth day of dark fortnight of August and September. According to its ritual performance, Thāru young females are gathered and prepare the *Aṣṭimki* mural on the house wall of *dehari* on the day time. The worshipping of *Aṣṭimki* folk art is held in the evening time of *Aṣṭimki* day.

Aṣṭimki is a festival of women as Thāru girls and young women only participate to sing the *Aṣṭimki* song. Before singing the song, they worship *Aṣṭimki* mural that includes the figures of “the sun and moon, two rows of warriors, porters carrying a bride and bridegroom in a *doli*, male-in-law (*samdhi*, father of the bride or bridegroom), *Kānhā* playing his flute in a tree, milkmaids in a boat . . . and large-scale figures of fish, or other animals like monkeys” (Rajaure, *Anthropological* 495). Definitely, the *Aṣṭimki* song is related to the “recounting the life of Krishna—who the Thāru call *Kānhā*—recited by young Thāru women” (Dalzell, “Fragility” 203-4). Moreover, it is a ritual song performed by *Ḍaṅgaurā* Thāru youth female. It has different parts like creation myth, birth of Krishna, his growth and enmity with maternal uncle (Kansa). Apparently, females worship “*Aṣṭimki* art to fulfill their religious and spiritual purposes” (Kharel, *Ḍaṅgaurā* 45). Among these parts, creation myth is sung in the beginning as Krishnaraj Sarbahari involves,

Pahila ṭa sirijala dharaṭi Maḍāgin

Siriji ʒa gaila kusa kahi ra dābha

Siriji ʒa gaila kusa kahi dābha

Sirija ʒa gaila ri anna ra purusa (The mother earth was created in the beginning.

Then the top of holy-grass, *kusa*, was created.

In the next time, the sprouts of *kusa* were extended with growth.

In the creating process, the grain was also cultivated). (*Thāru Sanskritimā* 127)

Moreover, the creation myth section in *Aṣṭimki* song includes that the land of earth was made before the creation of different creatures like grass and plant, earthworm, crab, crocodile, tortoise, fish and snake. Anyway, Thāru young women are also major performers of the creation myth part of *Aṣṭimki* song as they participate in singing in their own way. In other words, it is their rituality to perform few couplets of creation myth before performing *Sakhyā-paiyā* song and dance. Without collectively singing few beginning couplets, their ritual norms do not allow for the performance of *Sakhyā-paiyā* song and dance during *Aṣṭimki* festival.

Vignette on the Recital of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* (June 18, 2019)

Before undertaking the journey from Kathmandu to Dang for observing the *Gurvā*'s recital of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*, I was conversing with Chitra Bahadur Chaudhari (58) at my cell phone. Chitra Bahadur is a famous *Gurvā* who performs the role of *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* in *aglā pragannā*¹¹. According to him, he has spent twenty three years of the responsibility of *Gurvā* in *Aglā pragannā*¹². Indeed, *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* is a shaman in the community of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus

¹¹ Traditionally, the entire Dang valley was divided into five shamanistic regions. Indeed, such traditional division is working in the present day of Tharu community in the Dang valley as we can see in their ritual performance of Gurai *pujā*. Those divided shamanistic regions were Pachhillā Pragannā, Pātu Pragannā, Chhilli Pragannā, Pachhillā (or Pachhvā) Pragannā and Aghvā (Aghillā) Pragannā. These regions are working in the case of traditional ritual performance under five different shamans in their community. See Rajjure, Drone Pd. "Tharus of Dang: Tharu Religion." *Kailash: A Journey of Himalayan Studies*. Vol IX No 1. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1982. 61-96.

¹² My talk with Chitra Bahadur Chaudhari during my field visit in his home village, Ghorahi sub-metropolitan 2 Rāmpur Bukā in Dang valley. This village is almost eight kilometers far away from Ghorahi market.

as he is ritually the head of a *pragannā*. Moreover, he is from the special clan of Madua¹³. Prior to twenty three years, his eldest brother was *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā*. His brother handed over the responsibility to him. Accordingly, he is continuing the duty of *Gurvā*.

I reached to Dang Ghorahi in the evening time on Monday, June 17, 2019. The next day was fixed for the ritual performing of *Hāryā Gurai* in Bhānpur village of Dang valley. Bhānpur village is almost five kilometers far away from Ghorahi market and is located its eastern side. When I reached in the village of Bhānpur village at twelve o'clock of day time on Tuesday, June 18, Thāru *Gharḍhuriyā* were preparing for the ritual performance of *Ḍhuryā Gurai*. I was with the photographer Kuldip Neupane as he supported me to collect photos and visual clips of performing of the *Gurai puḷā*. This village has almost eighty households of Thāru community. In the previous time, most of the households were from the community of Thārus. Due to the rapid migration, many households are also non-Thārus (Brahman, Kshetriya, Magar and Dalit).

Maṭavā, *Ḍesbandhyā* and *Kesaukā Gurvā* went to take bath before the ritual beginning. The people of the households gathered in the house of *Maṭavā* and prepared the offering items like alcohol and leaf-small plate to their deities. They went to *bhuinyārṭhān* for the preparation of *puḷā*. Before the beginning of the ritual, *Maṭavā* cleansed the *bhuinyārṭhān* using holy water and cow-dung. Other participators sat near *Maṭavā* and *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā*.

¹³ Drone Prasad Rajaure has discussed about a tradition in Dangaura Tharus to take the responsibility of *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā*. Accordingly, the following four Tharu clans have the right to be a *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā*: Jagarnathhyā, Bherrvā, Madua and Demondaurā. Moreover, Bherrvā has two subgroups, Dahit and Sukhroryā Bherrvā. See Rajaure, Drone Pd. "Tharus of Dang: Tharu Religion." *Kailash: A Journey of Himalayan Studies*. Vol IX No 1. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1982. 61-96. Among the groups, Chitra Bahadur is from the clan of Madua.



Figure 22: *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā*, Chitra Bahadur Chaudhari (58), reciting the couplets of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* on the occasion of *Hāryā Gurai* in Bhānpur Dang. Photo by: Kuldip Neupane.

At first, *Maṭavā* lit the oil lamp. Both *Ḍesbandhyā* and *Kesaukā Gurvā* (assistant of *Ḍesbandhyā*) sat in the same line (Figure 22). Then the *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* threw the rice grain (*akṣatā*) around the body of *Kesaukā*. *Ḍesbandhyā* and *Kesaukā Gurvā* started their conversation. Whatever *Ḍesbandhyā* began to ask, the *Kesaukā* replied on behalf of the deity. After this conversation, *Ḍesbandhyā* recited the couplets from *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* in this way, “*Paṭṭalse nikāral phyukuli gyaguṭiyā amar māṭi ḍuḍhi kecuniyā ḍāral jāvan/ Sirijigaila jalaṭhala ḍharṭi sirijigaila kusaka dāpa sirijigaila ḍubaka dāpa . . .* (The crab took out the *ammar-māṭi* of the underneath. An earthworm took and scattered that soil. At first, the water and earth was created. Then, *kush* and *ḍubo* were sprouted).” At that time, *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* took more than fifty minutes to recite all the couplets of the creation myth. After the recitation, they began the offering the sacrifice of the chickens and pigs to their local deities. Moreover, *Hāryā Gurai* helps open for musical dances and songs whereas occasion of *Ḍhuryā Gurai* becomes the tools for

stopping all their activities of musical events. In this way, the creation myth is most significant content for reciting *Desbandhyā Gurvā* on the occasion of *Gurai pujā* in Thāru community.

Vignette of *Chokrā* Song and Dance

On the day of January 12, 2019, the villagers of Chakhaurā in Dang valley were preparing to perform *chokrā* dance based on *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*. This village is situated in the western side of Tulasipur market and almost ten kilometers far away from there. Chakhaurā is famous for Thāru Cultural Museum (TCM), which is supported and preserved by Backward Society Education (BASE). Indeed, this museum preserves old assets like scenario of Thāru culture, tradition and lifestyle as well as beautiful paintings, photographic documentation about the Thāru history, custom and belief. Anybody who goes there can experience the traditional culture and typical Thāru local foods in the peaceful environment. I was with photographer Kuldip Neupane, who supported me to collect photos and visual clips of this venue. We spent almost three hours in the morning time. In the meantime, we also enjoyed Thāru local foods and went to the residential area of farmers.

The atmosphere was sunny and farmers were preparing for performing dances. Moreover, the day was few days before *Māghi*, the greatest festival of Thārus. So they were also getting ready for *Māghi*. It was time for the preparation of celebration. Thāru males who had gone abroad and beyond their village had come back and so it became easy for their gathering due to nearing *Māghi*.

Rajman Chaudhari, seventy years old, was leading for the performance of *chokrā* dance as he had the role of *Mohryā* and led singing performers in their team (Figure 23). I had contacted him two weeks before. He had suggested me to go there on that particular day to observe the folk dance based on the creation myth. The performers started to gather almost at 12

o'clock in the day time. At first, they brought the dresses of performers from the office of TCM and also musical instruments from various households. Moreover, the performers gathered at the house courtyard of Purna Bahadur Chaudhari, *Maṭavā* of Chakhaurā and also elected chairman of Dangisharan Village Municipality ward no 3. Indeed, he coordinated the performers as the villagers have given him the responsibility of *Maṭavā* for social and cultural promotion.

Besides the performers, various villagers attended there to watch and enjoy the performance. In fact, the audiences were Thāru males and females, but performers were only the males. For the performance of *chokrā*, a male dancer (*nacanyā*) used to wear the dress of female like *colyā*, *ṭenihā* and *gonyā*. He also wore the folk ornaments of *curyā*, *ṭikiyā*, *ṭaryā* and *bākābijāiṭa*. In the meantime, the male singers put on the uniform of caps, *jhulvā* and *kachauṭi*. Moreover, *maḍaryā* also wore the similar attire of the singers. When the performers became ready after wearing the dress and ornaments, Rajman began to sing the folk song of creation myth in that way:

Han han re pahile ṭa barsai re, ḍhundi re kuhira/ aba ḍāiyā chauḍisa pirāṭhi ḍhundi re kuhira (The cloud covered in the beginning and the earth became dark around). *Han han re ḍosare ṭa sirijala gobarākai rekha/ aba ḍāiyā kaljug gherala miraṭi bhavan* (The drops of dung rained in the second time/ So the earth surrounded by the days of Kali era). *Han han re ṭisari ṭe barse koilākai rekhā/ hare aba ḍāiyā koi nāhi ṭikahi miraṭi bhavan* (The line of coal rained in the third time. Due to the difficulty of coal, nobody could exist in the earth).

When the head singer began to sing the beginning lines of creation myth, his assistant singers continuously reiterated the same couplets. There was almost semi-circle of singers in two groups and both groups repeated the same lines whatever the head singer sang (Figure 24). The dancer

also danced with the drummer according to the rhythm and beat of the tom-tom. Such performance continued until the evening 5:30 pm. The females had prepared delicious local snack items. After their performance, they took drinking and snacks and enjoyed a lot. At that time, they were sharing their memoirs of bygone days. Likewise, some people were joking and teasing each other. It was especially between the young girls and boys. Indeed, overall ambience showed quite joyful environment.



Figure 23: Rajman Chaudhari (72), head singer who can still orally sing more than fifteen hundreds couplets of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* in the village of Chakhaurā. Photo: Kuldip Neupane



Figure 24: The performers performing *Chokrā* dance based on *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* at the village of Chakhaurā in Dang valley. Photo: Kuldip Neupane

Conclusion

The performance of Rama story and creation myth underlines the ethnic identity and cultural value of the Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. Indeed, the very significant feature of performing folk texts has the identity of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus that captures the dynamism of performance in the ritual, dancing and singing activities. On the one hand, the performance of *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā* dances based on these folk texts gives emphasis to the reflection of Thāru folk life and folklore. In other words, spatial performances have the reflection of folklore through the folk dances and songs because these enactments are the integral part of the ethnic community with the deep-rooted relationship of the ancestral property and knowledge. Indeed, the vernacular expression of the folk texts is related to the complex question of what the peasantry people of Thārus are, where they live, how they live, how they deal and communicate with others. Thus, the performance of the folk texts is essentially the cluster of ways of their relationships to know their background, origin and identification. Similarly, those people are also recognized by their dresses, jewelries, musical instruments, speech, behavior and look through their folk songs and dances. As a consequence, manifestation of such folkloristic dimension is also to know their embedded norms and shared values.

On the other, ritualization of folk text like their creation myth highlights the power ritualization of ethnic community. *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* recites that folk text on the occasion of *Hāryā* and *Ḍhuryā Gurai*, but its context of ritualization enhances the harmony, commonality and attachment among the members of Thāru villagers because they gather and share the ancestral knowledge and properties. The ritual act of *Gurai pujā* is held two times in a year. Likewise, such ritual act is repeated and peasantry people of Thārus get the opportunity to revive the traditional knowledge of folklore. Similarly, the ritual function of the ethnicity is more

localized and it also rejects the dominant ideology to represent their own cultural identity and values. Such ritual performance is their cultural root and social nexus that brings the social relationship in the local and bottom space.

Chapter V

Ethnicity and Modernity in Performing Folk Texts: Challenges and Possibilities

The field visit observation of performance of the selected folk texts of Ḍaᅇgaurā Thārus shows their traditional socio-cultural life which is more or less interrupted by the shifting process from village to town and mono-cultural to multicultural settlement and thereby acculturation and assimilation in modern life. It seems that the primordial identity of ethnicity is gradual eroding because traditional daily life and modernity are sometimes contradictory in their space. Indeed, the primordial ethnicity is reinforced by the ancestral, biological, linguistic, familial and territorial aspects. In other words, homogenous origin is the basic factor to reinforce the cultural and ethnic value of primordialism. Accordingly, the transmission of folkloristic expression through song, dance, knowledge, skill and craftsmanship from one generation to another was comparatively easy in primordial and pre-modern life as most of the ethnic members of households were involved in the traditional way of agricultural occupation. But the wave of modern project enhances the multiple features like immigration, assimilation, new education, advanced technology and access of young male and female Thārus in non-agricultural engagement and occupation. Consequently, there occur many challenges in the preservation and promotion of Thāru folk texts and performing arts because of the gap in routinized, regular and fixed types of annual festivals, seasonal and cultural rites.

In the first section, this chapter tries to explore how the traditional folk way of Ḍaᅇgaurā Thārus (i.e. lifestyle of primordial ethnicity) becomes comparatively successful to preserve and promote their folk texts and performing arts. No doubt it was easy to perform and ritualize these folk texts, skill and knowledge in the way of primordial ethnicity during the occasions of their festivals, rites, customs, seasonal contexts and cultural events. Indeed, their traditional ethnic

organizations like *Maṭavā /Barghar* and *Gurvā* system are the major pillars to preserve and promote Thāru rituals, customs, folkloristic texts and performing arts.

In the second section, this chapter seeks to explore the multiple causes of neglecting the primordial identity of ethnicity in Daṅgaurā Thārus as those grounds are more or less accountable to the gap and discontinuity of performance of ritual and folkloristic texts and performing arts in proper way of modern time. In the beginning, TWS played a historical role to modernize the family members of landlords and elites of Thārus. Its basic agenda of modern education and ethnic consciousness of all Thārus living in the Tarai region help them to adopt the modern way of lifestyle. There are different phases of Thāru Social Movement (TSM) in Panchayat system, Multiparty System and Democratic Republicanism. *Baṭohiyā*, *jasko joṭ usko poṭ* Maoist Insurgency, *Kamaiyā* Movement and Identity Politics were prominent Thāru social movements. These social movements of Thārus did not incorporate the cultural agenda for promotion and preservation of the folkloristic texts and performing arts. Those movements primarily highlighted the land issues, peasants' rights, political rights, and bondage labors' rights. In fact, the disruption of agricultural system of folk lifestyle is due to the modern education, immigration, advanced technology, social movements, access of new generation and their non-agricultural jobs, which have impeded the transmission of folk knowledge, skills, performing arts and craftsmanship to new generation of Thārus.

In the third section, this chapter attempts to explore possible ways of preserving and promoting of indigenous knowledge of Thārus and their folklore, ritual, festivals, skill, and performing arts. The implementation of national and international cultural policies and strategies, audio-visual archiving of folk texts and performing arts, digitalization and virtualization, professionalism of folk group and performers, inclusion of folkloristic course study from school

class in the majority of Thārus students' educational institutes are also discussed for the possibilities to preserve and promote the folk texts and performing arts in their spatiality at present and future time. Finally, the study also concludes that the transmission of ethnic folk texts and performing arts cannot be in the same way as in the traditional farming lifestyle but the cultural awareness of Thārus through *Maṭavā / Barghar* and *Gurvā* system, three layers of governmental policy and strategy as well as NGOs/INGOs can play a significant role in reframing and reshaping the ethnic identity and value even in the modern time.

Ethnicity, Homogenous Origin and Performing Folk Texts

Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus live in their locality with primordial nature of ethnicity, which embodies the typical type of cultural identity with particular performing folk texts and arts. They are traditionally established, deep rooted and regulated in the ambiance of their agricultural way of folk life. Indeed, primordial nature of ethnicity is not fluid in modern sense. Accordingly, such folk life reinforces to preserve and promote the performing folk texts in natural and normal way. Moreover, the primordial type of Thāru ethnicity is “essential identity, defined by the metaphor of blood: an ethnic group consists of people who are of one blood and whose essential biological unity is expressed in a common culture that has remained fundamentally unchanged through the centuries” (Guneratne, *Many* 14-15). Thus, their traditional rural based folk way of life is depended on different social formations of ancestral, familial and kinship relationship.

The ethnic identity of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus in Nepal is purely local construction of the primordial nature in the sense that the blood relationships, kinships and intermarriages of their cultural and social values are also originated from the specific territory of Dang valley. Besides, their identity is concerned with ethnic conscious of its folkloristic consideration in a large sense. It is the output of ethnic conscious based on primordial identity that establishes the political and

social relationship with other ethnic, caste, regional and tribe groups. In other words, primordial ethnicity is “socially constructed out of pre-existing cultural orders and social and political elites” that “are significant actors in this process” (19). Thus, the previous and traditional spatiality of Thārus plays a substantial role to enhance the primordial ethnicity based on blood, intermarriage and ancestral relationships.

The primordial ethnicity of Thārus in Nepal is socially and locally constructed as they are identified and grouped together with their attachment of particular region as well as familial, kinship and blood group connection. At this backdrop, Dang valley has the circumstantial evidence of anthropological identity of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thāru that shows the lineage group known as the *gotyār* (clan/lineage). Definitely, their social and familial system based *gotyār* is “patrilineal and exogamous, and serves primarily, to structure marriage relations” (48). Their number of different *gotyār* and clan in the community is a basic foundation for the identity construction of primordial ethnicity. Moreover, the traditional socio-cultural feature of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus portrays “the tutelage of alien powers for a long time and many aspects of their social organizations” that “are rooted in an ancient process of subjection and political centralization” (Krauskopff, “Corvees (Begaari)” 49). They reside in a particular region and practice certain traditional, social and ethnic organizational rituals, which are primarily depended on the hereditary, blood and kinship relationship of *gotyār*. In other words, *gotyār* relationships and contacts within Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus are reinforced by the essential relationship of such heredity, blood and kinship landscapes. At this circumstance of primordial ethnicity, it looks relatively comfortable to perform their folk texts.

Rural Farming and Folk Knowledge

By tradition, Thārus have the identity of agricultural occupation to manage their livelihood. They use to grow various crops like rice, maize, wheat and vegetables. In the same way, they also have the animal farming of cows, buffalos, pigs, sheep, goats, she-goats as well as farming of chickens, ducks, pigeon and fishes. Thus, Thārus have the ethnic identity of “great pioneers cultivators and creators of rich farmland” in Tarai region of Nepal (Krauskopff, “From” 35). There is no doubt that the peasants of Thārus have a highly valued agricultural labor force since the period of pre-unification, greater Nepal and Rana patrimonial bureaucracy to post-Rana period. Before the new settlement Tarai was covered with dense forests and it was known as a malaria-infected land. There were dangerous wild animals (such as, tiger, bear, elephant and lion) and venomous creatures (such as, snake and scorpion). Thārus deforested the dense forests and fought against such dangerous animals and poisonous creatures. Indeed, Thārus combated the malaria-pandemic as they had developed immune power against the disease. There are no clearly written documents when Thārus began to reside in the Tarai region, but it has been commonly established that Thārus are indigenous people of Tarai land and they have been residing there for long time.

The rural farming is an integral part of Thāru socio-economic life. Indeed, their agricultural occupation “is still largely based on traditional methods among these indigenous people” because most of the Thārus “use simple tools of wooden plough” in the Tarai region of Nepal (Diwasa, *Thāru* 84). Moreover, their traditional production shows a complex system of interrelated functions carried out by Thāru households. Besides, their rural production has basically followed three types of agricultural system: crop farming (wheat, barley, maize and rice), animal husbandry (oxen, cow, sheep, goat, hen, pigeon and pig) and handicraft production.

Therefore, the folk texts and performing arts of Thārus are concerned with their indigenous knowledge, which is transmitted by old generation to new performers. Such knowledge is the accumulation of collective experience of the ancestral, blood and familial relationships. Their ethnic society is grounded on the “clan, sex, familial and intra-clan marriage” as such naturally divided primitive group enhances to their cultural practices and performance comparatively easy (33). Moreover, the folk texts, skills, craftsmanship and performing arts of vernacular knowledge are still valuable in the community of Thārus because these folk materials are more or less performed and practiced during their festivals, ceremonies, rituals and cultural events in folk way of life. The transmitted folk knowledge is embedded in the mind of Thārus. Moreover, folk materials create the ecological and amicable progression in the environment of their locality.

The indigenous knowledge of performing folk texts and arts is fostered in their “variety of cultural contexts” as it has the dynamic power of creating the ethnic consciousness, which is the “nature of its production, and the process of its engagement with cultural difference” (Semali and Kincheloe 15). In the context of tradition based agricultural occupation, the indigenous knowledge of folk people has become a rich socio-cultural resource about the primordial type of ethnic consciousness. The local Thārus use their traditional folk texts and performing arts to counter external influences of other cultures. Without contesting external influences, they cannot maintain the socio-cultural identity and representation in their region. So the indigenous knowledge of performing folk texts and arts seeks to underpin the local, ethnic and cultural ways of knowing to reshape and reframe the cultural and ethnic consciousness.

The cultural knowledge of folk texts and their performing arts in social and ethnic group may be the “subjugated knowledge” because it is the “naïve knowledge, located low down on the hierarchy” from the perspective of official knowledge and academic curriculum (Foucault,

Power 81). In other words, indigenous knowledge of their performing folk texts is “*local* because it is the result of the quotidian interactions in indigenous peoples’ territories of ethnic group” (Maurial 63). These interactions occur among different members of the community. Such folk knowledge is basically transmitted through oral tradition in the locality. In addition, such folk knowledge of performing folk texts and arts is not officially circulated through the academic and official process.

Moreover, folk knowledge is not normally produced by planned procedures and rules because it is generated by folk people that “seeks to find solutions to problems in their day to day lives by drawing on existing societal wisdom and other local resources that may be available, and by using a fair amount of intuition and creativity” (George 80). Anyway, such agriculture based folk knowledge of performing folk texts and arts are performed and ritualized during their festivals, ceremonies and cultural events. The more Thārus are involved in the folk-life of rural agricultural occupation, the more folk knowledge of cultural and oral texts as well as performing arts is transmitted easily from one generation to another. Thus, the preservation and promotion of the folk knowledge and performing arts of Thārus was easy in past days due to their major occupation of tradition based agriculture.

Maṭavā and *Gurvā* System

Traditional ethnic organizations of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus like *Maṭavā* /*Barghar* and *Gurvā* organizations are major pillars to preserve and promote the performing folk texts and arts. Definitely, Thārus do have distinct features of ethnic community as they are governed by their unique traditional rules, customs and rituals. Moreover, their traditional social structure is based on kinship, ancestral and blood relationship of ethnic construction that revolves around the system of headman (i.e. *Maṭavā*) in every village level. More specifically, their traditional ethnic

institutions are “the totally of rules and systems followed by the members of the society for the achievement of common goals” (Diwasa 90). Likewise, the position of headman in their community has the socio-cultural and political authority to exercise the absolute power. Furthermore, Thārus are divided into different family households, clans and occupations, but they are organized under their traditional ethnic organization of *Maṭavā* system that helps functional mechanism effectively at the local level. Their ethnic identity is deep-rooted in their social and cultural interactions with the relatives, neighbors and clans.

Traditional ethnic organizations of Thārus have a distinctive, dynamic process to preserve and promote the traditional folk texts and performing arts. It is the situation of the expressions as they need to share for creating “the sense of dynamism” to fulfill the common goals in their community (Sims and Stephen 77). Likewise, the traditional structure of ethnic community has socio-cultural influence to uphold cultural texts and performing arts. Such organization is culturally situated of certain individuals, households and clans with the communicative actions of traditional institutions.

Maṭavā / Barghar system is a managerial and decision-making body that carries out the socio-cultural activities in the space of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. It is such a procedure that takes out the individual and collective jobs in the systematic and organized way. In other words, it is a tradition based mechanism of administrative and managerial body or structure that really manages and handles the cases of their socio-cultural activities. As a distinct identity of traditional ethnic institution, *Maṭavā* model exists in every village of Thāru community. Under this system, Thāru people are organized and united to continue their folk texts and performing arts. Regarding the traditional authority of such Thāru organizational system, Gopal Dahit opines:

Thāru organization system is directly inherent to Thāru community, which is derived from many years of experience and transforming from one generation to another. Under which, each Thāru easily accepts and follows all the norms and values of it. It does not require written rules and regulations to enforce them to follow all the norms and values of Thāru organizational system. (*Thāru Indigenous* 160)

Such organization, therefore, has helped to strengthen the folk texts and performing arts due to its appropriate responsibilities at the local level. It shows that every household of Thārus is related with traditional system, rule and regulation of such customary system under *Maṭavā* system. Thus, the headman, *Maṭavā* (in Dang valley) or *Barghar* (in Deukhuri), leads the villagers according to the oral rules and regulations in their folk life. Moreover, *Maṭavā* model is such “a system of customary laws, traditions and conflict resolution practice” that underscores the “unwritten Thāru traditions and customs” (Khadka 2-3). Similarly, it is also a significant mechanism to maintain the bonding of the community and its integrity that underpins the harmony and unity among the *gharḍhuriyā* of Thārus.

Maṭavā system does not only endeavor to manage the interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, but also helps to promote indigenous institutions, rituals, ceremonies and practices. The role of *Maṭavā* in their locality is “like that of a chairperson and a judge who, keeping others’ view in mind, gives the final communal decision” (Rajaure, “Thārus of Dang” 157). The duty of *Maṭavā* is to maintain the “good relations among villagers, as well as conducting the village’s affairs” (156). Accordingly, he has the traditional obligation of a senior administrator and a judge in the village. So their traditional institution of *Maṭavā* system is connected to maintain and manage the festivals, rituals, ceremonies and cultural events as they have been practicing for

centuries. Such model focuses in restoring the mutual relationship and communal harmony through the continuity of their festivals, rituals and cultural practices.

Maṭavā /Barghar system is popular in the spatiality of Dang-Deukhuri, Banke, Bardia, Kailali, Surkhet and Kanchanpur districts where Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus are densely resided. According to its rules and regulations, all Thāru households participate to continue their traditions, cultural celebrations, festivals and ritual practices. In the meantime, the traditional laws, customs and rituals are significant aspects in the performance of their folk texts and performing arts. Furthermore, these laws, customs and ceremonies are common ethos and codes of Thārus that support various households to unite them because such things are integral part to underscore the shared values and folk beliefs through the performance of folk texts and arts. In this regard, the concept of *Maṭavā* system is related to pre-modern organization to manage ethnic ritual, cultural, political and administrative arrangement as the *Field Bulletin* of United Nations describes:

Before the advent of the modern state, communities all over the world developed their indigenous institutions and governance mechanisms. The Thārus in the Tarai region of Nepal call this the *Barghar [Maṭavā]* system, a local governance institution with a traditional head and staff . . . Traditionally, *Barghars* also perform the role of adjudicator of community disputes and issue decisions and verdicts, generally with community consultation. . . Other functions are to determine the festival calendar and perform rituals. They lead the selection of persons with religious responsibilities and coordinate traditional rituals and *poojā* (worship). They manage and facilitate Thāru festivals, dances and marriage ceremonies. (“Barghar” 1-2)

Therefore, *Maṭavā* is a chief person in the village of Thārus as he has the highest position and authority in the managerial and administrative procedure of their community. Moreover, he is selected every year during their *Māghi* festival from the households of Thāru villagers. All the local Thārus participate to elect their headman of the village for preserving and promoting the traditional folk life, festivals, ceremonies and performing folk texts. So the *Maṭavā* or *Barghar* “acts as an administrator, legislator and judicial head” (69). Consequently, he is the cultural and religious guardian of the folk life of Thārus. In the meantime, *Maṭavā* is an important post to perform the political, social and cultural authority as he has “a high level executive body of the community” in their socio-cultural life (Diwasa 96). Without the protection and guidance of *Maṭavā*, it is difficult to handle and manage the Thāru families and households as he keeps them together and unified while performing the folk texts and arts during festivals, ceremonies and rites in their locality. Thus, *Maṭavā* system is one of the most primitive forms of social organization to organize and manage their religious, cultural, political and legislative power in the space of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus.

From the perspective of preservation and promotion of their festivals, cultural events, folk texts and performing arts, *Gurvā* organization is also equally significant like *Maṭavā* system in the community of Thārus. Indeed, the *Gurvā* system reinforces the folk religion and spiritual practice of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. Obviously, the term ‘*Gurvā*’ is made up with two terms, i.e. ‘*guru*’ and ‘*vā*.’ Accordingly, ‘*guru*’ means spiritual teacher and ‘*vā*’ refers to practitioner (Dahit, *Thāru Indigenous* 113). Therefore, Thāru *Gurvā* is a spiritual teacher and a practitioner who performs his folk knowledge in the real practice of mantra in their locality. In fact, “the healers who use mantras and perform therapeutic rituals” are known as *Gurvās* in their community (Subedi, “Media” 60). In other words, they are “shamanic, spiritual and faith healers, and also

play a customary priestly role to perform various rites and rituals and worship various types of deities for the wellbeing of an individual, family and community” (60). Thus, they do not only use herbs and different medicinal plants to cure the sick persons, but also conduct domestic and social ritual performances. Without the recitation of mantra by *Gurvā*, the rituality of performing the folk texts of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus cannot proceed. Therefore, the farmers, leaders, teachers, intellectuals and all layers of people take the service of *Gurvā* in the locality of Thāru community (Sarbahari, *Thāru Gurvā* 29). Definitely, *Gurvā* is not only a practitioner of magic spell, but also a protector of practical folk knowledge of Thārus based on different festivals, cultural events and ceremonies of their socio-cultural life.

Thārus have folk belief and conviction based on supernatural power. Such folk belief underlines the truth, benevolence and non-violence activities. Moreover, Thārus have “a complex network of religion” because their folk life is well-preserved and promoted by the religious authority of *Gurvā* (Diwasa 100). There are five types of *Gurvā* according to their role and responsibility in the community of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus: *Ḍesbandhyā*, *Kesaukā*, *Ghar*, *Ḍharharyā* and General *Gurvā*. From the traditional political and religious perspective, the entire Dang valley has been divided into the following five *pragannā* (regions): Agalā Sawāri, Pichhallā Sawāri, Chhilli, Pātuand Pachhallā *pragannā*. Among the five *Gurvās*, *Ḍesbandhyā* has the highest position as he needs to perform “the religious activities in all the villages that lie in his region” (100). Accordingly, *Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā* visits one village to another to perform rituals so that he helps people being protected from ghost and evil spirits. It is believed that the mantra recitation of *Gurvā* helps to cure “illness of humans and livestock, crops failure and miscarriages” from the unseen forces of evil spirits (100). As a chief of religious functions of his

pragannā, *Desbandhyā Gurvā* helps to protect and promote the folk texts and arts of Thāru community.

Similarly, *Kesaukā*, *Ghar*, *Ḍharharyā* and General *Gurvā* also assist to *Desbandhyā Gurvā* in their own village during the performances of different religious, ritual and cultural functions. The notable event of such assistance can be witnessed during the period of their ritual performance of *Ḍhuryā* and *Hāryā Gurai*. They gather and assist the chief *Gurvā* according to own role, but the major assistance is required from *Kesaukā* on the occasion of *Gurai* *pujā*. *Ḍhuryā Gurai* is performed during the month of April and June as it is before the rice plantation. Similarly, *Hāryā Gurai* is held during the month of August and September as it is performed after the rice plantation wishing to protect the prosperity of their agricultural occupation and crops. Indeed, the performances of both *Gurai* *pujā* are concerned with the ritual of “affirmation of shared identity” that underlines to protect and promote the performing folk texts (Khadka 128). Thus, religious and cultural institution of *Gurvā* system highlights the folk belief of spiritual power. Moreover, their *Gurvā* system always promotes the performing folk texts and arts because such system is an essential local force for upholding the festivals, ritual and ethnic knowledge based on folk literary awareness.

Indeed, the folk knowledges and authorities of *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* represent the non-textual, non-codified and non-institutional knowledge, but it underscores the popular forms of traditional supremacy in the community of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. Both personalities lead the religious, cultural, social and political responsibilities in the local level as they manage and facilitate to perform the folk texts and performing arts during their festivals, marriage ceremonies and other cultural events. Of course, both *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* organizations are the output of pre-

modern state as they are practiced for many centuries to uphold the folk and ethnic knowledge of Thārus.

Modernity and Shifting in the Traditional Legitimacy

The traditional ethnic institutions of Thārus and performance of their folk texts and arts show the cultural “expression of a primordial sentiment,” which underlines the significant components to interweave the major foundation of ethnic community (Guneratne, “Modernization” 751). With the rise of modern state, such tradition based non-official ethnic institutions and organization, their folk texts and performing arts have been ignored. The modernity is related to the “strongly to belief in progress and the power of human reason to produce freedom” as it is a departure from the traditional society of ethnic and social group identity (Lyon 3). Indeed, the performance of folkloristic materials and arts is gradually eroded with the arrival of modernity because the folk idea, performance, ritual and knowledge are set on the traditional village community of Thārus.

The lifestyle of modern times in Thārus replaces the rules of conventional ways of doing things, substituting the authorities of the *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* systems. There is a fundamental difference between the identity of tradition and modernity because “identity is given in traditional society, in modernity it is constructed” (27). So tradition of Thāru folk ways of life is controlled by the authorities of the *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* systems as well as ancestral, kinship and blood group of the community. On the contrary, the outlooks, attitudes and behaviors of the modern society are comparatively liberal and uncontrolled. Consequently, their folk texts and performing arts are also becoming irregular in the modern time.

Thāru Welfare Society (TWS)

Thāru identity of primordial aspect has also weakened with the growth of modern state and its practice in many ways. Guneratne argues that Thāru identity in modern state of Nepal is a departure from the socio-cultural context of traditional folk groups' project because "the process of ethnic identity formation is largely an elite project" with the arrival of leading device of their modern ethnic organization, i.e. the TWS (Thāru Welfare Society/Thāru Kalyānkārini Sabhā in Nepali) ("Modernization" 762). In other words, Thāru ethnic identity in the modern time is the outcome of elite forces rather than the forces of subordinates in the community. Besides the ethnicity in the modern world is a reaction to the process of "modernization that facilitates the development of ethnic consciousness" (769). Moreover, the ethnicity was not an adequate foundation for the political action in pre-modern of Nepal because it was easy to perform the primordial attribute based knowledge, skills and arts of the ethnic group. When modern attitudes of lifestyle began to expand, new identities are also "formed and transformed, and ethnic boundaries are contracted and expanded as the circumstances in which individuals and societies find themselves change" (770). Thus, the construction of ethnic identity in Thārus is not taken as a thing, but as a fluid, flexible and malleable process in the context of modern epoch of different socio-cultural practices.

TWS is an ethnic organization that is supposed to represent all Thārus in Nepal and it efforts to incorporate "of a shared sense of peoplehood among ethnic groups as culturally dissimilar as the Thāru" (Guneratne, *Many* 125). It was established in 1948 and perhaps the first ethnic association and formally recognized by the state as it was established during the late Rana regime of Nepali political history. Its first National Convention was held in 2007 in Bara district. It seems that Rana s did not see "possible threat" from the Thāru people of Tarai as the

organization had not encompassed the issue and agenda of political right and sovereignty (130).

In the initial phase, aim of the ethnic association was “oriented toward Sanskritizing activities, its focus today is an economic or material welfare” (139). So the emphasis of modern ethnic association is not preserving and promoting the original folk texts and performing arts of Thārus, but modernizing their lifestyle through economic development and material welfare.

TWS is an ethnic association of Thārus and its district branches have been extended to twenty three districts (Kanchanpur, Kailali, Baradia, Banke, Surkhet, Dang-Deukhuri, Kapivastu, Rupendehi, Nawalparasi, Makawanpur, Udaypur, Chitwan, Bara, Parsa, Rautahat, Dhanusha, Siraha, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Saptari, Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa) of Tarai region. It also has an additional branch in Kathmandu valley. Historically, Thāru landlords and elites were influential and powerful in Tarai region before 1950 and the central state was also largely depended upon them (Sarbahari, *Tharuhat* 21). Accordingly, this association did not emphasis on political and cultural right, but its leaders were very close to central rulers in the Rana regime and Panchayat time and they also tried to take benefit from the state. In the initial phase, the Society aimed to achieve the economic, education and cultural prosperity of Thāru community because Thāru landlords and elites were also influenced by the modern sense of lifestyle and attitude. Indeed, the objective of their ethnic association had incorporated “the economic betterment and upliftment of Thārus and eradication of what are seen as backward social customs like the consumption of alcohol” (Guneratne, *Many* 187). Consequently, the National Convention of TWS in 1979 had adopted the following social reformation based modern agenda:

- a) take special measures for women’s education, b) establish a hostel for Thāru women (presumably), c) pay more attention to adult education, d) give special encouragement to creating an interest in diverse occupations, e) make an effort to set up cottage industries,

and f) encourage young men to go to the towns and acquire modern skills and means of livelihood. (142)

Moreover, the rise of modern ethnic association in their community was not really sincere to collect, perform and study traditional folk knowledge, rituals, skills, arts and performances. In addition, the priorities of the ethnic association were to encompass the concerns of the modernizing elites as they were encouraged to involve in the modern economic prosperity by using new skills rather than traditional way of agricultural life. Their ethnic consciousness got changed with the paradigm shift from the traditional cultural expression to new political and economic fact. So the process of ethnic identity in the formulation of primordial attributes is vulnerable due to the activities and campaign of the modern ethnic association. Since its establishment to present-days, TWS has given priority to economic prosperity and affluence based lifestyle of Thārus rather than focusing to study, perform and preserve their folk knowledge, rituals, arts and folk texts.

Thāru Social Movement (TSM)

It is generally argued that the ethnic movement of Thārus is also a historical movement of minority group in Nepal. But its essential point is unresolved discussion on it is either “a political, cultural, economic movement, or mixture of all these” (Sapkota, *Rise* 11). Anyway, folk knowledge and indigenusness in the folk life is a core part of Thāru identity and representation. The TSM that ran through different socio-historical phases also claims as one of the powerful ethnic, regional, political and peasantry movements but shows no concern in the issue and agenda for uplifting and promotion of traditional types of folk cultural texts, knowledge and performing arts. It is clear that the “agenda of their cultural identity and ethnic recognition do not seem to match with their livelihood issues, basic living standards, access to

control of the resources, education and health services, gender relations, income opportunities, poverty and inequality” in the modern time (13). In other words, their movements revolved around political, regional, ethnical, and economic and peasantry issues because those movements have apparently highlighted the central issue of the identity politics but not linked with their cultural right, folk texts and performing arts in their folk life.

Until the 1950s, the combating against malaria epidemic was the major issue in the lowland of Tarai region. Therefore, sole effort of Tharu people was to combat the malaria disease because they have “gradually developed immune power against malaria” due to their genetic strength (Dahit, *Indigenous* 27). With their ethno-historical background of transforming the mosquito-infested jungles of Tarai region into the fertile land, we can witness different Thāru social movements such as, Tharuhat movement, Thāruvān movement, Kamaiyā movement, Kamlari movement and peasants’ movements. The holistic study of Thāru movement, from Tharuhat to peasantry movements, reveals that their issues and agendas only focused on peasant land, labor bondage and linguistic rights, but not given emphasis to the cultural right with the preservation and upholding of their the folkloristic texts and performing arts.

Historically, the social movements of Thāru in Nepal began early 1950s. Before 1950s, its movement was more focused on “the land issues to be granted by the Rana rulers for the Thāru peasants of the western Tarai region” (Sapkota, *Rise* 13). It was the period of mobilization of peasants, the elite Thārus lose the protests against the Rana administration because of the establishment of TWS in 1940s and the organization was controlled by the landlords and elite Thārus. Moreover, most of the leaders had close relation with Rana rulers and also were profited from them. After 1950s to prior Panchayat system, the “social-cultural reform movement was laid in the name of *bandej*” which influenced the Thāru people of eastern part of Nepal,

particularly in Bara, Parsa and Rauthat districts (13). In the same way, the Panchayat political system had underlined on “Thāru mobilization along with cultural and social reform strategies” through the mechanism of TWS. Such cultural and social reform programs were the process of “a modernizing elite” because Thārus had developed the organization “for the promotion of modern education and eradication of deeply rooted, anti-development, traditional prejudices and outdated institutions” (Guneratne, *Many* 142). Indeed, the family members of elite and landlords Thārus were encouraged for modern economy and welfare by acquiring new skills from the modern educational system.

During the Panchayat era, the agenda of TSM was focused on “peasants’ rights” such as, *beṭh-begāri* (forced labor in landlord’s land without payment), campaign against the landlords, movements for the tenancy and *baṭohiyā* (the sharing system of agro-product between land-owner and tiller) and “the campaign of land for the tillers (i.e. *jasko joṭ usko poṭ*)” (Sapkota, *Rise* 14). *Belvā-Banjari Kāṇḍa* (against local landlords) in 1960s in Dang and *Khenvā Āndolan* (for the tenancy and *baṭohiyā*) in western Tarai districts were prominent peasants’ movements. Moreover, the Kamaiyā Liberation Movement (KLM) began on May 1, 2000. The KLM in 2000 shows the agrarian western Tarai movement that encompassed the issue of bondage labor in the community of Thārus. Therefore, the Thāru bondage (*kamaiyā*) people raised the agenda of their “emancipation and livelihood transformation through education, health and poverty reduction” (Cox 1994). Consequently, the government of Nepal announced the prohibition of Kamaiyā (bonded labor) on 2000, 17 July and Nepal Bonded Labor Prohibition Act, 2002 was passed. On 10 September 2006, the supreme court of Nepal gave a verdict on Kamlari system (labor bondage of female) and declared such bondage as illegal. The BASE and other local NGOs

played a significant role to lead the movement of Kamaiyā, but their emphasis was not on protection of the traditional culture, performing arts, folk knowledge and folk texts.

The Maoists insurgency had focused on the “political fabrics” of the Thāru movement (Sapkota, *Rise* 11). So the armed struggle of Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) (NCPM) encouraged Thāru people for participating in military activities to get united under its sisterhood organization of Thāruvān Mukti Morchā (TMM) in different districts of western part of Tarai in Nepal. Moreover, their political agendas were related to the landlessness, exclusion, discrimination, poverty and land right. The people’s movement 2006 brought the massive socio-political changes in the context of Nepal. After the people’s movement 2006, Nepali ethnic movements highlighted to reframe the “political agendas along with the debates of constitution-writing and state-restructuring” (14). At this background, Tharuhat Joint Struggle Committee (TJSC) and Tharuhat Autonomous State Council (TASC) actively led the Thāru movement.

At that time, the identity politics based demands for the autonomous Tharuhat region was focus for their prosperity and autonomy. Their demand was challenged with the rise of Madhes Movement in 2007 as it demanded the agenda of ‘one Madhes, one state.’ Indeed, the socio-political activity of Thāru movement in 2007 was “an emergent part of identity politics with its larger regional coverage, popular participation and changing dynamism” (14). Consequently, TSMs highly focused to include the development, identity, autonomy and livelihood of Thārus in the process of constitution-writing and such demand did not include the agenda of preservation and promotion of folkloristic texts, cultures, customs and rituals as well as performing arts.

Modern Education

The modern education system has brought awareness for open and individual life and sense of freedom among the new generation of Thārus. Indeed, the individual status of every

Thāru is determined by his/her family birth and ancestral system in the traditional type of agro-based folk life. Consequently, s/he cannot strive for social mobility like in the modern world. Moreover, agronomic attitude and behavior of Thārus are governed by the traditional customs, rituals and cultural values as their kinships and ancestral relationships give more priority to social relationship and interactions. On the contrary, modern education in the Thāru community brought the substantial departure from traditional folk way of life as the individual wit and freedom became the “responsible for his [her] own earthly destiny” to run the life (Tarnas 319). Such thinking of new generation is due to modern education based on scientific reason. It shows that their learning from traditional society is gradually declining in the modern way of life. In other words, the arrival of secular socio-cultural authority undermines the traditional society of ritual, custom, collective and social interactions.

The modern society is highly varied from the primordial structure of the ethnic folk life because it respects individual activities and institutional structures rather than collective traditional folk life. Moreover, the modern education is not determined by the fixed, inscriptive kinship, territorial caste and ethnic group. Therefore, modern education in society of Thārus help declining of the traditional legitimacy of the local ethnic institutions like *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* system. When folkloristic preparation of ethnicity is abolished or delegitimized, it does not only help to disappear the traditional ideology and practice of the concerned community, but also remodels and reframes the social value system. For the process of modernization, “the education is centrally significant” because it gives importance in homogenizing culture rather than diversified locality and peripheral culture of the ethnicity and caste (Guneratne, *Many* 79). The prominence in the pre-modern agrarian folklore and its performance and preservation has been undermined in the governing principal of the modern state and its education.

At this backdrop, the modern state of Nepali society has also highlighted the policy of “community participation in schooling” because the parents’ desires have the developing their children in living with balanced, standard and advanced life in the modern age (Dixit 210). Therefore, the community participation in modern education has the central thrust for new generation of Thārus in their space. In fact, the modern educational system runs under the rigid of the state as its curricula and examination systems have been administered by the state and the system has also neglected the local, regional, ethnic or caste identity and representation. Indeed, the modern education is more or less ignoring the local representation, identity and primordial ethnicity as such education follow different modern myths and slogans of the “global homogenization,” “global village,” “modernity” and “westernization” (Liechty, *Suitably* 250). Consequently, the traditional folk texts and performing arts are fading day by day.

Govinda Acharya, the Thāru folklore expert, opines that the “cultural attitude and lifestyle of modernity is a major barrier” in case of preserving the traditional performing arts and folk culture of Thārus (Appendix I, A, “Interview” 241). Moreover, when the social lifestyle of the ethnic group is changed, apparently their folk culture and performing art is also changed. Acharya argues that their cultural value and identity are fundamental elements and, therefore, modern education should not create hurdle in preserving and promoting folk Thāru culture and tradition. It is a bitter reality that new educational system has “ignored the traditional based cultural value of the ethnic, caste and regional communities. Consequently, overall modern society is becoming chaos and disorder day by day” (241). Indeed, the responsibility of such turmoil and chaotic environment in the current society is due to the modern education.

Meanwhile, Ashok Thāru also argues that the extension of education has essentially impacted to young males and females in the villages of Thāru community. Moreover, he does not

“see remarkable individuals from young master and diploma degree holders” have involved to ensure “their identity and career through performing arts” (Appendix I, B, “Interview” 248). They are losing the attraction and zeal of performing folk texts and arts to preserve and uphold the cultural value and identity created by the folk texts and way of life. As a man of long experience in performing *Barkā Nāc*, Chandra Prasad Thāru opines that it has become very challenging “to find trained folk performers such as, *Gurvā*, singers, drummers and dancers in the present time” because the young groups of Thārus are not “adapting to perform and memorize the couplets of *Barkimār*” (Appendix I, B, “Interview” 257). Such crisis in performers is the outcome of modern education in school, college and university level as they are considering that the materials of folk texts and performing arts are not legitimately significant for their practical and professional life in the changing context of modern society.

Non-Agro Occupation and Immigration

The shifting from rural based agriculture to urban type of non-agro occupation and profession has more and less hindered the continuity and routinized performance of Thāru folk texts and performing arts. The transformation from a rural to an urban society is concerned with an agrarian to industrial and post-industrial major changes in the social structure as the “social structure comprises the economy, technology and the occupational system” (Bell 12). The shifting of social structure from agrarian to industrial and post-industrial underscores that any social framework and structure cannot become “constant and permanent because of its dynamic nature” (Kharel, *Marxism* 23). That’s why, the periodical nature of human society is “subject to change with emergence of various new dimensions” in various social modes of production. When the social structure of agrarian life is changed, there can be witnessed “whole different way of seeing cultural activity” in the ethnic community (Williams, *Marxism* 111). Indeed, such

cultural works and activities are reflected according to the practical life of social, cultural and economic relationships with the emergence of new class.

The global structure of three phases (i.e. pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial structure) of society reveals that people are not only involved in agrarian way of life. More or less, Thāru males and females have involved in non-agricultural occupations in present way of life. At first, the pre-industrial society is basically “dominated by agriculture” or agro-dominant society before the advent of the industrial development (Kharel, *Marxism* 31). It is a living lifestyle before machine manufacturing and mechanization. So the primordial way of ethnic folk life of Thārus is primarily depended upon agricultural life. Secondly, the cultural and social attitude and rationality of industrial society transformed the agricultural society into the “manufacturing of goods” and services as the rural area of ethnic group reinforced into more industrialized and urban cities. In the third phase, the post-industrial features underscore the economic production of life in “service sector” rather than heavy industry and manufacturing. With the global influence of industrial and post-industrial society, new generation of Thārus are also involved in the economic activity related to the service sector. Therefore, traditional occupation of agriculture became less priority in the community of Tharus in modern life.

The majority of physical “labor force” of the agricultural life of Thārus is “no longer engaged in agriculture,” but new males and females of Thārus have got involved in non-agricultural occupations of white collar class jobs like business/trade, engineering, administration, teaching, research, consultation, marketing, social networking, social working, medical doctors, architecting, medical sectors, transportation, foreign employment, health and education (Bell 15). To employ in white collar jobs, profession of non-agricultural occupation shows their knife’s edge between modernity and tradition of agricultural way of folk life. In

other words, it is their folkloric life in “new cultural process” of negotiating and apparently there seems a contradiction between agro-production occupation of traditional farming and non-agro-production occupation (Liechty, *Out Here* 5). The industrialization in agricultural sector has not been focused, but the immigration and social service professions have become a rife in late modern life of Thārus. Their production of foods, vegetables and other livelihood materials are imported from Indian market and rest of the territories as their local productions of Thāru space and geography have been reduced considerably.

Migration and urbanization are also significant factors in disrupting the tradition of agricultural occupation. When the performers are migrated from their birth place, it becomes difficult to preserve the folk texts and performing arts because most of the migrated urban areas have no such environment to continue the performance of the folk texts and performing arts. The migrants are either involved in labor work in industry or joined some white collar jobs. In other words, they have no opportunity to evolve a group of performers from rural life of their ethnic and ancestral community. From the sociological perspective, new space of individuals and family members is not secured for kinship and social network like in the primordial ethnic community. Definitely, the geography of primordial ethnic community is socially and culturally productive in the sense that the physical body of their territory is produced by a host of social relationships, particularly ethnic kinship and ancestral forces. But external and internal migration of ethnic individuals and groups in Thārus has loosened such tradition of kinship system and structure. Without the robust relationship of such kinship and heritage, it becomes difficult to continue the performing folk texts and arts in the new environment of migrated space.

Very interestingly, Govinda Acharya gives emphasis to the multiple factors responsible for the crisis of performing folk texts and arts as he opines, “most of Thāru folk rituals and arts

are based on the agricultural background and occupation. When most of young Thārus moved to non-agricultural professions, few of them have the opportunity for grasping the knowledge of folk cultural life in the rural area” (Appendix I, A, “Interview” 241). Likewise, the grasping the knowledge of oral texts and performing arts of *Sakhyā*, *Rāmbihagrā*, *Phulvār*, *Gurbābak*, *Jarmauṭi* and *Barkimār* are quite lengthy and time-consuming as these folk materials were created in the background of tradition based agricultural way of life. Consequently, it is quite difficult to transmit in a short time and practice in the new generation. Migrated individuals, family members and ethnic groups as well as non-agricultural job holders feel hard to grasp such skill and knowledge in short time.

Maoist Insurgency

Maoist insurgency that ran from 1996 to 2006 in the rural area of Nepal caused hindrance to perform the folk texts and performing arts of Thārus in many ways. Govinda Acharya opines that “ten years’ Maoist insurgency became the dark period for the performance of Thāru culture and performing art” because mainly “the performing folk materials in the period of night time were not practiced regularly and they were almost stopped due to the horror and frightening environment in the rural area” (Appendix I, A “Interview” 240). In other words, the transmission of many Thāru folk texts and performing arts were postponed because the Maoist conflict brought serious internal crisis in the rural region of Thāru community. Due to the turmoil, chaos and fear, most of the Thāru performers did not get a chance to practice those folk texts and performing arts during the night time.

Moreover, performers also forgot the folk art of night song and dances due to the lack of regular practices. For instance different sections of *Rāmbihagrā* “is performed in different time-frame, for example, *samrauṭi* (opening song), *sanjhyā gainā* (evening song), *rāṭkaṭnā* (night

song), *aḍharatyā* (mid-night song), *bhinsaryā* (early dawn song), *bihāniyā* (dawn song) and *ḍin-nacavā* (day-time song)” (Appendix I, D, “Interview” 259). Such time-frame of performance was disturbed because most of the performing folk materials of this epic are related to night time and Thārus could not perform during the insurgency time. Moreover, their ritual activities, marriage ceremonies and other cultural events which used to take place at night-time were shifted to day time or postponed. With the postponing of rituals, marriage ceremonies and other cultural events at night-time, such performing pattern of folk texts and arts got gradually disappeared.

The state had declared the “emergency” and “fundamental rights of the citizens” were also “suspended” in 2000 because of the serious internal arm-struggle between the rebellion fighters and state arm-force in the rural region (Thapa, “Maobadi” 77). Similarly, the events of killing and kidnapping of innocent people continued from both sides the state and the Maoist during the emergency time. As a result, many people in the rural regions lost their lives, families, ancestral and relative members. Definitely, it was not possible to continue the folk texts and performing arts due to such unrest, chaos and anarchy during the insurgency period.

Moreover, a brief glance at the political agenda of the Maoist ‘people’s war,’ from February 1996, gave emphasis to identity politics such as, the focusing of the issues in ethnicity, gender and regional discriminations. The campaign of Maoist Party was concentrated on the rural area where many repressed ethnic and caste groups reside with their ancestral and familial system. In other words, the armed force of Maoist Party, its leaders and cadres advocated that the ‘people’s war’ was “the chance for this repressed diversity to come out into the open” (Sales 69). Moreover, the discriminations of landlords and elites as well as gender and regional suppression in the rural area were rife. On the one hand, Maoist Party advocated the political slogan of

gender, ethnic and regional rights that fascinated various males and females of Thārus to get involved in the political campaign of Maoist party.

On the other, several Thārus who did not agree with the ideology of Maoist party were displaced from the village area. Moreover, political agenda of Maoist was targeted against landlords and elites of rural areas. They also felt insecure to live in the rural area. From the cultural perspective, performance of folk texts and performing arts is a common heritage for landlord, non-landlord, elite and non-elite Thārus. But the political agenda of Maoist struggle divided Thārus between the landlord and non-landless as well as the elite and non-elite class within the community. Accordingly, their cultural practice of performing the folk texts and arts were not given priority at all.

Ashok Thāru argues that some Thārus needlessly claim that Thāru folk tradition and knowledge is exclusively influenced by Hinduism and also campaigned “to leave their ritual and practice” (Appendix I, B, “Interview” 248). Such campaign also reached to the climax during the insurgency period. As a result, some Maoist activists also blamed Thāru folk tradition as “Hinduization and it was tried to prohibit for performing their traditional culture during the insurgency period of ten years.” Such needless publicity also impacted to some radical activists within the community of Thārus.

Likewise, the internal conflict among the Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus from Maoist insurgency “caused major destruction on the local level, especially in the villages” as it “destroyed the collective co-existence of diverse communities, damaging the integrity of historically developed indigenous models and institutions” (Khadka 9). When Maoist insurgency started, the local government as well as traditional or indigenous and primordial mechanisms of Thāru ethnicity became fragile or nearly collapse. Indeed, the ethnic members of Thārus were divided by Maoist

agenda based on identity politics. Therefore, importance of unwritten rules as enacted by the indigenous community of Thārus and their oral tradition based performing folk texts and arts were undermined and devalued.

Dying Old Performers

The folk performers are the real pillars for preserving and promoting the Thārus folk texts and performing arts in the socio-cultural context of Daṅgaurā Thārus. They enjoy the distinctive social status in the local area and they work as a force to unite all *gharḍhurryā* by their role and responsibility and the help in the ethnic identity and representation through their individual and collective performance. In other words, their folk materials, texts and performing arts are existed, lived and repeated during the occasion of Thāru festivals and cultural events. Moreover, folk performers themselves consider that performing such folk knowledge is their duty and responsibility provided by the community. Definitely, the performing of folk texts and arts is the cultural memory of folk way of life. Consequently, the transmission of oral knowledge existed and lived as the folk “performers, creative adapters, transmitters between past and future generations live in different material circumstances and are differently placed in powerfully developed structures of status difference” (Charsley 20). Similarly, the performing of folk arts, texts and knowledge by the performers unfolds the social status, cultural identity of the ethnic community.

The power of oral communication through the performance of Thāru folk texts and arts underscores the creativity and oral literacy of the folk performers of Thārus. By doing so, the performers share the folk knowledge of the texts and arts within their community. If the old performers do not teach and instruct the folk knowledge of performing texts and arts to new comers, it is difficult to transmit such knowledge from one generation to another. To perform the

folk texts and performing arts, the folk performers face the “different socio-cultural and political occurrences” that are “created inside and outside of the country” (Appendix I, A, Interview” 248). Such events do not only become an interruption for performing Thāru folklore, but also disturb the overall tradition of performing the Thāru folk culture and arts. Indeed, the folk performers have to face various obstacles as socio- political and natural events. Moreover, the folk materials of Thāru performers are practiced with the organized system of cultural rules and methods. Strictly speaking, folk texts and performing arts of Thārus could only be performed through the social interaction of systematic cultural procedure.

Sixty six year old Ashok Tharu is a researcher and scholar who has devoted long time to study and research in the area of the traditional Thāru arts, folk literature and philosophy. Before joining his professional career in teaching and academic research, he had enjoyed himself as a performer of drummer of *Sakhyā-Paiyā* as well as a *Gurvā* for ten to fifteen years. According to his experience, in past days, Thāru folk performers were adequately trained and, therefore, they could perform the folk skill in the right-track because there was amicable environment of learning and teaching. But now he does not see such trained and skilled folk performers like *Gurvā* , *Maṭavā /Barghar*, *Mohryā*, *Mohrinyā*, *Nāc-nacavā* , *Nacinyā*, *Nacginyā*, *Pacavā* , *Maḍaryā* and *Swāñyā* in the villages of Thārus because such talented and experienced performers “have disappeared and such things have become like a folk tale in the present days” (Appendix I, B, “Interview” 248). Indeed, he asserts that the performers in current days are not so interested to share their performing folk knowledge because they do not have friendly competition among them in the community.

In case of *Gurvā* mantra during the *Gurai puḷā*, there used to be unique type of ritual performance in the early days. But Ashok finds that fire-dance (i.e. *agni-nritya*) of *Gurvā* can be

watched “only for formality” in the present-days of folk life (248). At that time, it was very difficult to get folk knowledge of *Gurvā* mantra. The young Thārus used to gather to be taught by senior *Gurvā* during the *Ḍasyā* festival, but now the young people are not interested to get the folk experience and knowledge of mantra from the old generation. Consequently, it has become a precarious condition to have a *Gurvā and Gurvā* mantra in his village. While practicing the *Barkimār*, Ashok has also unique experience because it used to be “sung and held the competition among the singers during the rainy season of paddy plantation,” but such practice has vanished from folk way of life (250). For Ashok, performing *Mainā* and *Sajanā* songs are also declining.

Celebrating *Hori*, *Ḍasyā*, *Ḍevāri*, *Māghi* and *Gurai* festivals are becoming more or less modern because Ashok does not see the artistic worth as used to be in past days of memories as he articulates, “I don’t find such pleasure of bygone days’ childhood and young-age in the present time. Only memories are remaining in my mind of those events” (249). In this way, the deep-rooted folk knowledge of performers about the folk texts and performing arts are not reflected in their performing scenario of Thāru folk life. As a *Mohryā* of *Barkā Nāc*, Chandra Prasad Chaudhari has bitter experience about disappearing of folk knowledge in his social location. To perform the *Barkā Nāc*, Chandra Prasad underscores that it is very difficult to find trained folk performers because the “new generation of Thārus is not adapting to perform and memorize its couplets and content” as he asserts, “Old people of Thārus have forgotten those couplets due to the lack of regular practice and time-age factor” (Appendix I, C, “Interview” 257). In the meantime, Bejhlal Chaudhari, *Mohryā* of *Rāmbihagrā*, also expresses sad experience about the lack of transmission of traditional knowledge of performing Thāru *Rāmāyana* in his locality as he asserts,

The vanishing is not only in the case of performing *Rāmbihagrā*, but also other traditional long and short folk song like *Barkimār*, *Gurbābak Jarmauti*, *Phulvār*, *Aṣṭimki/Sakhiyā*, *Māgar*, *Ḍhumru*, *Maghauṭā*, *Māḍo Sundari*, *Mainā* and *Sajanā* . . . Young Thārus of village are just interested in Nepali, Hindi and English film songs, but they do not emphasis to learn our cultural and traditional songs and dances . . . So I suffer so much and cannot sleep even in some nights due to the disinterested of young Thārus on our identity, cultural history and knowledge of forerunners. (Appendix I, D, “Interview” 260)

However, the folk performers are the pillars for preserving and promoting the Thārus folk texts and performing arts, but they are failing to safeguard those texts due to various socio-cultural factors. On the one hand, the new generation of Thārus is not adapting the folk knowledge of the folk texts and performing arts. On the other hand, the old people are forgetting day by day such folk knowledge in their locality because they have no regular practice to transmit the folk experiences and ideas. Moreover, every folk text has its own type of performing rituality and the way of getting the aesthetic pleasure. But the amicable atmosphere of teaching-learning in Thāru community is dwindling. The performers, creative adapters and transmitters have no friendly and proper circumstances to transmit their knowledge. Besides, there is also a gap between the old and new generation in sharing folk knowledge. Consequently, it has brought a big challenge for preserving those cultural properties of Thārus. Apparently, the old performers are dying and new performers are not ready to replace the old performers.

Costume, Ornament and Musical Instrument

The costume, ornament and musical instruments of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus are integral folk materials necessary to perform the folk texts and performing arts. The contents of their folk literary texts, rhyme, rhythm and other elements are not only challenging to transmit in the

present days, but also their traditional dresses, ornaments and musical instruments are also problematic to transfer from past to present time and to future. The traditional costumes, ornaments and musical instruments are the folkloristic ways of life because they are lived practices and practical ideologies that enable Thāru community feel the sense of cultural identity and representation.

Indeed, the costumes and ornaments are worn in the body of performers whereas musical instruments provide the melodic tone while singing the folk epics. Consequently, any folk dance, costume and musical instrument of ethnicity “as a symbol of identity” as it is “outwardly symbolizes the identity of a folk community and expresses the individuals’ manifold relationship to and with the community” (Eleuterio 63). On the one hand, their traditional dresses, folk ornaments and musical instruments are used while performing the folk texts and performing arts because these materials help to identify the unique ethnic relationship and identity. On the other hand, their traditional dresses, ornaments and musical instruments are also cultural memory of the ancestral property and folk knowledge.

Like other ethnic communities, Daṅaurā Thārus too have their own style of dressing, costumes and ornaments. Their dresses “exist in the attire on the basis of age and sex” (Maiti 184). At the same time, their attires and ornaments are not only their basic needs, but also have a substantial part to reinforce their “social recognition” (184). So the costumes and ornaments emphasize that these folk material are tradition based cultural heritage of Thārus. Moreover, the diverse attire “reflects their socio-economic and cultural aspects along with the ecological circumstances” as where they reside themselves in the locality (Diwasa 117). Most of traditional attires and ornaments are worn on the occasion of festivals and socio-cultural events. However, the daily costumes of Thāru males wear the white cap, waist-coasts and loin cloth, but the

females use to wear *colyā*, *ṭenihā jhulavā*, *gonyā*, *gaṭyā*, *kurṭā* and *lehangā*. While performing their folk dances like *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍiṅyā nāc*, Thāru males also wear these costumes of females. Wearing the folk ornaments by the female performers is “highly valued” in the community as wearing such ornamentation make them unique and very attractive, which fascinate the audience (119). In the daily life, the females wear *curyā*, *ṭikiyā* and *ṭaryā*. Moreover, Thāru women have the special ornaments named *jhimalyā*, *gaṭaiyā*, *bankā*, *kansiri* and *mālā*. Most of these ornaments are worn by the Thāru females while performing folk dances based on folk texts.

The folk musical instruments of Thārus are based on socio-cultural practice as they provide real life to different folk songs and dances. Indeed, the songs and dances based on the narratives of folk epics become distasteful and dull without the usage of folk musical instruments. So the use of such folk musical instruments during the performing arts “gives life to songs and dances” (126). In other words, their musical instruments provide entertainment to the folk concert audience on the occasion of the rituals, festivals and cultural events. Common Thāru folk musical instruments are: *mandrā*, *basyā*, *manjirā*, *jhāli*, *kaṣṭār* and *chaṭkauli*. These instruments are played by the performers during the performances of folk dances based on myth-poetic texts.

Based on his experience of folkloristic study of Thāru folk texts and arts, Govinda Acharya opines that different aspects of Thāru folk texts and performing arts as well as folk costumes, jewelries and musical instruments are vanishing day by day in their locality. Indeed, the costume, ornament and musical instrument represent the cultural value and ethnic identity as Acharya argues, “Absence of these musical instruments makes the performance deviated and tasteless. Such enactment will be like a flower without smelling and the moon in the sky without

moonlight. Therefore, we should emphasize to preserve Thāru folk texts and performing arts with their dress, jewelry and musical instrument” (Appendix I, A, “Interview” 242-3). Meantime, Ashok Thāru also agrees the crisis of the folk dress, jewelry and musical instrument as used by the folk performers of Thārus. Emphasizing the need to preserve these folk things, he further states:

The unavailability of such folk materials is that Thārus have not linked these things with financial income. I see little bit fascination is increasing among Thārus to preserve and promote their folk dress, jewelry and musical instrument. It is necessary to promote traders for producing such cultural materials of Thārus. The beauty of performing arts without these cultural materials will be dull, less interesting. (Appendix I, B, “Interview” 250)

With the changing lifestyle of the Thārus, we witness not only disappearing of folk texts and performing arts, but also their folk costumes, jewelries and musical instruments. With the fast speed of modernization, Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus are heavily impacted. Indeed, the traditional costumes, ornaments and musical instruments are the most vibrant elements of cultural properties of ethnic group as they are used in various festivals and cultural events. Moreover, they are playing significant role to promote the ethnic and national identity as well as the representation of the ethnic group and nation. In other words, it is related to the issue of preservation of national values and cultural heritage. Therefore, the folk costumes, ornaments and musical instruments are existed in certain geographical and socio-economic circumstances under the cultural root of different folk tradition, customs and rituals.

Cultural Right and Possibilities of Preservation and Promotion in Policy

The preservation and promotion of Thāru folk texts and performing arts is an essential part as it upholds the basic cultural heritage and properties of Thārus to show their cultural identity and representation. The policies and strategies of different national and international organizations have also underscored the act of preserving and promoting the traditional culture, ritual and folklore of ethnicity and social group. At this backdrop, it will be better to examine the effectiveness and practicality of those policies and programs for preserving and promoting procedure in the context of promoting the Thāru folk texts and performing arts.

The preservation and promotion of folklife materials and folkloristic values such as, objects of folk epics and arts, intangible performances of dances, music, ritual and cultural memories of ethnic, caste and regional group are concerned with the “both personal and community identities” (Silverman and Ruggles 3). In fact, those components of folkloristic aspects are shaped through the process of different “tangible objects and intangible cultural performances” because such things have an embodiment of their robust identity to show fundamentally differences from other groups and communities (3). In other words, the cultural right of the ethnic and regional group is concerned with the spatiality of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus and their individual relationship as well as community that reflects the cultural memories, social relationship and communicative action.

International and National Policy and Guidelines

The Article 27 of United Nation (UN)’s Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) clearly asserts the basic freedom of any person to participate in one’s own cultural activity as it describes, “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits” (Silverman and Ruggles,

“Universal” 27). Indeed, this Article of UN underlines that cultural aspect of the individual in any ethnic, caste and regional group in the worldwide is the basic concern of human rights, which upholds the robust relationship between the social and individual survival as well as community and nation. Moreover, UN also passed the procedure of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966.

Declaration of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also focuses on the cultural preservation as its Concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage (2003) mentions, “Cultural heritage is an important component of the cultural identity of communities, groups and individuals, and or social cohesion, so that its intentional destruction may have adverse consequences on human dignity and human rights” (Silverman and Ruggles, “Cultural” 5). Thus, UNESCO declaration underlines that cultural heritage is a noteworthy component of national, ethnic, regional and caste identity and representation. Moreover, both documents of UN and UNESCO focus on the cultural properties of ethnic and social group, which are the most powerful international heritage that plays a noteworthy role in the setting of worldwide policy for the cultural heritage management and preservation. The guiding principles, strategies and rules of these international organizations valorize the folkloristic performance of any national, ethnic, regional and caste group.

The principles and methods of national policy, planning, management, financing and organizational resources for any caste, tribe and ethnic group are significant component in the process of preservation and promotion of cultural sector. It is significant to note that “the rulers and inhabitants of Nepal are united in preserving their culture” as the cultural identity, value and representation are the manifolds of the survival in the humanistic value based social order

(Amatya 28). Accordingly, it is an essential matter in official policy, rule and regulation, and guideline of the state, which enhances a provision for preserving and promoting folk culture.

The Article 32 of The Constitution of Nepal (2015) has provisioned the right of language, civilization and culture as it mentions, “2) Every person and community shall have the right to participate in the cultural life their communities, 3) Every Nepali community residing in Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civilization and heritage” (20). Meanwhile, Nepali state has also underscored to “carrying out studies, research works, excavation and dissemination for the protection, promotion and development” of cultural heritage and traditional culture because folk culture, literature arts and heritage of various castes, tribes and communities enhance “the basis of equality and co-existence while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country” (31). Such provision in the constitution shows that the state has recognized the planning on the promotion of folk texts and arts, literature and music of diverse caste, tribe and community.

Among the objectives of Tribhuvan University (TU) Act 1992, one of them is to “to do research works on various fields, protect and develop national culture and tradition” (“Preamble” 1). Such provision of TU shows that the policy of higher education also highlights the importance to protect and develop different ethnic, tribe and caste communities of national culture and tradition in the diverse context of Nepal. In the meantime, Nepal Academy (NA) Act 2007 also includes functioning for giving “a priority on preserving and promoting the disappearing language and culture of Nepali various caste, ethnic and tribe groups” (160). Moreover, Nepal Fine Arts Academy (NFAA) Act, 2007 insists “h) to do study and research on, protect and maintain, fine arts that reflect identity of various castes, tribes and communities of Nepal . . . m) To boost up, develop and expand folk pro-people (*Lokpachhyā*) arts” (3).

According to Nepal Music and Dance Academy (NMDA) Act, 2007, it is necessary “to do study and research on, protect and maintain innovative/typical folk *Dhun*, folk music and folk dances of various tribes and communities of Nepal” (3). In fact, different functions, duties and powers of three governmental academic institutions (such as NA, NFAA and NMDA) depict that their many strategies and policies have aimed to boost up and develop for performing ritual and traditional folk texts and arts of ethnic community.

Declaration of Constitution in 2015 had legitimately accepted Nepal as the country of Republican Federal System. The Constitution has also defined the following three layers of government: federal, provincial and local governments. Relying on such constitution of republican federal system, the government of Province No 5 has also issued Tourism Act, 2019. This act has aimed to develop the local folk arts, music, culture, lifestyle, dress and food items of any indigenous ethnic group. It has also encouraged for managing the homestays of the ethnic, caste and tribe group in their locality. Its Article 33 has apparently mentioned, “Any indigenous ethnic, tribe, community or institution can make the cultural group to protect own traditional folk art culture for the promotion of tourism and it also can submit in the ministry” (18). Thus, the province government has aimed to protect and promote the folk texts, performing arts, dresses, musical instruments, dresses and food items of ethnic community in relation to professional tourism.

Moreover, Local Government Conducting Act (LGCA), 2017 states that every local government (i.e. metropolitan, sub-metropolitan, municipality or rural municipality) has the duty, function and power for promoting and preserving the folk tradition, historical arts, archaeological assets and culture. According to its Article 3 Clause 2, any local government can declare any region of its own as the cultural or tourist area for the promotion of traditional arts

and culture as well as professional tourism. Similarly, this act of chapter three has also a provision to conduct and manage traditional festivals, exhibition, *jātrā* and performance. Moreover, it has instructed to protect and develop of language, culture and fine arts in the local level. Moreover, Clause 17 of the chapter three has also encompassed the function, duty and power of local government's ward committee "to enhance and promote the festivals, arts and drama of local community as well as make them aware in their cultural program" (32).

Relying on LGCA 2017, the government of Nepal's Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration has issued Local Level Annual Planning or Budget Management Guideline 2017. According to this Guideline, Ministry has given priority to allocate the budget on different more than nine sectors (such as, poverty, production, employment, local skill, marginalized group, gender equality and the like). Among these sectors, the budget allocation on preserving and protecting the local languages and cultural aspect also has been given main importance. The traditional performing dance, song, arts and festivals of ethnic group are given importance in three levels of governments as their legal official papers have included such provisions for promotion and preservation.

The promulgation of National Cultural Policy (NCP) 2010, issued by Ministry of Culture and Tourism, was the landmark event in the policy-making for cultural preservation and promotion of diverse ethnic, caste and regional communities in Nepal. This policy has highlighted the innovative plan and program of the state for preserving and promoting of any folkloristic knowledge, cultural heritage and traditional ritual of any ethnic, caste and regional community in the present and future. Indeed, NCP has apparently given emphasis to the need of establishing Academy for the preservation and promotion of diverse ethnic, caste and region based traditional culture and folklore as its point (no. 20. 8) includes, "There shall be established

the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and Folklore Academy (FA)” (415). Consequently, NCP aims at strengthening the local to national value of cultural creation and production nationwide.

Meanwhile, NCP 2010 has also pointed out the following problems and challenges: “Any culture has the challenge of foreign or exterior cultural impact. To minimize and control the influence of wide-ranging electronic communicative channel in any original culture has one more decisive task in the present global situation” (411). Moreover, it has also the goals to survey and study on various ethnic and caste groups. So NCP enhances the promotion and preservation by establishing culture centers of the communities. In the meantime, it also aims to increase the investment every year in the cultural sector for survey and study in diverse castes’ different folk literary genres. Moreover, guiding principle of NCP has also highlighted the product of the traditional tangible folk art and performing art by professionalizing the original skill and technology of folk group. This policy has also outlined the strategy and planning of ethnic, caste and regional group based study and research in the folkloristic area of customs, rituals, festivals, literary and folklore, traditional folk arts and performing art.

At this backdrop, it is necessary to explore the governmental policy and strategy in the area of Thāru folk texts and performing arts. Indeed, there is gap of the policy making of stakeholders between the central and local level. To know such gap, the pertinent questions are: How have the aforementioned national and international policies, programs and strategies facilitated the preserving and promoting of folk texts and performing art in the context of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus? Are those policies playing positive role in the implementation of cultural space? Indeed, Govinda Acharya appreciates the legal provision for cultural policy of government of government, but he does not find effectiveness of implementation in the locality of Thāru community as he argues:

Problem real seems in the perspective of political leaders, who also are in the position of policy-making of the state and political parties as they have no analytical viewpoints to implement the policy effectively. The provincial and local governments are trying to promote Thāru folk culture and performing arts in the name of tourism promotion. Their programs are not adequately planned, organized, regular and effective for the implementation of the policy. (Appendix I, A, “Interview” 243)

Furthermore, different layers of local governments have been haphazardly working in implement such national and international policies, but they have no adequate body to reach to particular folk group of Thārus. According to him, metropolitans and sub-metropolitans have just begun and managed Tourism and Cultural Promotion Department (TCPD) to promote their folk culture, but municipality and rural municipality have no effective channel and mechanism to implement those policies and strategies. So Acharya suggests for extending TCPD in every ward level of local government in the community of Thārus. Indeed, such local based cultural promotion gives emphasis on the promotion as the program and policy of the state have aimed to reach to the stakeholders of folk groups and performers. If such policies and programs do not reach to the target group of the folk performers in Thārus, the governmental investment in the sector of cultural preservation and promotion becomes futile.

Moreover, Acharya asserts that the state should recognize the folk knowledge and traditional culture of Thāru community as an essential part of national property and identity of the nation. So he emphasizes that the over-politicization must be forbidden in the area of collective property, cultural heritage and their shared value. Likewise, the stakeholders of performers and ethnic folk group of Thārus “must be sincere to preserve their ethnic culture” because they are the insider force of folk culture (245). Indeed, the governmental policy is only

outsider force because its role plays as a catalyst, but insider force of the folk groups is a crucial factor to promote and preserve the folk texts and performing arts.

Meanwhile, Ashok Thāru argues that three bodies of government (federal, provincial and local) need “commitment, adequate budget allocation and grant facility for participation of its national and international marketization” for the promotion of folklore and performing arts of Daṅgaurā Thārus (Appendix I, B, “Interview” 250). Besides, Ashok opines that Chinese model of “skill development training” is required for “rural cultural production” to promote the folk groups of performing arts and skills in the context of Nepal (250). Without the national and international marketization and professionalization of folk skill development of performing arts, there will not be an effective folk cultural promotion, policy, guideline and strategy in the sector of the implementation in near future. So the opinion of Ashok is that professionalization and marketization in the folkloristic performance and performing arts is a basic need of Thāru folk groups to preserve and promote their folk texts and performing arts.

Folklore Archive

Nepali folklorists need to focus on the practice of archiving the day by day disappearing folk culture and literature for preserving the folk properties and materials of Thārus. Indeed, the motivation for archiving culture is the process of saving folk materials as the archive method more or less helps to practice for preserving research and performing materials. In other words, repository condition of folk materials of ethnic group may provide an opportunity to perform them on the occasion of various traditional socio-cultural contexts. It is clear that the more repository of folk knowledge of ethnic group the more cultural power of their community.

The ethnography of folklorists underscores the folk texts and folk life archive for the sake of ethnic folk materials. Realizing the significant aspect of archiving method in the procedure of

folkloristic study, NCP 2010 aims to “identify and archive of both tangible and intangible properties of the cultural heritages” (413). If the materials of folk texts and performing arts are protected and preserved through the archival methods, it may have an opportunity for collaborative engagement with the community of its origin. In fact, “folklore archive act as repositories for *folklore* by serving as sites for the preservation, organization and continued accessibility of discrete representations of this specific class of human creative behavior” (Kolovos 5). Moreover, the function of folklore archiving encompasses the typescripts of folk materials (such as, folk epics, folk songs, folk music, folk riddles and folk legends) into audio-visual recordings and photographs. Moreover, audio-visual recordings of such folk materials and texts reveal the live performance of ethnic community that features the documentation and preservation.

Archival method of folkloristic texts and performing arts represent a potential of reviving mode of folkloristic way of Thārus. However, Govinda Acharya underlines that “it is impossible to revive all substantial materials of folk literature and arts” because those folk texts and performing art materials “are not all used in the changing time process, but their significant and core materials must be documented through documentary, books or any method (audio-visual). So the next generation can learn from these documented materials” (Appendix I, A, “Interview” 245). So the activities of folklore archiving in the community of Thārus are done by many governmental organizations (such as NA, NFAA, NMDA, Cultural Corporation and Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan), NGOs (such as Nepal Music Center (NMC), Handicraft Association (HA)) and personal endeavors. Therefore, Ashok Thāru is also optimistic in “the enhancement of visual documentary archive” because such method can preserve and promote folk texts and performing

arts of Thārus in appropriate way (Appendix I, B “Interview” 252). Moreover, such method of documentary archive has been considered as “a successful method” in many countries.

In the process of documentary archive, there can also be digital and virtual method in the present time of thriving day by day advanced information technology because internet has become “a free medium that opens access to information” in the ethnic community (Bronner 22). Indeed, the digitalization and virtualization of the folkloristic texts and performing arts of ethnic group “may broaden to a variety of settings—urban as well as rural, industrial as well as agricultural—and include folk transmission via a host of technologies” (21). In the same way, the booming widespread access of internet means of transmission may enhance the cultural practices on digital equipment to reinforce the folkloristic enactment in near future.

The new generation of Thārus are migrated and scattered from their origin, kinship and ancestral spaces and some of them are still residing in their origin spaces. The current-day of global economy and the socio-cultural lifestyle is disjuncture and difference because the worldwide lifespan has taken the account of “deeply disjunctive relationships among human movement, technological flow, and financial flow” rather than primordial setting of single ethnic community and single socio-cultural based folkloristic life (Appadurai 35). Moreover, the national, ethnic and regional boundaries are blurred because every member of ethnic community is moving from one part of region to another.

It seems that “the new global cultural economy is shaped by new technologies, shifting systems of money, and media images that flow across old national borders” (Denzin xii). Consequently, the access of internet, you-tube, face book, instgram, twitter, and other various methods of social media can enrich the Thārus for communicative facilities with their folkloristic knowledge and performing arts. By using the archive method of digitalization and virtualization

as well as publication of photographs and books, new generation of Thārus may have a limitless frontier for getting and transmitting their ancestral and kinship knowledge of archive culture. Thus, folkloristic archive in the area of Thāru folk life, materials and knowledge has the wide-range of potential opportunity for folk knowledge transmission in near future.

Folklore in Curriculum

Very interestingly, NCP 2010 has pointed out that present educational system has not satisfactorily included the original cultural content based course-curriculum of various ethnic, caste and tribe groups of students. Accordingly, the current education has not “made the realization of own cultural implication” because the course contents of School to University level “have not sufficiently enhanced for making aware the students in their embedded commitment and faith” of cultural component (412). It is realized that governmental policy should include the course contents of folklore such as, oral literature, social folk custom and performing arts of ethnic, caste and regional communities in educational curriculum. Moreover, the course content of folkloristic aspect may provide the students and learners the cultural values and commonalities of folk-life that develops a sense of prehistoric and ancestral worth for the commoners.

There are quite a lot of advantages in using folkloristic curriculum in the school level. First, including the folkloristic content in course curriculum of school helps to foster “the development of positive student attitudes towards learning about culturally different people” (Coverdale 9). Indeed, such inclusion of course content encompasses the potential value of folklore, i.e. folk material culture, skill, habit, arts, crafts, and belief of ancestral group in the society. Second, if the classroom activity of teaching and learning focuses on “open dialogue and activity,” such function apparently incorporates the method of group discussion, role playing,

music, dance, stories, games, pictures, photo exhibition, audio-visual and other constructive enactments of ethnic group through the embedded knowledge of cultural elements (23).

Consequently, these teaching-learning methods of teacher and student “provide outlets and expressions in diverse forms, which are adaptable to the teaching of folklore and also go beyond collecting, analyzing and archiving folk materials” (30). Likewise, the essence of Thāru folkloristic texts, arts and its contents may be remembered as equally as it was transmitted in the agricultural background of the folk life.

Third, the students of Thārus will be able to use folk collections of resource materials to create their own cultural identity, value and representation in the diverse setting of ethnic and caste communities. Indeed, different genres of folkloristic studies are folk myth, folk tales, proverbs, daily folk living, social folk customs, festivals, folk belief and superstition, performing folk arts, folk music, folk songs, folk dance and folk crafts. If these folk materials are properly practiced and performed in the proper environment of classroom, where Thāru students are enrolled, may have the opportunity of transmission. Fourth, the inclusion of local knowledge of folklore in the course-curriculum promotes the “diversity by valuing the way-of-knowing that are characteristic of various cultures” (Semali and Kincheloe 5). Moreover, such provision also enhances the process of internalization of local folk knowledge of ethnic community as it gives the students of Thārus and non-Thārus to “a global network of indigenous knowledge resource centers” in near future (5). In the same way, it may also promote social and cultural interaction between Thārus and non-Thāru communities through the medium of sharing ancestral and kinship knowledge of the folklore.

Fifth, the teaching in academic and educational institutions of ethnic folklore is related to indigenous knowledge of ethnic community that “may be used to teach language, to explore

values, to recount history, to analyze changes in attitudes over time, and so on” (George 84). In this way, teaching of various genres of folkloristic studies permits the students of Thārus and non-Thārus to esteem and identify the values of ethnic folk life, history, language, ancestral knowledge and folk customs of their lives.

Govinda Acharya argues that the inclusion of these folk materials in the curriculum and teaching-learning method from school level “would be fruitful” to transmit and preserve the disappearing folk texts and performing arts of Thārus (Appendix I,A, “Interview,” 244). To do so, Acharya asserts that “there needs plenty of research and study in the area of folk life, traditional folklore and arts” of Thārus. So he focuses that policy-makers and political leaders should realize the ethnic power of the folk knowledge and culture. It is challenging and unmanageable to implement such policy and strategy in the educational system. According to his observation, Nepal Music Center (NMC) Kathmandu has included in its course study of ethnic music and certain teaching and learning method for last ten years from nine to twelve classes. In this way, many schools also can run the folklore study courses of Thārus according to ethnic and language majority students in their spaces. Meanwhile, Ashok Thāru also opines that the inclusion of Thāru folk texts and performing arts in the course study of school can be implemented “by using educational right of local governmental body” (Appendix I, B “Interview” 251). To do so, the stakeholders of Thāru community, their representatives and governmental policy-makers need to have the dynamic and visionary plan, policy and strategy.

Conclusion

To sum up, the folklore and modernity in the community of Ḍaṅaurā Thārus unfold the contradictory relationship in different ways. Indeed, their folk texts and performing arts are disappearing day by day along with the wave of modernity and its cross-cultural lifestyles in

many caste, regional and ethnic groups. Different folk texts and performing arts have been neglected and these folk materials are on the verge of losing basically the originality and authenticity along with many other causes in the community of Tharus. There needs transmissions of folkloristic practice, expression, knowledge, skill and craftsmanship in performing folk ability and aptitude from old generation to new generation. In the first section, the study has tried to explore how the primordial ethnicity of Thārus is comparatively easy to preserve and promote the folkloristic texts and performing arts. Indeed, the primordial ethnicity in Daṅgaurā Thārus encompasses the existence and living of folk groups with their traditions of folk beliefs, customs and rituals of primordial objects that are basically relied on biological and ancestral factors as well as territorial location of the majority of same blood and familial ethnic group residing. In other words, it is relied on a major notion of kinship, ancestral and biological factors of *goṭyār* system. On the contrary, the constructivist notion of ethnicity has not fixed boundary of ancestral, biological, kinship, language and territorial location, but it goes beyond and also encompasses the ethnic rights and identity based politics as well as modern economics and modern educational issues to reshape and reframe the ethnic force.

Thāru mobilization in the local level becomes effective through the system of traditional organizations like *Maṭavā / Barghar* and *Gurvā* system. Moreover, these two systems are the pillars to promote and preserve the folk texts and performing arts in Thāru community. Likewise, *Maṭavā* system functions as the managerial and administrative body to enhance the ancestral and familial relationship with the non-written rules and regulations of folkloristic customs and rituals. It is clear that *Gurvā* plays the priest, shamanic and spiritual role to reinforce the traditional festivals, ceremonies and rituals as most of the folkloristic texts and performing arts

are practiced and performed on the basis of repeated and routinized activities of *Hāryā* and *Dhuryā Gurai* performances in accordance to their annual calendar.

With the new wave of modernity, the role, duty and responsibility of *Maṭavā / Barghar* and *Gurvā* organizations are gradually decreasing in their folk life. Consequently, the preservation and promotion of the folk texts and performing arts based on the traditional occupation of rural farming have become extremely challenging. Definitely traditional rural farming occupation does not show advanced technology based industrial and post-industrial society. From the perspective of their tradition based agricultural mode of production, their folkloristic handicraft, transmission of folk epics, knowledge and skill promotes the customarily ancestral and familial attachment that becomes easy to preserve and promote the folklore.

In the second section, the study has underscored to encompass the major components that have ignored the pre-modern primordial ethnicity in the community of *Ḍaṅaurā Thārus*. Most of the *Thārus* in the spatiality of Tarai region are becoming day by day modern and also they have failed to recall their cultural and ethnic values based on their folkloristic texts and performing arts. On the one hand, the national umbrella based their common ethnic organization TWS began to play a significant role to modernize landlords and elites of *Thārus* in the Tarai region since its establishment around 1950s. Indeed, its foremost objective and agenda was modern education and ethnic consciousness, which also influenced the modernizing process among the elites and landlords of *Thārus*.

On the other hand, different periods of TSM did not incorporate the agenda for preserving and promoting the folkloristic texts and performing arts in *Thāru* community. For example, around the 1950s, Panchayat and multi-party system, the issue of land and peasant rights were their major agendas and demands during the social movements. Similarly, Maoist

insurgency and *kamaiyā* (labor bondage) movement were run with the agenda of peasant right, political right and the right of the labor bondage rather than preservation and promotion of cultural right, folkloristic texts and performing arts. Consequently, neither folk performers of old generation are becoming successful to transmit the folk knowledge and skill to new generation nor young males and females of new folk performers are receiving such knowledge and craftsmanship in proper way. In the meantime, the challenges of transmission are not only in the textual content and materials of folk epics, ritual texts and performing arts, but also of their folk dresses, adornments and musical instruments.

In the third section, the study has attempted to analyze cultural right and the national and international policies and strategies as well as potentials of preserving and promoting the folk texts, rituals and performing arts in the shifting way of modern life in the community of Tharus. Ultimately, this chapter has tried to examine different ways of following possibilities of safeguarding folklore in the community: method of folklore archiving and inclusion of folklore in educational curriculum from school level in the majority of Tharu students in different educational institutes and promotion of developing professionalism in their folk skills, music and dance to their new generation. The folklore in the modern world has crossed the national and geographical boundary. Indeed, it should be investigated under the four rubric inquiry as Dorson argues, "Folklore and the city, Folklore and ideology, folklore and industrialism, and folklore and mass media" ("Introduction" 3). Apparently, folkloristic performances in the modern circumstance require the interpretation, reconstruction and revivalism to enhance the cultural production. In this way, this appraisal has given emphasis to encompass the potentials of reviving the lost and forgotten folk, ritual texts and performing arts.

Chapter VI

Spatial Performance of Folk Texts in Thāru Identity Formation

Overview

The cultural performance of folklore or any folk literary text constructs the identity, social communication and relationship in the spatiality of a particular community. Indeed, the performance of the folk texts according to the regular, fixed and routinized time-pattern and content during the particular festival, ceremony and socio-cultural event of ethnic group rejuvenates the primordial knowledge and folk property. It seems that ritual and cultural performances are not reified object of the folk textual pattern, but rather as the cultural specific, spatiality and dynamically communicative and social action as well as symbolically prosperous and rich substance and social behavior. Furthermore, the performance of folk performing arts is based on the folkloristic texts and it does not only unveil the ethnic people's engagement in musical, cultural, ritual and aesthetic activities, but also produces the embedded meanings and values, which enable them to have insights in the cultural identity and representation process of the ethnic community.

Regarding the cultural performance of folk texts, the dissertation has applied the multi-disciplinary approaches of key theoretical concepts and opinions from the area of performativity, ritual, cultural, spatial and folkloristic criticism. Moreover, it also encompasses the primary data of field visit observation based performances, interviews with folk performers and researchers, visual clips and photo shots of real performances based on the selected folk texts. Using the performance events, interviews and vignettes of live performances, the study has also attempted to examine the dynamic processes of ethnic identity through the performing folk texts in the modern way of life. In other words, cultural performances of folk texts and arts can empower the

under-represented people of folk-life because such enactments can encourage and enable them to carry out the subjugated knowledge into a forefront for identity and cultural representation.

The examination of performing folk texts of Daṅaurā Thārus underlines the most important facets like cultural representation and memory, identity, spatiality, communicative action and power of subjugated knowledge in folk life. The insistence on ritual performance and ethnicity, however, seems in a remarkably distinctive in the sense that folkloristic texts and performing arts are their core cultural and ritual values that are embedded in the folk knowledge of the ethnic folk group. It is pertinent to map out the folk texts that embodies the thematic and conceptual structures and attributes. A comprehensive examination of these folk literary texts and performing arts interprets the multiple sites of performance, ethnicity and spatiality. These components of the folk texts encompass the borderlines of the ethnic implication to explore the objectives and hypothesis of the study.

Actually, the study has examined the dynamic aspects of folk life through the folk performances of folk texts. Despite the mobility of modern life, Thāru youths need to hold on their traditional /*pāramparik* identity of performing folk texts because they have the dynamism in the continuity of folk song, dance, dress and musical instruments for the enhancement of local narratives of cultural memory. Similarly, the research has focused to study the minor ethnic group, its local narratives of power-relationship and identity formation through the performance of *Rāmbihagrā*, *Barkimār* and *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*. Consequently, overall study may contribute in the scholarship of Cultural Studies, Nepal Studies and Folkloristic Studies in Nepali academia.

The performing art of Thāru *Mahābhārata* shows the rhetoric of different episodes from the five Pandava brothers in the folkloristic way. On the one hand, the study has analyzed the cultural performance of *Barkimār* during the festival of *Dasyā*, which underscores their social

relationship, ethnic power and solidarity in the local level. On the other, the examination also highlights how the performers and performing objects in the *Barkā Nāc* have the socio-semiotic implication of *Barkimār*. Similarly, the spatial performance of Rama story and creation myth also has emphasized the reflection of Thāru culture through the performances of their folk songs and dances like *chokrā*, *jhumrā* and *hurḍīnyā*. In doing so, it has also discussed the communitas and power-relationship of ritualization through the ritual performance of creation myth on the occasion of their *Gurai pujā*.

The modern ways of life and traditional knowledge based folk texts are very challenging. Relying on the issue of modernity and traditional knowledge, the study has attempted to analyze the prospective of preservation and promotion of these folk texts because it is an essential for their ethnic and cultural identity as well as for safeguarding the cultural and national heritage of the state. Examining the socio-historical steps of many modern challenges, the study has put emphasis on the need of safeguarding the traditional ethnic organizations like *Maṭavā / Barghar* and *Gurvā* system in the days to come for the promotion and preservation of Thāru folk texts and performing arts. Underlining the cultural policy and strategy of national and international context, the examination has also discussed several potentials of promotion and preservation. For instances, audio-visual collection of folk texts and performing arts, digitalization, virtualization, professionalism in folk performance and inclusion of folkloristic course study from school level are possible ways of safeguarding the folk texts and performing arts in the present-day and days to come of modern life.

Primary Concern and Outcome

As a result of examining the selected folk texts, this dissertation comes to the conclusion with the following five primary concerns and outcomes of the study: wide-ranging performing

style of folk narratives, performing context, spatiality, cultural reflection, and safeguarding the primordial ethnicity and power-relationship of subjugated knowledge. First, the performing style of these folk narratives are the folk songs, dances (i.e. *Barkā Nāc*, *Jhumrā*, *Chokrā*, *Hurḍīnyā*) and recitation of the mantra, but these folk texts are the folk versions of *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyana* and creation myth respectively. Apparently, these narratives have the unique differences from the classical content of the Sanskrit epics despite certain basic similarities of the story-content. The classical ideas, issues and patterns are subverted when we enter into the embedded meaning of the folk texts. Second, ritual performance reveals that these folk texts are performed during the particular festivals, ceremonies and socio-cultural events. Indeed, the folk performers are controlled by the particular ritual rules and customs and they also cannot go against the cultural and ritual rules of the *communitas*. As a consequence, their performing contexts are their opportunity for rejuvenating the folk knowledge and properties to construct their cultural identity.

Third, performance of the spatiality unveils the locality of Thārus, which is culturally significant from the perspective of national and cultural heritage. On the one hand, their space is a center of the aesthetic pleasure and social ritual in the ethnic and caste mosaic country of Nepal. In other words, their cultural space is rich in the performance of folk texts and folk knowledge. On the other, performing space is an essential matter in their communicative action, which gives emphasis to revive the past memories of the ethnic group and folk knowledge. Besides, the ethnic spatiality embodies the cultural values and shared identity of particular community as their particular open spaces like the *agnā* (courtyard) of *Maṭavā* and *gharḍhuriyā* as well as *khenvā* (threshing floor) of the villagers are recognized for their communicative, sharing and transmission of the folk knowledge. For them, space as their folkloristic way of

experience and knowledge because they are experiencing, continuing and transmitting the significant category of folk knowledges. In other words, “places are emerging or becoming; with historical and cultural change new elements are added and old elements disappear” (Relph 5). Therefore, spatiality of Tharus unfolds the dynamic aspect that underscores their folkloristic activities and meanings. In other words, space of Tharus can be understood from the dialectic approach as it shows the contact zone of tradition and modern in the present time and days to come.

Fourth, performance of the folk texts and folklore reflects the ordinary nature of peasantry way of life. Such reflection is the thematic side of the cultural identity and representation as performances of these folk texts form the mirror image of the Thāru culture. Therefore, the matrix of cultural identity shows the following five interrelated process of the social meanings within the circulation of performances in their community: production, consumption, regulation, representation and identity. However, overall reflection of ethnic culture and tradition through the performances of folk texts underlines how the peasantry of Tharus experience and communicate themselves, the world where they live, what they speak and wear, how they know themselves and how they deal with other people. Consequently, multidimensional aspects of folkloristic way –such as, speech, costume, jewelry, food item and musical tone— are also revealed in the procedure of ritual and cultural performances.

Finally, the safeguarding of subjugated knowledge of the folk narratives enhances the cultural identity and value of the ethnicity as well as the major concern of the national and cultural heritage of the state. Ultimately, these folk texts are the cultural production of the primordial ethnicity rather than the modern approach of ethnicity. Actually, such representation of ethnicity is ancestral, familial and hereditary property of the Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. Thus,

safeguarding such folk texts underlines the cultural memory of past events, traditional knowledge and ancestral properties for the present life and upcoming days. Besides, the promotion and preservation of the folk texts and performing arts also promises to unite the people as they feel fellow feeling, homogeneity and togetherness when they perform on the occasion of particular socio-cultural contexts. Likewise, a regular, routinized and habitual enactment of these folk texts and arts also reinforces the power relationship of *communitas*. Thus, overall research concludes that cultural performances of *Ḍaṅaurā Thāru* folk texts give emphasis to the power-relationship of local narratives in the process of *Thāru* identity formation in the ethnic and caste mosaic country of Nepal.

Suggestions for Way Forward

Regarding the potential involvements of stakeholders and academic inquiry in the days to come, the study has tried to point out certain suggestions in relation to the recommendation for policy making level. First and fundamental suggestion is that modern way of life has shifted the traditional folk texts and performing art in the position of fragile condition in the spatiality of *Thārus*. So the pillars of traditional ethnic organizations like *Maṭavā / Barghar* and *Gurvā* system should be preserved and promoted. Moreover, the policy and strategy of federal to local governments as well as various cultural organizations should give emphasis for preserving and promoting those systems. The stakeholders should be attentive to uphold the folklore and performing arts based on primordial ethnicity in the wave of modernity.

The folk culture of ethnic minority group of Nepal should be used in the process of modern national building. So those folk knowledge, texts, performing arts and culture are needed in the modern time for the promotion of national and cultural heritage of the country. On the one hand, the stakeholders can promote these folk cultures and knowledge with the purpose of

cultural tourism. So professional performers of folk texts and performing arts should be preserved and promoted. On the other, stakeholders should underscore on archiving and publicity of the audio-visual on the performing arts and oral texts. Moreover, the collection, virtualization and digitalization of these folk texts and performing arts are required to catch the global economy flow in the forthcoming years. Similarly, inclusion of folkloristic course study from school level according to the enrollment of majority of ethnic students' in the local educational institutions may reinforce the transmitting process of those folk knowledge from one generation to another.

Another significant argument, more effective system is needed to fascinate the national and international researchers in the galaxy of folklore and traditional culture of the country in general and the ethnic community of Thārus in particular. NCP 2010, issued by Ministry of Culture and Tourism, has mentioned the need of establishing ICH and FA to safeguard and promote the diverse ethnic, caste and regional communities of Nepal. Under the umbrella act of Traditional Culture and Folklore, the implementation of establishing ICH and FA is required as soon as possible.

Research Prospect for Future

With the extensive concern of performance of ethnicity and spatiality of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thārus in the folk texts, there are potential issues for further research. Due to the methodological perspective, limited time and scope of research, encompassing all observations and collecting many audio-visuals, interviews and many other folk texts was not possible. As the research has attempted to introduce and classify the multiple genres of Ḍaᅅgaurā Thāru folk literary texts in the chapter one, the research can be also chosen to underscore on the rest of the selected folk texts in the light of performance, ritual, cultural, spatial and folkloristic criticism. In the same

way, exploration can lead to the studies of broad perspective of safeguarding the folklore and tradition of overall ethnic, caste and regional communities of Nepal as the study has tried to examine the challenges and possibilities of preserving and promoting the Thāru folk texts and performing arts in the chapter five. Relying on the findings and analytical chapters, the study offers the following prospects for future research in the specific area and topics of Ḍaṅgaurā Thāru folk texts as well: Comparative Study of Classical and Thāru *Mahābhārata*, Comparative Study of Classical and Thāru *Rāmāyana*, Cultural Representation in the Thāru Creation Myth, Mythological Representation in the Thāru Folk Texts, Cultural Representation in the Thāru Folk Songs and Dances, Performing Folk Arts in the Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus, and Folk Festivals and Performing Vernacular Arts in the Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus.

Appendix-I: Interviews with Four Persons¹⁴

A: Interview with Govinda Acharya (PhD) (Folklore Expert)

Q.I. You through your academic career have contributed in the area of Thāru folk ritual, culture and performing art. What type of cultural variations did you find in Thāru community?

Answer: Thārus have different communities and, therefore, we can see variation in cultural, language and origin according to their living space. My study is focused on overall folk cultural life of Eastern, Chitoniya, Daṅgaurā, Deukhuriya and Rānā Thārus. So I found their differences on their performing folk art, ritual, tradition, language and dress as well as performance of socio-religious recitation. In my view, Eastern Thārus are influenced by Maithili culture and Chitoniya Thārus by Bhojpuri culture. In the same way, Western Thārus have the impact of Awadhi language and culture. In the case of Daṅgaurā and Rānā Thārus, they have comparatively their own originality and creativity.

Q.II. Do you see any obstacle caused by political, social events or any other event in performing Thāru folk culture, tradition and performing art?

Answer: Different socio-culture and political occurrences created a gap between insiders and outsiders. They not only caused interruption in performing of Thārus folklore, but also disturbed to overall tradition of Nepali folk culture and performing art. Those events may be related to social, political, natural etc. In case of Thārus performing folk ritual, art and literature, the political and natural events are mainly responsible for creating obstacles in performing folk culture and arts. Indeed, ten years' insurgency became the dark period in the performance of

¹⁴ Interviews with Govinda Acharya and Ashok Thāru were taken through facebook messenger and phone call due to the first wave of pandemic Corona Virus in April-May 2020. I had face to face talk with Chandra Prasad Chaudhari and Bejhlal Chaudhari during my field study in October-November 2019. All interviews were taken in Nepali and I have translated them in English. Moreover, I have also quoted their opinions from English translated version in core analysis section of my dissertation.

Thāru folk culture and performing art. Especially the performing folk materials in the period of night time could not be practiced regularly and they were almost stopped due to horror and frightening situation in the rural area. Consequently, most of Thāru folk performers forgot their folk art of night time based songs and dances. In the same way, the earthquake also disturbed in the performance of folk text on particular time. Moreover, the present time of widely spreading terror of Corona Virus has also caused disturbance in performing their folk culture and performing arts.

Q.III. What type of impact do you see in the continuity of performing folk culture and art of Thārus that is created by the modern education system, foreign employee or overall non-agricultural professions as well as migration? Do you find any hindrance in transferring such folk knowledge from old generation to new one in Thāru community?

Answer: Generally, cultural attitude and lifestyle in modern time has become a major barrier for the traditional folk culture. When the social life style is changed, obviously the folk culture and art of the concerned society is also affected. For the purpose of their cultural value and identity, education would not be a hurdle on folk culture and tradition. But new education system ignored the tradition based cultural value of the ethnic, caste and regional communities. Consequently, overall modern society is becoming chaotic and disordered. Moreover, overall environment of nature is ruining day by day. When population is increased, the entry in different professions and employments of young people is compulsion and it is natural as well. With the entering in new professions, the tradition based cultural faith is also decreasing. It is apparently the pessimistic aspect for the folk culture and tradition. At this point, the responsibility goes to the state and its educational environment. Most of Thārus folk rituals, cultures and arts are based on the agricultural background and agro-occupation. When a large number of young Thārus accept non-

agricultural professions, few of them have the opportunity of knowledge of their folk cultural life style in the rural area. If we aware them about their value based on their folk culture and performing arts, they are naturally attracted towards traditional human values. That's why, Nepali immigrants celebrate festivals with the tempo of singing and dancing rather than those living in the native place.

Q.IV. We find various folk epic based materials (such as, *Sakhyā*, *Rāmbihagrā*, *Phulvār*, *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* and *Barkimār*) in Thāru folk life. These folk epics based singing and dancing materials are lengthy. Accordingly, these take long time and become difficult to transmit them to new generation in a short time and it is more difficult to practice. What do you think to preserve such folk knowledge based materials in near future?

Answer: Whatever we see and collect oral tradition based (present days') living materials of ethnic folk culture are not complete and original text. In other words, the contents of such folk texts are like grandmother's knitting scarf from the wool every year. So the folk epics of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus such as, *Sakhyā*, *Rāmbihagrā*, *Phulvār*, *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* and *Barkimār* are varied in different spaces and persons though the subject matter of the folk texts is the same. Comparatively, it seems difficult to protect the oral tradition based long folk texts; however, short and small songs can be learnt and taught. Therefore, it is necessary to collect and publish folk texts for teaching the cultural values to new generation of Thāru community. If we emphasize in this way, the young individuals of Thāru community can perform and continue the folk tradition. Cultural renaissance is necessary for new generation in Thāru community.

Q.V. Different facets of Thāru traditional folk culture, their dress, jewelry and musical instrument are not available and missing day by day. How can the performing arts of Thārus without these things be possible?

Answer: Of course, this is a bitter reality of overall condition of traditional folklore. Not only the folk epics and songs, but various aspects of Thāru traditional folk culture such as, dresses, jewelries and musical instruments are also disappearing day by day in their community. Absence of these things obviously makes their performing arts less interesting and tasteless. Such enactment will be like a flower without smelling and the moon in the sky without moonlight. Therefore, we should focus on preserving Thāru performing arts with their folk dress, jewelry and musical instruments.

Q.VI. How do you evaluate the policy of the state and its various bodies in the case of preservation and promotion of Thāru traditional folk culture and performing arts? Is the policy effective? Is improvement necessary? If so, which aspect is needed to be improved?

Answer: The Government of Nepal is the signatory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Convention 2003 with the purpose to preserve and promote for the tangible and intangible culture in Nepal. In the same way, the Ministry of Culture, Government of Nepal has approved National Cultural Policy (NCP) 2010 for the preservation and promotion of such culture. Real problem real lies in the perspective of political leaders, who are in the position of policy making of the government and political parties as they have no analytical viewpoints to implement such policy effectively. The provincial and local governments are trying to promote Thāru folk culture and performing arts in the name of tourism promotion. Their programs are not adequately planned, organized, regular and effective for the implementation of state policy. Metropolitan and sub-metropolitans of local governments have managed Tourism and Cultural Promotion Department (TCPD), but both municipality and village municipality have no such body. So my focus is that municipality and village municipality do not have such bodies for the promotion of

traditional folk culture of ethnic, caste and regional community. In the same way, such body should be extended to the ward level of every local government.

Q.VII. What is the role of traditional Thāru *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* system or Thāru Welfare Society (TWS)? Do you see their role in preserving and promoting Thāru folk culture and performing art? In the same way, what kind of activity has NGOs/INGOs and political parties play in this context?

Answer: These days, *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* system has been almost functionless as various organizations of political parties are extended to Thāru villages. Due to their political influences, traditional Thāru cultures and practices are waning day by day. It is their weakness and lack of cultural consciousness from the perspective of traditional culture. TWS is a common forum of Thāru community. But there is no guarantee that its leadership becomes visionary and fortunate to reinforce their culture. Due to the lack of resources, budget and infrastructure, its role has been limited to coordination of cultural programs during festivals and cultural events. Ethnicity based common forums and organizations are more or less influenced by politicization like the educational, health and justice sectors of the country. Therefore, it has become a negligent and minor issue for them to enhance and strengthen tradition based Thāru folk culture and performing arts. NGOs/INGOs are not active whereas political parties have no concern in protecting Thāru folk cultures.

Q.VIII. If the course-curriculum and teaching-learning of traditional folk culture for Thāru students from school level is started to transmit and preserve the traditional folk culture and art, what will be the outcome? Do you see such effort made by somebody, anywhere?

Answer: Exactly. If somebody attempts to do so, it would be fruitful to preserve and uphold their folk culture. For this thing, the state should include the curriculum of traditional culture from

school level. To involve such curriculum, there needs plenty of research and study in the area of folk life, traditional folk culture and art. At first, the state must realize that ethnic culture and arts are reservoir of our knowledge in the society. Nepal Academy (NA) and different non-government organizations (NGOs) have engaged in the research and study of traditional culture. Nepal Music Center (NMC) Kathmandu is one of them as it is continuing to enhance the investigation and inquiry of ethnic music since last decade. Moreover, NMC has included the course curriculum of ethnic music and started to teach the students from nine to twelve classes. But the government is not sincere to support on such procedure. If the government is interested, it can incorporate the folklore study courses in school curriculum according to ethnic and language majority based students in the classroom.

IX. Can the documentary of folk literature, performing culture and art—which are still in the tradition of *sruti-smriti* in *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* system their community—support to preserve and uphold them? Do you see such activity of documentation?

Answer: It is impossible to revive all substantial materials of folk literature and arts from the perspective of traditional aspect. Moreover, all materials cannot be used in the changing context. But significant materials must be documented through documentary, books, or any medium (audio-visual). So the next generation can learn from these documented materials. Such activities have been initiated by the government and NGOs as well as personal level. I see it needs further work.

X. Finally, do you have any further suggestion to encourage and preserve the folk knowledge, culture and traditional art?

Answer: Thank you very much! At first, the policy of state should be positive in the pragmatic level to promote and preserve the folk knowledge and traditional culture. This is also related with

nation and ethnic identity and, therefore, there should not be politicization in the area of folklore. In the same way, concerned ethnic community must be sincere to preserve their own ethnic culture. Moreover, the state should include the curriculum of folk knowledge in school and university level. Besides, any foreign aid of the state should not be acceptable in the condition of foreign interference on our original and primitive folk culture.

B: Interview with Ashok Thāru (Thāru folklorist and linguist)

Q.I. You are born, nurtured and spent the professional life of teaching in Thāru community. In the same way, you are devoted in the research of Thāru folk life and have also guided different national and international researchers of various universities in Thāru villages. At this backdrop, you spent at least six decades with the proximity in Thāru folk life and its traditional culture. What type of variations do you see in folk lifestyle and culture of Ḍaṅaurā Thārus since your childhood to the present life?

Answer: As a Thāru young boy, I enjoyed to play tom-tom of *Sakhyā-paiyā* from ten to fifteen years. At that time, three to four persons of nearly fifty years' males had the extra-ordinary talent of playing the musical instrument of tom-toms. When such trained tom-tom players—who had worn white shirt and *marḍānā dhoti*—came out and walked on the street, the villagers looked at them very curiously. Ten to twelve young intimates and tom-tom players began to play. Meanwhile, the group of *baṭhaniyā* also jointly danced. Children, young, old males and females all congregated to watch their performing art. The competition was held among the performers. All performers were interested to share their knowledge of performance each-other. Young females made the *ṭāni* and gave it as the prize for their lovers. All these traditions have disappeared and such things have become like a folk tale at present.

To dance *Gurvā* during the recitation period of *Hāryā Gurai*, they used dried cow and buffalo-dung (*guiṭhā*) to set the fire. *Gurvā* performed his own dance in the bizarre way. It was called fire-dance (*agni-nritya*), but these-days such dances are performed only for formality. During the *Ḍasyā* time, there used to be a gathering of people to be taught by *Gurvā*. I tried to be a *Gurvā* and became successful in third attempt. *Gurvā* could sing orally *pacarā* (mantra). But now it has become rare singing of those oral texts based mantras. Most of the young persons are not interested to be a *Gurvā*. Last year, a *Gurvā* came to my home to bring the written text of *pacarā* for teaching to young persons who wanted to be the *Gurvā*. It is such fragile condition of *Gurvā* system in Thāru village.

In the same way, *Barkimār* was sung and the competition was held among the singers during the rainy season of paddy plantation. We could see the *dohori* of *mainā* and *sajanā* songs among the performers. It has become very difficult to find such folk singers. Moreover, young newly-married couple prepared themselves *ḍelvā*, *ḍhakyā*, *ḍhakli* and *panchopni*. I don't find any female to prepare these folk handicrafts in our village. The tradition of bringing these handicrafts in one's-in-law (*sasurāli*) has been vanished. Newly-married couple went to *sasurāli* for receiving the *ṭikā* and *jiurā* as well as blessing of their senior guardian. They also brought *khaṭauli* and *gundri*. But nowadays they use to bring plastic mat and chair. Besides, the people used to gather to select *Maṭavā*, but it is vanishing day by day. Non-Thāru people are also becoming *Maṭavā* in some villages. In the same way, *Holi/Hori* festival was celebrated for at least three days. We used various colors and local bamboo syringe. I don't find such pleasure of bygone days' childhood and young-age in present time. Only memories are there in my mind of those events.

Q.II. What are the reasons for decadence in traditional folk life?

Answer: There is common fact that every culture is changeable according to time-moving. But people should be concerned to both changing and protecting aspects of the ethnic culture. Indeed, improving on the faith of *sanātan* dharma according to time-changing is substantial facet, but the people should be aware of continuing the ethnic value and identity. If there is not a coordination of cultural element with the financial profits, obviously the traditional folk technology, skill and knowledge of ethnic community will be vanished. In the same way, the inferior mentality of Thāruism is also significant reason for the decadence of Thārus traditional culture.

Q.III. Do you see any obstacle created by political, social event or any event to perform their folk culture, tradition and art? Which period do you find the most troublesome to perform folk texts?

Answer: During the last four decades, I find the unique type of mentality changes in the cultural elements of Thāru community. Within thirteen years (1973-2003), I find several hindrances to perform those folk texts of Thārus. First, their inferior mentality of ethnicity and hesitation played a notable role as they did not feel the proud on their cultural performance and continuity. Second, some Thārus thought that their folk tradition and knowledge is output of Hinduism and also tried to leave their ritual and practice. Likewise, Thāru tradition was also blamed as Hinduization and it was tried to prohibit for performing their traditional culture during the Maoist insurgency period. Third, Thārus got involved in formal education and it became problematic to continue the ritual and custom. Due to such influences, the common song and dance of *Sakhyā-paiyā* in Thāru villages is not performed in these days.

Q.IV. Do you think modern education, foreign employment, fascination of agricultural to commercial livelihood of new generation as well as migration of Thārus are some of the reasons that hindered to transmit the knowledge of traditional culture and performing arts in their community?

Answer: Surely, the extension of educational development and new employments has influenced more or less the young males and females of Thārus in the village. We do not see remarkable individuals from young master and diploma degree holders are trying to make their identity and career through performing arts. In the same way, we also do not find so notable personality among them who got involvement to make the identity and career through traditional culture, performing arts and drawing arts.

Q.V. We find majority of folk epics based materials (such as, *Sakhyā*, *Rāmbihagrā*, *Phulvār*, *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* and *Barkimār*) in Thāru folk life. These folk epics based singing and dancing materials take long time and become difficult to transmit new generation in a short time and practice. What do you think about preserving such folk knowledge based materials in near future?

Answer: It is not impossible to entice Thāru young males and females if we teach them the embedded cultural elements and values from these ballads of Thāru community. But such manpower has not been yet ready to carry on the performing such their folk arts. No doubt that it needs to transmit the diverse knowledges of Thāru folk arts to old generation to new one. There is a need to make environment them of participating in national competition. Some steps have been taken by different stakeholders as well. The government has awarded national award to eight young individual Thārus from Dang, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur since 2013 to 2020. The *chokrā* dance based performing folk arts from the villages of Sisahanyā Dang and Mahadevā Deukhuri had been performed in different national and international programs. The exhibition of *Aṣṭimki* art was also held in several national and international programs. For the marketization of Thāru handicrafts, the grant has also been given to Thāru males and females to encourage for the participation in SAARC level commerce festival. These are some of the examples to promote

the young generation for their participation to receive the knowledge from old generation. It is a bitter reality that such manpower has not been yet prepared to continue the performing of such folk arts.

Q.VI. Different facets of Thāru traditional folk culture such as, dress, jewelry and musical instrument are also vanishing day by day. How will be the performing arts without these items?

Answer: The unavailability of such folk materials is that Thārus have not linked these things with financial income. I see a little bit attraction among Thārus to preserve and promote their folk dress, jewelry and musical instrument. It is necessary to promote traders for producing such cultural materials of Thārus. The beauty of performing arts without the use of these cultural materials will be dull, less interesting.

Q.VII. How do you evaluate the policy of state and its various bodies in the case of preservation and promotion of Thāru folk culture and performing arts? Are these policies effective? Do you think some improvements required? If so, which aspect is needed to be improved?

Answer: Three bodies of government (federal, provincial and local) should incorporate the policy of promoting the substantial types of folk cultural elements. For this thing, the commitment, adequate budget allocation and grant facility for participating in national and international marketization should be provisioned in their policy guidelines. In the same way, skill development training should be held by using their various mechanisms of the government to uphold the quality based prosperity in the rural cultural production. Three layers of government can learn from the neighboring country China as Chinese government has underlined the skill development training in the rural area for the promotion of rural cultural production. Indeed, three layers of governments should appreciate the cultural materials of diverse ethnic communities as they are essential properties and basic pillars of the country.

Q. VIII What role of the traditional Thāru *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* system or TWS do you see to preserve and promote Thāru folk culture and performing art? In the same way, what kind of activity NGOs/INGOs and political parties have been doing?

Answer: The role of such traditional system and association is not so effective according to our expectation at present time. The political association was prohibited in Panchayat era of king's active rule. But the king had allowed establishing TWS for the promotion of cultural and ethnic value of Thārus. The NGOs are more active than TWS in our time to promote the Thāru cultural sector, but still their programs and policies are not satisfactory. Handicraft Association (HA) Dang was established in 2013 and it is actively working to reinforce the diverse elements of cultural sectors. To promote the rural Thāru handicrafts, it has presented proposal letter and policy to different layers of government. Its budget is limited, but it has tried to encourage *Aṣṭimki* folk art, wood art, dress preparing training, *tāñi* construction art etc. for transmitting the knowledge of traditional art to new generation from old people. It has also promoted the folk artists to participate national and international competitions. The eight folk artists of Thāru communities from Dang, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur are nationally awarded by various layers of governments within six years (2013-2020). The folk performers of Sisahanyā, Kapradevi and Mahadevā villages of Dang-Deukhuri have performed their *chokrā* and *jhumrā* dances. Among different branches of Thāru Welfare Society, Deukhuri branch is playing more active role to transmit the knowledge in preparing traditional Thāru dresses.

Q.IX. If the course curriculum is framed for teaching-learning of traditional folk culture for Thāru students from school level, what will be the outcome? Do you see such effort made by somebody, anywhere?

Answer: The inclusion of traditional culture and performing arts in the curriculum of school level and promotion of Thāru students in teaching-learning method can be fulfilled by using educational right of local government body. Nobody has still adopted such policy. To implement the teaching-learning in mother tongue and use of Thāru language in official activities, Thāru people and their representatives are not so sincere. If the stakeholders will become active to implement, surely such provision will be fruitful.

Q.X. Can the documentary of folk literature, performing culture and art—which are still in the tradition of *sruti-smriti* in *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* system their community—support to preserve and uphold them?

Answer: The enhancement of visual documentary archive for the preservation and promotion of traditional culture and performing art is a successful method in various countries in the worldwide. So it is possible to use them for making the process effective in strengthening traditional based folk culture and performing arts of Thārus in Nepal.

Q.XI. Finally, do you have any further suggestion to encourage and preserve the folk knowledge, culture and traditional art of Thāru community?

Answer: Thanks. If a strong and committed network is made, the extension and the use of documentary archive will be fruitful to promote the folk culture and performing arts of Thārus.

C: Interview with Chandra Prasad Chaudhari (*Maṭavā* and *Mohryā* of *Barkā Nāc*)

Q.I. You are well-known as *Maṭavā* and *Mohryā* of *Barkā Nāc* in Dang-Deukhuri. What is *Barkā Nāc*?

Answer: Thāru *Mahābhārata* is known as *Barkimār* in our community. When the collected songs of *Barkimār* are performed in the form of big dance in our community is known as *Barkā Barkā Nāc*. In Thāru language, the word ‘*Barkā*’ means big and ‘*Barkā Nāc*’ refers to dance. So it is a

big dance in the sense that it needs almost forty folk performers and they collectively perform their performing arts. Moreover, its story is based on the war between Pandavas and Kauravas in the Kurukshetra of war. Accordingly, various symbolic characters like five Pandavas, Draupadi, Kauravas, Dronacharya, Bhishma Pitāmaha etc. are involved in performance. Therefore, overall *Barkā Nāc* is our cultural dances of Pandavas, the five brothers having the divine power to overcome the injustice of Kauravas.

Q.II. When did you learn this folk skill of performing *Barkā Nāc*?

Answer: Late my father Ruplal Thāru led this folk dance from 1922 to 1970. When he died in 1971, since then *Barkā Nāc* was not performed until 1993. American two persons, Kurt Mayer and Pamela Deuel, came to my home in 1993 and they encouraged me to revive this tradition of folk dance. Then, I turned collection of manuscripts of my father as it was written by bamboo pen in the parchment. I started to read. I found the rules of performance and collected songs in twelve *paidhār* (chapters) of *Mahābhārata* story. I practiced with villagers to sing the songs and played various rhythms and beats of tom-toms.

Q.III. What did you attempt to continue its tradition of performance in your life?

Answer: At first, my learning credit goes to Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel as they motivated me to revive what was forgotten after the death of my father. I felt little bit confusion to begin, but Meyer and Deuel inspired me to revive the historical and cultural status of my father. Most of the villagers were afraid of performing this dance as they called it was '*bhuṭāhā nāc*' (ghost dance). So I was in confused to revive in the beginning. But I took the risky game of leading the performance of the ghosts' dance. It was practiced and performed in 1993 after almost twenty five years. I held meeting of *Gurvās* from various villages and they also approved and suggested me to revive its folk tradition and culture. *Gurvās* bolstered me for worshipping and performing

rituality to our local deities. In the same way, I took the support of various folk performers from my own village. Without the backing of *Gurvās* and other performers, it was impossible to continue. The finance support of Meyer and Pamela facilitated us to manage the dresses, musical instruments, jewelries, animal sacrifices and other materials. After the performance in 1998, I took the support of different villages, NGOs/INGOs, local governments and so on.

I led this dance to various socio-cultural ceremonies in my life. Dangisharan Celebration (2006), Tharuhat Movement (2014), Narharinath Religious Program of Ratannath Temple Dang (2005), Dang Cultural Festival (2006) and *Barkā Nāc* Celebration in Samṭhena Dang (2014) were the prominent programs for the performance of *Barkā Nāc*. In the same way, *Barkā Nāc* Documentary Preparation, held by Thāru Welfare Society Dang in 2019, and other cultural events were also significant programs for its performance.

Q.IV. How do you select the characters when you go to perform the dance?

Answer: This folk dance includes various village members of our community. Five persons are Arjun and they have the role of signing the song of *Barkimār*. Five persons are Ḍharma Juḍhiṣṭhil (Yudhiṣṭhir) and they wear *jāmā*. The cultural dress of *jāmā* indicates the uniform of the king. Six persons are Bhevān (Bhim) and they bring the wooden-hammer in their hands as it indicates the weapon of mace used by Bhim in the Kurukshetra war. They also perform the *muṅgrā* (hammer) dance. Five females are Draupadi and they wear the *lehangā*, *meṭaki* and the feathers of peacock to show their dance. Five males are Sahiḍeva Paṇḍit (Sahadeva) and they wear dhoti, shirt and half coat to show their dance. Three to five males are Nakurān (Nakul) and they wear shirt, dhoti and half coat to play the tom-toms in the performance.

Similarly, Dornācārya and Bhisma Pitāmaha are two unique characters and they play the role of *Desbandhyā* and *Kesaukā Gurvā* in the ritual performance of *Barkā Nāc*. Another unique

character is Svāñe who wears the *khapparā* (skull) in his head and bamboo-penis in the organ of pelvic cavity. His penis refers to Shiva-*linga* and *khapparā* symbolizes the Krishna. So Svāñe is the representative of both Mahadev and Krishna. His role is to make a performing space peace and wider from the crowd of the audience. The performers and audience are spiritually combated by him as the evil-spirits, witches and ghosts can attack them in the invisible way while performing the dance. The *Maṭavā* is a headman of whole dance and he leads from the beginning to ending of this ritual dance. Another important character is *Maṭinyā*, a wife of *Maṭavā*. She worships the *Shiva-linga* of Svāñe and sets light the *akhandā-jot* (unceasing light) in the performing space. In this way, many characters play different roles in the ritual dance of *Barkā Nāc*.

Q.V. Which is the suitable time and occasion (performing context) for the performance?

Answer: According to our tradition, *Barkā Nāc* begins on the occasion of *Ḍasyā* festival. If it becomes impossible to commence during this festival, it can be started in December and January months as well. It can be performed between *Hāryā Gurai* (July/ August) to *Ḍhuryā Gurai* (May/June). Before the *Ḍhuryā Gurai*, its dance must be ritually ended. When *Ḍhuryā Gurai* is held, the musical instruments are not allowed to play and, therefore, it is not possible to perform afterwards. So *Hāryā Gurai* must be performed to open the musical instruments.

Barkā Nāc is comparatively expensive dance and, therefore, it becomes difficult to perform every year. So our forefathers had made to perform in every five years. The provision of performing this dance in every five years is called *Paṭṭi phernā* in our Thāru language. When it is inaugurated, there must be ritually ended before *Ḍhuryā Gurai*. It can be danced four-five days to seven-eight months traveling in various villages.

Q.VI. How and where do you select the performing space?

Answer: The space where common deities of Thārus are placed in our village is called *bhuinyārṭhān*. Placing of Thāru deities in the village shows that *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* system is running. If *Maṭavā* and *Gurvā* system has been running in any Thāru village, it becomes easy to perform the traditional rituals and customs of Thārus. By tradition, *Barkā Nāc* is related to deity dance of five Pāndavas. So our folk belief is that the deity space like *bhuinyārṭhān* can only save the folk performers to perform the dance. Having every *bhuinyārṭhān* village of Thārus is religiously and spiritually protected to perform the dance. If the non-Thāru people invite to perform the dance, Hindu temple protected area can be chosen to perform. Before the abolition of Ratannath Guthi, we had to perform this dance at the courtyard of Ratannath Temple Chaugherā as we (Thārus) from Jalaurā and Narayanpur were using the land property of Ratannath Temple. Moreover, the courtyard (*agnā*) of *Maṭavā*, threshing floor (*khenvā*) and open space of the village can be chosen for performance and dance.

Q.VII. What are the semiotic aspects you erect in the performing space of folk theater?

Answer: As I have already said, the performers of this dance represent different characters from the story of *Mahābhārata* like Arjun, Yudhisṭhir, Bhīma, Draupadi, Sahadeva, Nakul, Dornacarya, Bhishma Pitāmaha and so on. In addition, there are erected bamboo poles (*tārbān*) in the performing space as they represent different semiotic aspects. First and the longest pole is Hinautā pole that has red color and also has black yak-tale in its peak. Second pole is Yudhisṭhir pole and it has white color and white yak-tale in the peak. Third pole is Duryodhan pole and it has black yak-tale. Moreover, fourth pole is King Vairāṭ and it has white cover of cloth and black yak-tale in its peak. Final pole is Draupadi pole and it has red color and brass-water pot in its peak. In this way, these five wooden poles have different significance of *Mahābhārata* story. Besides, the *rāu* bird represents the hitting target of the competitors for getting wife, Draupadi at

her *swayamvara* ceremony in the kingdom of Panchala. According to our story of *Mahābhārata*, Bhīma became successful to target the *rāu* bird instead of Arjun.

Q.VIII. How do you perform ritual and worship while you are going to performance?

Answer: The ritual performance of *Barkā Nāc* is the highest level of religious and spiritual act in our community. It portrays our folk belief and religious faith. Where such ritual dance is performed, the fertile power of land is increased; the descendant's production of any couple is also fulfilled and peaceful atmosphere is created in the villages of Thārus. So *Gurvās* of various *pragannā* (traditional regions of Thārus) are gathered to perform such auspicious based religious performance. So the *Gurai pujā* is performed before the opening the dance.

Q.IX. What are the dresses, jewelries and musical instruments needed in the performance?

Answer: While performing the dance, different dresses the performers use. The dress of *jāmā* and *pagyā* (crown) is worn by the team of king Yudhiṣṭhir. The white shirts and pants are used by male characters. The group of Draupadi wears blouse, *colyā*, *lehangā* and various local jewelries like *ṭaryā*, *bijāiṭ*, *kaṅṭhali*, *kakari*, finger ring, *meṭaki*, *curyā*, *kaṅṭhālā*, *ghungnā*, *kaṅṭhi* and *sutyā*. The three to five *mandrā*, *majirā* and *jhāli* are used as the folk musical instruments.

Q.X. What types of challenges do you see in performing folk dance of *Barkā Nāc*?

Answer: It is not easy to perform the *Barkā Nāc* in these days. First, it is difficult to collect the materials of dresses, jewelries, musical instruments, bamboo poles, *rāu* birds and the like. The dresses, jewelries and musical instruments are expensive to buy in the markets. These materials are not available easily in our villages. Second, there is difficult to find trained folk performers such as, *Gurvā*, singers, drummers and dancers. The new generation is not ready to perform and memorize its couplets and content of *Barkimār*. Young Thārus are not living in the village to continue our tradition based agricultural occupation as they have involved in other professions.

The dance needs almost forty trained performers. In the same way, old people of Thārus have forgotten the couplets of *Barkā Nāc* due to the lack of regular practice and time age factor.

Among twenty two *khvāt*, less than dozen rhythms of tom-toms can be performed in our village of Jalaurā in present days as skilled *Maḍaryā* are decreasing and vanishing. Third, it is very difficult to organize this dance due to its rule of animal sacrifices and expense involves in buying eight pigs, three young goats, three she-goats, two ships and almost forty five chickens to offer various local deities. Thus, it has become very difficult to preserve this dance.

Q.XI. What will be the suitable method to transmit the knowledge of the performance to new generation in days to come?

Answer: I see problem within our community and new generation. Without curiosity of young Thārus, none can do anything to continue this dance. At first, they should be aware of to preserve their traditional culture. In the same way, the government should take steps for making them aware and invest money if needed to protect our culture.

Q.XII. Have you any further idea to promote and preserve the performance in coming days?

Answer: Thanks for my interview. My age is more than seventy years. I am losing my energy day by day. The researcher like you should have the responsibility to make alert to the new generation of Thārus and government of Nepal should give priority for the promotion of our traditional culture.

D: Interview with Bejhlal Chaudhari, *Mohryā* (head singer)

Q.I. You are a head-singer (*Mohryā*) of *Rāmbihagrā* in your village. In your opinion, what is *Rāmbihagrā*?

Answer: *Rāmbihagrā* is Thāru *Rāmāyana* and it is a story of Rama. It is sung and danced during the occasion of various festivals and cultural events. Its performing style is *chokrā* and *jhumrā* song and dance. Sometimes it also can be performed in the style of *hurḍīnyā* song and dance.

Q.II. When and how did you learn this folk epic in your life?

Answer: When I was fifteen to sixteen years old, I was so eager to sing the folk songs on the occasion of festivals and cultural events (marriage, birth, religious program etc.). My grandfather, Jit Bahadur Chaudhari, was very talented to sing various Thāru songs. I learnt many songs from him. My father, Karnalal Chaudhari, was also trained to sing and dance. Indeed, my family environment was encouraging for learning the singing and dancing in the age of my teenage. In such environment, I felt easy to sing comparatively long folk song *Rāmbihagrā*.

Q.III. How much time does it take to perform?

Answer: *Rāmbihagrā* is such type of performing material to sing that it can be performed during twenty four hours. It is performed according to time-duration of twenty four hours because it has been divided into following sections: *Samrauṭi* (opening song), *sanjhyā gainā* (evening song), *rāṭkaṭnā* (night song), *aḍharatyā* (mid-night song), *bhinsaryā* (early dawn song), *bihāniyā* (dawn song) and *ḍin-nachuvā* (day-time song). Even though the content is Rama story, but the rhythm and style of singing and dancing is changed according to time-duration.

Q.IV. How many performers are used to perform this text?

Answer: The *Mohryā* is a head singer as he leads the singing process of entire team of performers. Eight to fifteen singers are divided into two semi-circles. These singers are assistants of *Mohryā* and they repeat the lines whatever the head-singer sings. Two persons have unique role of playing the tom-tom and dancing in the style of *chokrā*, *hurḍīngyā* and *jhumrā* dance.

Q.V. What is the suitable performing context of *Rāmbihagrā*?

Answer: *Māghi*, *Holi*, *Gurai pujā*, *Aṣṭimki*, *Ḍasyā* and *Ḍevāri* are our prominent festivals. On the occasion of these festivals, the folk material of Rama story is relevant to perform in the style of *chokrā*, *hurḍiṅgyā* and *jhumrā* song and dance. In the same way, birth and marriage are also our noteworthy cultural events for its practice. The developmental process of rural constructions like well, road and path are auspicious for our villagers. When we complete such social works together, we need space to celebrate joy with dancing and singing. We assist any household in harvesting, paddy plantation and house construction if his/her family members are not sufficient to complete those works. After the completing of harvesting, paddy plantation and house construction, we use the materials of Rama story with singing and dancing for our joy.

Q.VI. Where is the performing space for *Rāmbihagrā* in Thāru life?

Answer: The performing space for *Rāmbihagrā* is courtyard of any *gharḍhuriyā* and *khenvā* (threshing floor/ open space) of village. For gathering and dancing of performers and audience, the wide courtyard, threshing floor and open spaces are appropriate space in our Thāru community.

Q.VII. What type of folk dances based on *Rāmbihagrā* can be performed?

Answer: Particularly, three styles of folk dances— *chokrā*, *hurḍiṅgyā* and *jhumrā* dance—can be performed based on the Ram story in our community.

Q.VIII. What type of dresses, jewelries, and musical instruments are used while performing it?

Answer: The male Thārus use to wear white caps, home-made waistcoats and loin cloth. In the same way, the female Thārus wear *colyā*, *ṭenihā*, *jhulavā*, *gaṭyā*, *kurṭā* and *lehangā*. Moreover, females also are decorated with our local ornaments like *curyā*, *ṭikuli*, *ṭaryā*, *gaṭaiyā*, *bankā*, *kansiri* and *mālā*. While performing dances, our folk musical instruments are significant as we use to play *manḍrā*, *kaṣṭār*, *manjirā*, *jhāli* and *basyā*.

Q.IX. What type of challenge do you see to perform *Rāmbihagrā* in present time?

Answer: At first, it is very sad that young people of our community are not adapting the traditional knowledge of performing *Rāmbihagrā*. The vanishing is not only in the case of *Rāmbihagrā*, but also other traditional long and short folk songs, such as, *Barkimār*, *Gurbābak*, *Jarmauṭi*, *Phulvār*, *Aṣṭimki* /*Sakhiyā*, *Māgar*, *Ḍhumru*, *Maghautā*, *Māḍo Sundari*, *Mainā* and *Sajanā*. I am more than sixty years old, but I can still orally sing all these songs, but the young males are not so interested to learn these songs. I was so interested to learn these songs and practiced a lot during our festivals and cultural events in my young age. Consequently, I became successful to learn from my grandfather and father. Young Thārus of my village are just interested in Nepali, Hindi and English film songs, but they do not pay attention to learn our cultural and traditional songs and dances. Second, all *gharḍhuriyā* of Thārus in our village used to be under the leadership of *Gurvā* and *Maṭavā* in the past days, but most of the households are not handled by *Gurvā* and *Maṭavā* system in present time. Due to the waning of dominant *Gurvā* and *Maṭavā* system, our traditional culture and custom is dying. So I suffer so much and cannot sleep some nights due to the disinterest of young Thārus about our identity, culture history and knowledge of forerunners.

Q.X. What will be the better solution to transmit the folk knowledge of *Rāmbihagrā* to new generation in Thāru community?

Answer: The cultural consciousness of young Thārus is necessary. Outsiders of the cultural group can only inspire and promote. If the young Thārus are not interested to practice the traditional songs and dances, how can the outsiders preserve our culture? Some of the non-Thāru people like you are interested to know our traditional songs, dances, *Gurai pujā*, art and other knowledge. So they come to know and consult with me, but young Thārus of our village do not

come to know. They do not pay attention to learn. Then, how can I transmit my traditional knowledge to them? So the major weakness is within our community as new generation is not under control of old people and their counseling. We have weakened our traditional culture by ourselves. Our community has been divided by the political parties. Politics is weakening our culture. When new generation will realize this fact, they will start to learn from old generation and our knowledge. Without cultural consciousness of new generation within our community, it is impossible to transmit the traditional songs and dances.

Q.XI. Have you any further opinion to promote this folk text in coming days?

Answer: Thanks. People like you from non-Thārus come to know about our traditional culture. I feel very happy that we are rich in our cultural songs. But I feel so sad that new Thārus have no idea about our rich traditional knowledge. So I request to the government of Nepal to focus on cultural consciousness among our Thārus to preserve and promote traditional song and dance like *Rāmbihagrā* in the coming days.

Appendix-II: Glossary

Most of the entries are from Daṅgaurā Thāru language and some from Sanskrit and Nepali. The meanings of all entries are given in English.

<i>Aḍharatya Giṭ/ Nāc</i>	Mid-night song/dance
<i>Agnā</i>	Courtyard
<i>Agni-nritya</i>	Fire-dance
<i>Āhān</i>	Idiomatic expression, adage, saying
<i>Akhaṇḍa-jot</i>	The lighting lamp that should not be wiped out during the ritual dance of <i>Barkā Nāc</i> according to its rule.
<i>Akṣatā</i>	Holy rice grain for ritual purpose
<i>Ammar- māṭi/ Ammarmāṭi</i>	Divine soil of underneath
<i>Aṣṭimki</i>	Generally known as Krishna Janmastami that falls according to lunar calendar on the eighth day of no moon fortnight in the month of Bhadra. People celebrate the birth of lord Krishna on this day. On the occasion of <i>Aṣṭimki</i> , Thāru females sing on Krishna life as <i>Aṣṭimki</i> song. Moreover, <i>Aṣṭimki</i> is also folk wall painting made on that day to worship god Krishna by Thāru females.
<i>Bāhra Paiḍhār</i>	Twelve chapters. Thāru <i>Mahābhārata</i> has twelve chapters known as <i>paiḍhār</i> whereas classical version has eighteen chapters known as <i>Parva</i>
<i>Bān</i>	Arrow
<i>Bankā</i>	Wrist ornament of female made of silver, gold or iron metal.

<i>Barāṭ gainā</i>	Members of bridegroom family who go to the house of the bride for the marriage ceremony.
<i>Barkā Gurvā</i>	Chief Priest/Shaman
<i>Barkā Nāc Biḍhān</i>	Rules for <i>Barkā Nāc</i>
<i>Bārmāsyā</i>	A seasonal song/ all-time song
<i>Basyā</i>	Flute (in Nepali <i>Bansuri</i>)
<i>Baṭhaniyā</i>	Unmarried young females in Thāru community
<i>Baṭkōhi</i>	Folk tale
<i>Baṭohiyā</i>	The sharing system of agro-product between land-owner and tiller
<i>Bebri</i>	A local flower like basil
<i>Beṭh-begāri</i>	Forced labor without payment (usually landowner forcing the system to poor farmers in his area)
<i>Bhevān Nāc</i>	Dance of Bhīma with wooden-hammer in <i>Barkā Nāc</i>
<i>Bhevān</i>	Thāru name for Bhīma.
<i>Bhuinyār Gurvā</i>	A type of <i>Gurvā</i> (priest/shaman).
<i>Bhuinyārṭhān</i>	The holy space for local Thāru gods and goddesses in the village where they keep wooden and stone-signs of different size and design
<i>Bhuṭāhā Nāc</i>	Ghost dance
<i>Bihāniyā Nāc/Giṭ</i>	Morning dance/song
<i>Cācar Nāc</i>	A folk dance
<i>Chaturyuga</i>	<i>Chaturyuga</i> refers to <i>Saṭya</i> , <i>tretā</i> , <i>dwāpar</i> and <i>kali</i> Yuga in Hindu narratives.

<i>Chokrā song/ Nāc</i>	Local folk song/dance. A male dancer wears female dresses like <i>lehangā</i> and bangles to perform such <i>Chokrā</i> dance
<i>Curyā</i>	Bangle
<i>Ḍānbir Karna</i>	Karna is a very liberal character in <i>Mahābhārata</i>
<i>Ḍasyā song</i>	A song performed during the festival of Dashain/ Dashain song
<i>Ḍasyā</i>	Dashain festival of Thārus
<i>Ḍaunāgir</i>	Thāru name for Guru Dornācārya
<i>Ḍehari</i>	An earthen grain storage
<i>Ḍelvā</i>	A type of local basket used in cultural and marriage ceremony
<i>Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā</i>	Chief of a regional (<i>pragannā</i>) priest/shaman in the community of Thārus
<i>Ḍevāri</i>	Thāru name for Tihār festival/ Deepāvali
<i>Ḍhakli</i>	A small basket made of <i>kush</i> type of grass
<i>Ḍhakyā</i>	A colorful basket made of grass
<i>Ḍharmarājā Juḍhisṭhil</i>	Thāru name for Yudhisṭhir
<i>Ḍhikri</i>	A typical Thāru food item made of rice flour through the process of steaming
<i>Ḍholāhā Nāc</i>	A folk dance with big drum playing
<i>Ḍhumru</i>	Festival song, one day before Thāru New Year, <i>Māghi</i>
<i>Ḍhuryā Gurai,</i>	A ritual performance in the month of May/June in the village of Thārus with the wish to protect growing rice crops from insects and diseases. This ritual is observed for closing the musical instruments during rainy season when people get involved in

farming. From the period of *Dhuryā Gurai* to *Hāryā Gurai*, Thāru songs are sung without using musical instruments

<i>Ḍin gainā giṭ</i>	Day-time song
<i>Ḍin -nacavā nāc,</i>	Day-time dance
<i>Dohori</i>	Pertaining to both sides' reply with singing form
<i>Ḍuḍhiyā</i>	A type of earthworm
<i>Ḍurpaṭi nāc</i>	A folk dance in <i>Barkā Nāc</i> that represents Draupadi
<i>Ḍurpaṭi</i>	Thāru name for Draupadi
<i>Dwāpar</i>	Third cyclical pattern of four ages in Hindu civilization
<i>Gaiyā Behrnā</i>	A folk drama performed in Thāru village during the rainy season
<i>Gangevā</i>	Thāru name for Bhishma Pitāmaha
<i>Gaṭaiyā</i>	A form of ornament made of silver coin, worn around the neck by Thāru women
<i>Ghar Gurvā</i>	A type of priest/shaman
<i>Gharḍhuriyā/ Gharḍhurryā</i>	Head of the family or household, particularly male becomes head in their community
<i>Ghatasthāpanā</i>	First day in ten day long Dashain festival
<i>Goṭyār</i>	Clan/lineage
<i>Guiṭhā</i>	Dried object made up from the cow or buffalo-dung
<i>Gundri</i>	Local mat
<i>Gurai Pujā</i>	A ritual of Thāru performance two times (<i>Hāryā</i> and <i>Dhuryā Gurai</i>) for protecting of rice crop from disease in

	the area/ villages. Before the inauguration of <i>Barkā Nāc</i> , <i>Gurai Pujā</i> is held in Narayanpur, Jalaurā of Dang valley
<i>Gurbābā/Gurubābā</i>	Spiritual forerunner or first Thāru saint with divine power
<i>Gurvā /Guruvā</i>	Priest or shaman
<i>Guthi</i>	Trust
<i>Hāryā Gurai</i>	A ritual performance in August/September (Bhadra) for good rice crops in the village of Thārus. This ritual opens for playing the musical instruments. With the ritual performance of <i>Ḍhuryā Gurai</i> , playing the musical instruments is stopped
<i>Hurḍinyā giṭ/nāc</i>	A local folk song/dance
<i>Jāmā</i>	An old fashioned long cloak worn by Thāru male which represents the King dress in <i>Barkā Nāc</i>
<i>Jāṭ</i>	Caste or ethnic group
<i>Jātrā</i>	Religious and cultural procession
<i>Jhālī</i>	Big cymbal
<i>Jhumrā giṭ/nāc</i>	A folk song/ dance
<i>Jirijoḍhan</i>	Thāru name for Duryodhan
<i>Jiurā</i>	The corn / maize shoots (<i>jamarā</i> in Nepali)
<i>Jug</i>	Age/era
<i>Kachauṭi, ṭenihā jhulwā</i>	A local Thāru dress
<i>Kal-jug/kaljug</i>	Second cyclical pattern of two ages in Thāru creation myth (in Nepali it is Kali <i>yuga</i>)
<i>Kali</i>	Fourth cyclical pattern of four ages in Hindu narratives

<i>Kalpa</i>	Cycle of world history
<i>Kamaiyā</i>	Bonded male labor in Tarai
<i>Kamlari</i>	Female bonded labor in Tarai
<i>Kānhā</i>	One of the names of god Krishna
<i>Kansiri</i>	Neck ornament of Thāru female
<i>Kaṣṭār</i> and <i>Chaṭkauli</i>	Name of the local musical instruments
<i>Kaṣṭār</i>	A local musical instrument
<i>Kaṭhoriyā nāc</i>	A folk dance
<i>Kesaukā Gurvā</i>	Assistant of <i>Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā</i> in <i>Gurai pujā</i> . <i>Kesaukā</i> is a representative of Bhishma Pitāmaha whereas <i>Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā</i> represents Dornācārya in <i>Barkā Nāc</i>
<i>Khaliyān /Khenvā</i>	Threshing floor/open space
<i>Khappar</i>	Human skull in <i>Barkā Nāc</i> by Svāne
<i>Khaṭauli</i>	Local sleeping bed
<i>Khvāt</i>	Rhythms of tom-tom. It is considered that maximum twenty two <i>khvāt</i> of tom-tom can be produced in folk music of Thārus
<i>Koseli</i>	Gift
<i>Koṭārin Māi</i>	Thāru name for mother Kunti
<i>Kulpujā</i>	Lineage-worshipping
<i>Kurrai</i>	A mud-made small pot
<i>Kurthā</i>	A loose fitting cloth for female
<i>Lākhi</i>	A ballad involved in the story of a female
<i>Lāthi Nāc</i>	A Thāru folk dance with sticks

<i>Lehangā</i>	A female dress
<i>Lugābār</i>	A ritual performance by performers in <i>Barkā Barkā Nāc</i>
<i>Maḍaryā /Mandaryā</i>	Drummer/Tom-Tom player
<i>Māḍo Sundari</i>	A ballad of love story of Madhav and Sundari
<i>Māgar</i>	A ritual song on the occasion of wedding ceremony based on the life of Shiva and Parvati
<i>Maghautā</i>	A song/dance performed on the occasion of New Year, <i>Māghi</i>
<i>Māghi</i>	Major festival or New Year of Ḍaṅgaurā Thārus. It occurs around the mid-January, it is the first day of Māgh month
<i>Mainā</i>	A seasonal song often performed during March to May
<i>Maiyā</i>	A goddess who was created by Gurbābā to make his wife
<i>Mālā</i>	A sort of necklace
<i>Mandṛā</i>	Tom-tom for folk melody
<i>Manjirā</i>	Small cymbal
<i>Maṭavā /Barghar</i>	Chief/head of Thāru village who has political, socio-cultural power in the locality
<i>Maṭinyā</i>	Wife of <i>Maṭavā /Barghar</i>
<i>Mayur Nāc</i>	A folk dance based in the guise of peacock
<i>Meghā Loṭnā</i>	A folk drama performed in the rainy season
<i>Meṭaki</i>	A female dress
<i>Mohrinyā</i>	Who leads Thāru female singers
<i>Mohryā</i>	Head of the Thāru male singers in folk song

<i>Muṅgrā Nāc</i>	Another name for the dance of Bhīma dance with big wooden club in <i>Barkā Nāc</i>
<i>Nacanyā</i>	Male dancer
<i>Nacinyā</i>	Female dancer
<i>Nāc-nacavā</i>	Male dancer
<i>Nakurān</i>	Thāru name for Nakul
<i>Pacharā</i>	Mantra
<i>Pachginyā</i> or <i>Pachavā</i>	Assistant of <i>Mohryā</i>
<i>Pachginyā</i>	Assistant in singing with female leader
<i>Pachavā</i>	Assistants of head singer who repeat the same line from the song of head singer
<i>Pagyā</i>	Crown
<i>Paiyā song/ Nāc</i>	A type of dance/song performed by young girl and male drummers during the festivals of <i>Ḍasyā</i> and <i>Ḍevāri</i>
<i>Panchopni</i>	A handicraft used for covering water pot
<i>Parbatiyā/ pahāri/ Pahāḍe</i>	The people living in hilly area of Nepal. Brahman, Kshetriya, Magar, Dalit and other caste and ethnic groups have the identity of <i>Parbatiyā</i> ’ or <i>pahāri</i> . The migrants from hill region are also known as <i>Pahāḍe</i> in the Tarai of Nepal
<i>Pāṭāl</i>	The underworld
<i>Paṭṭi phernā</i>	Five years of performing <i>Barkā Nāc</i>
<i>Pendyā</i>	A festival
<i>Phagvā</i>	Holi festival

<i>Phulvār</i>	Folk song in epic form that covers the story of Shiva and Parvati
<i>Piṭṭar ḍenā</i>	Offering to the ancestor
<i>Pragannā</i>	Division of traditional political and cultural region of Ḍaṅaurā Thārus. Accordingly, there were five <i>pragannā</i> in Dang valley
<i>Prasāḍ</i>	Offerings to gods and goddesses
<i>Pujā</i>	Worshipping
<i>Purnimā</i>	Full-moon day
<i>Rājā Bairāth</i>	Thāru name for King Virāt
<i>Rāslilā nāc</i>	A folk dance related to Lord Krishna dancing with Gopini in full moon night
<i>Rāt-kaṭnā giṭ</i>	Night song
<i>Rāu bird</i>	<i>Rāu</i> bird is not a live bird but a wooden frame that looks like a bird, which is a target point for the competition during the <i>swayamvara</i> of Draupadi
<i>Sahiḍeva</i>	Thāru name for Sahadeva in <i>Mahabharata</i>
<i>Sajanā</i>	A seasonal song often performed during March to May
<i>Sakhyā</i>	<i>Sakhyā</i> is a folk song based on the life of god Krishna and it is sung and danced by Thāru males and females during the festival of <i>Ḍasyā</i>
<i>Samrauṭi</i>	Opening song or invocation song of performers
<i>Sanjhyā gainā giṭ</i>	Evening song
<i>Sanjhyā nāc</i>	Evening dance
<i>Sasurāli</i>	One's-in-law

<i>Saṭ Jug /saṭjug</i>	First cyclical pattern of two ages in Thāru myth
<i>Saṭya</i>	First cyclical pattern of four ages in Hindu civilization
<i>Shiva-linga</i>	Symbol of Shiva-phallus that Svāne puts on during <i>Barkā Nāc</i>
<i>Shrāddha</i>	Hindu ritual to the ancestors
<i>Shukla-pakṣa</i>	Full moon fortnight
<i>Svāne / Swānyā</i>	Joker, symbolizing Krishna and Mahadev in <i>Barkā Nāc</i>
<i>Swargarohan Paiḍhār</i>	Epilogue of <i>Barkimār</i>
<i>Swayamvara</i>	Competition for spouse selection. Eligible bachelors compete to win Draupadī by hitting the target of <i>rāu</i> bird
<i>Ṭāngi</i>	Artistic local made rope and decoration for tom-tom made by the cover of local small creature/local art of decorating tom-tom
<i>Ṭārbān</i>	Bamboo/wooden poles
<i>Ṭaryā</i>	A type of bangle made from silver
<i>Ṭhanvā</i>	Another name for <i>Bhuinyārṭhān</i>
<i>Tharuhaṭ</i>	Thāru majority resided region of Tarai, low-land in Nepal
<i>Ṭikā</i>	Holy mark of chandan, rice or flour on the forehead
<i>Tikiyā</i>	Marker on the forehead of female
<i>Tretā</i>	Second cyclical pattern of four ages in Hindu civilization
<i>Uṭṭarā Kuvānra</i>	Thāru name of Uttar Kumar

Appendix III: Tables of Performers and Supporters in Folk Dances

A. Performers and Supporters of *Barkā Nāc*

The documentary on *Barkā Nāc* was directed by Chandra Prasad Chaudhari in October 16-19, 2019. Different institutes and individuals had supported and the following performers took part in different roles:

1. Financial Sponsor	-Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan Office Dang -Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan Ward No 10 Dang - Gaḍhavā Village Municipality Ward No 2 Deukhuri	
2. Organizer	Thāru Welfare Society Dang- Deukhuri	
3. Patron	Narulal Chaudhari, Mayor, Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan	
4. Advisors	-Sita Sigdel Neupane, Deputy Mayor, Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan -Rishi Ram KC, Administrative Chief, Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan -Chitra Bahadur Dangi, Chairman, Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan Ward No 10 -Bhaktu Chaudhari, Chairman, Gadhawa Village Municipality Ward No 2 Deukhuri -Churna Bahadur Chaudhari, Treasure, Thāru Welfare Society Central Committee	
5. Director	Chandra Prasad Chaudhari	

7.Coordinator	Bhuvan Chaudhari	
8. Research and Script Writing	Dr. Govinda Acharya/ Ashok Thāru	
9. Executive Director	Ashok Thāru	
10. Assistant Director	KB Chaudhari	
11. Story Writing	MP Kharel (Megh Prasad Kharel)	
12. Arrangement	-Balakrishna Khanal, Chief, Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan Tourism and Culture Promotion Branch -Rampati Chaudhari, Deputy Chairman, Thāru Welfare Society Dang-Deukhuri -Shramlal Chaudhari , Ex- Deputy Chairman, Thāru Welfare Society Dang-Deukhuri -Bikash Chaudhari, Ex-Chairman, Thāru Student Society Dang- Deukhuri -Shalikram Chaudhari, Member, Thāru Welfare Society, Dang- Deukhuri	
13. <i>Mohryā/Maṭavā</i>	Chandra Prasad Chaudhari	
14. <i>Maṭinyā</i>	Jangali Thāru	
15. <i>Mungrahawā/ Bhevān</i>	-Samir Chaudhari -Shikhar Chaudhari -Prajan Chaudhari -Amit Chaudhari -Shiva Narayan Chaudhari	Six performers for <i>Bhevān Nāc</i> is needed
16. King Jujisṭhil (Yudhisṭhir)	-Prema Chaudhari -Sanchita Chaudhari -Arati Chaudhari	Five performers are in the appearance of King Yudhisṭhir. Due to the

	-Dil Kumari Chaudhari -Samjhana Chaudhari	lack of young males in the village, females played the role of Yudhiṣṭhir.
17. Queen Ḍurpaṭi (Draupadi)	-Sanumaya Chaudhari -Urmila Chaudhar -Lila Chaudhari -Ruma Chaudhari -Enjila Chaudhari	Five performers in the appearance of queen Draupadi
18. Sahiḍeva Paṇḍit (Sahadeva)	-Rama Chaudhari -Pramila Chaudhari -Amisa Chaudhari -Asma Chaudhari -Balika Chaudhari	Five performers are needed in the appearance of Sahadeva. Due to the lack of young males in the village, females played the role of Sahideva.
19. <i>Maṇḍrā</i> Player (Tom-tom player)	-Chandra Prasad Chaudhari -Khatamal Bahadur Chaudhari -Ram Bahadur Chaudhari	Three to five persons are tom-tom players, who represents the role of Nakul (Nakurān)
20. Svāṇe	Bandhu Chaudhari	Svāṇe is an entertainer and he represents Brahmā and Krishna
21. Arjun	-Chandra Prasad Chaudhari -Jaggu Prasad Thāru -Hiralal Thāru -Bejhlal Chaudhari	Four to five persons are Arjun and they have the role of singing the couplets of <i>Barkimār</i>
22. <i>Gurvā</i>	-Jaggu Prasad Thāru (<i>Ḍesbandhyā Gurvā</i>) -Deu Narayan Thāru (<i>Kesaukā Gurvā</i>)	Two persons are <i>Ḍesbandhyā</i> and <i>Kesaukā Gurvā</i> . They represent Dronacharya and

		Bhishma Pitāmaha respectively.
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B. Performers in *Chokrā* Dance of *Rāmbihagrā*

Chokrā dance based on *Rāmbihagrā* from *Samrauṭi* to *Ḍin-nacavā* was performed in September 26-27, 2019 in Sisahanyā Dang. Several performers took part in different roles as following diagram:

1. <i>Mohryā</i>	Bejhlal Chaudhari	
2. <i>Pacavā</i>	-Madan Chaudhari -Basanta Chaudhari -Ramlal Chaudhari -Tek Bahadur Chaudhari -Siha Chaudhari -Bhagiram Chaudhari	
3. <i>Mohrinyā</i>	-Jugri Chaudhari	
4. <i>Pacginyā</i>	-Gita Chaudhari -Janaki Chaudhari -Maini Chaudhari -Laiyā Chaudhari -Chijmani Chaudhari -Ramkali Chaudhari -Kalli Chaudhari -Rita Chaudhari	
5. <i>Maḍaryā</i>	-Man Bahadur Chaudhari -Lilaram Chaudhari	
6. <i>Nacanyā</i>	-Jayalal Chaudhari	
7. <i>Nacinyā</i>	Rima Chaudhari	

C. Performers in *Chokrā* Dance of *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi*

Chokrā dance based on *Gurbābak Jarmauṭi* was performed January 12, 2019 in Chakhaurā Dang. Several performers took part in different roles as following diagram:

1. <i>Mohryā</i>	Rajman Chaudhari	
2. <i>Pacavā</i>	-Likhram Chaudhari -Jalabir Chaudhari -Chandalu Chaudhari -Ashapura Chaudhari -Jalu Chaudhari -Kaluram Chaudhari -Manbir Chaudhari -Birulal Chaudhari	
3. <i>Maḍaryā</i>	-Ramdas Chaudhari	
4. <i>Nacanyā</i>	-Nahakul Chaudhari	
5. Assistants	-Santosh Chaudhari -Anupam Chaudhari -Ramesh Chaudhari	

Appendix IV: Phonetic Symbols Used in Transliteration

Vowel Alphabets			
Letters in <i>Devanāgarī</i>	Vowel Letters	Transliteration	Words in Thārus
अ	A, a	<i>A, a</i>	<i>Aṣṭimki, Ammar-māti, Akhaṇḍa-joṭ</i>
आ	Aa, aa	<i>Ā, ā</i>	<i>Gurvā, Barkā Nāc, Agnā, Ammar-māti</i>
इ	I, i	<i>I, i</i>	<i>Kansiri, Jhāli</i>
ई	ee, Ee (long)	<i>ī, Ī</i>	
औ	Au, au	<i>Au, au</i>	<i>Jarmauti</i>
Consonant Alphabets			
Letters in <i>Devanāgarī</i>	Consonant Letters	Transliteration	Words in Tharus
क्	K/k	<i>K/k</i>	<i>Kānhā</i>
ख्	Kh/kh	<i>Kh/kh</i>	<i>Khvāt</i>
ग्	G/g	<i>G/g</i>	<i>Goṭyār</i>
घ्	Gh/gh	<i>Gh/gh</i>	<i>Ghar Gurvā</i>
ङ्	Ng/ng	<i>Ñ/ñ</i>	<i>Hurḍinyā</i>
च्	Ch/ch	<i>C/c</i>	<i>Nāc</i>
छ्	Chh/chh	<i>Ch/ch</i>	<i>Pachginyā</i>
ज्	J/j	<i>J/j</i>	<i>Jāt, jug</i>
झ्	Jh/jh	<i>Jh/jh</i>	<i>Jhāli</i>
ञ्	N/n	<i>Ñ/ñ</i>	
ट्	T/t	<i>Ṭ/ṭ</i>	<i>Ḍuparṭi, Aṣṭimki, Bairāṭ</i>
ठ्	Th/Th	<i>Ṭh/ṭh</i>	<i>Ṭhanvā, Ṭharuhaṭ</i>
ड्	D/d	<i>Ḍ/ḍ</i>	<i>Ḍasyā, Ḍehari, Ḍevāri, Ḍesbandhyā, Ḍhakyā, dhikri,</i>

ण्	N/n	<i>N/n</i>	
त्	T/t	<i>T/t</i>	
थ्	Th/th	<i>Th/th</i>	Thāru
द	D/d	<i>D/d</i>	
न्	N/n	<i>N/n</i>	<i>Nacanyā, Nacinyā, Nāc</i>
प्	P/p	<i>P/p</i>	<i>Pagyā,</i>
फ्	Ph/ph	<i>Ph/ph</i>	<i>Phagvā, Phulvār</i>
ब्	B/b	<i>B/b</i>	<i>Bān, Bankā, Barkā, Basyā, Batkōhi</i>
भ्	Bh/bh	<i>Bh/bh</i>	<i>Bhevā, Bhuinyārthān, Bhutāhā</i>
म्	M/m	<i>M/m</i>	<i>Māgar, Maghautā, Māghi</i>
य्	Y/y	<i>Y/y</i>	
र्	R/r	<i>R/r</i>	<i>Rāu-bird</i>
ल्	L/l	<i>L/l</i>	Lehangā
व्	V/v	<i>V/v</i>	<i>Khvāt khenvā, Gurvā</i>
स्	S/s	<i>S/s</i>	<i>Kesaukā, Desbandhyā, Satjug</i>
ह्	H/h	<i>H/h</i>	<i>Hāryā, Hurḍinyā</i>
क्ष्	Ksh/ksh	<i>Kṣ/kṣ</i>	<i>Akṣatā,</i>
त्र्	Tr/tr	<i>Tr/tr</i>	
ज्ञ्	Jn/jn	<i>Jñ/jñ</i>	

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