

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Chasuma Sili as a Symbol of Ecological Consciousness in Kirant Rai Culture

A Thesis Submitted to Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Masters of Arts in English

By

Lokmani Rai

TU Reg. No.:-6-1-40-2180-99

June 2012

Tribhuvan University
Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The thesis entitled " Chasuma Sili: As a Symbol of Ecological Consciousness"
submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus by Lokmani Rai
has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

.....

Kamal Pd. Thoklihang

Supervisor

.....

External Examinee

.....

Chranjibi Kafle

Head of the Department of English

Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus

Date:-.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very much thankful to Kamal Prasad Thoklihang, Lecturer and Assistant Campus Chief of Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, T.U. for his valuable directions, suggestions and cooperation during the preparation of this thesis. He was available for me at any time according to the requirements to prepare this thesis. It was his guidance that made this thesis possible in a complete form.

I am equally indebted to Rudra Prasad Paudel, former Head of the Department of English and present Campus Chief, of Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus who permitted me to write this thesis.

I equally thank Chiranjibi Kafle incumbent the Head of the Department of English, for the friendly and cooperative environment provided from the Department to generate critical ideas for the preparation of this thesis paper.

June 2012

Lokmani Rai

ABSTRACT

The present dissertation entitled "Chasuma Sili as a symbol of Ecological Consciousness" focuses on the relationship between nature and humanity and emphasizes the sustainable use of nature, rejecting Western industrialism and capitalism. It emphasizes the interdependence between nature and humanity and seeks appropriate space in nature for every living being so that ecosystem functions well. Capitalism and consumerism are the greedy and mindless product of Western industrialism causing serious ecological problem. This study analyzes how Chasuma Sili prevailing in Kirat Rai culture gives importance to the nature. With the eco criticism perspective, the research tries to challenge the Western industrialist perspective and ultra capitalistic thought. In this context, this study analyzes how the native Kirat Rai Culture focuses on the sustainable use of nature. As a whole, this research focuses that reading native cultures and following their core principle will surely create an environment friendly world with appropriate space to every living being in this nature.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1-13
Ethnicity and Literature	1
Sakela	4
CHAPTER II: ECOCRITICISM	14-25
<i>The Mundhum</i>	14
<i>The Mundhum and the Kirati Cultural Activities</i>	15
Ecocriticism	20
Chapter III: KIRAT RAI CULTURE	26-46
Sakela: A Festival of Nature and Ecology	26
Origin of <i>Sakela</i>	26
<i>Sakela</i> as a Dance	31
The <i>Silies</i> in <i>Sakela</i>	39
<i>Chasuma Sili</i> in <i>Sakela</i>	40
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION	47-52
Chasuma Sili: As a Symbol of Ecological Consciousness	47
WORK CITED	53-54

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity and Literature

Ethnicity is a state of belonging to a group of people having a common tradition, language, culture and an ideology. Ethnicity demands common ancestry or endogamy. It is a highly biological and self-perpetuating group and connected with a specific geographical area. Even the food preference, religious faith, habits and level of thinking often seem common.

The term ethnicity is derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning *nation*. Herodotus is the first person to state the main characteristics of ethnicity in the 5th century BC. He defines Greek identity in terms of kinship (Greek: of the same blood), language (Greek: speaking the same language), cults and customs (Greek: of same habits or life style).

The term *ethnic* and its related forms from the 14th through the middle of the 19th century CE were used in English to distinguish "pagan, heathen", as *ethnikos* (Greek: national). The modern meaning of ethnicity emerged in the middle of 19th century. It expresses the notion of *a people* or *a nation*. The term *nation* is used synonymously with ethnicity or with a sovereign state.

The modern usage of *ethnic group* reflects a kind of struggle with external groups within a country. Thus, the usage of *ethnicity* came to stand in opposition to the concept of *national*, by referring to people with distinct cultural identities who, through migration or conquest, had become subject to a state or "nation" with a different cultural mainstream. Thus, in today's everyday language, the words "ethnic" and "ethnicity" still have a connotation with minority and race relations.

Ethnicity is a phenomenon inherent in human experience. So, it is a fundamental factor in human life. German sociologist Max Weber, the first person to

bring the term *ethnic group* into social studies, has defined it as: . . . human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists.

The *Kirat* is one of the major ethnic communities of Nepal. They own their distinct religion (*Kirat Religion*) and culture (*Kirat Culture*) based on *The Mundhum*. Though migrated in different parts of the country and the world, they historically are connected to specific geographic region, i.e. central and eastern zones of Nepal. Mechi, Koshi, Sagarmatha and some districts including Kathmandu Valley in the Bagmati basin is historically known as the homeland of the *Kirat*.

The *Kirat* ruled the Kathmandu Valley, the then Nepal, for almost 1400 years. They were defeated by the *Lichchhavis*. And, for survival, they escaped and migrated towards the eastern part of the country. In this course they scattered and reached in the different parts of the region and settle down there. After a long course they, according to the geographic region, developed slightly different methods of practicing *The Mundhum* and *Kirat Language*. So, today we see some sort of lingual and cultural differences in practices in *Kirat Rai* communities. But the differences seen in different clan is not in philosophical level.

Today, the *Kirats* are known as *Four Kirat* or *Chaar Kirat*. They are Rai, Limbu, Yakhkha and Sunuwar. But, also *Jirel*, *Surel*, *Hayu* and *Thangmi* (Known widely as *Thami*) community has claimed and started identifying themselves as *Kirats*. But their claim is yet to be proved. Including *Jirel*, *Surel*, *Hayu* and *Thangmi* these *Four Kirats* are also listed as different castes in national documents. These *Four Kirats* believe in *The Mundhum* ideology which determines and directs their life

process. For them, *The Mundhum* is the philosophy of all human beings, the whole world and the universe. *The Mundhum* determines all the norms and values of the *Kirats*.

The Mundhum, unlike *Veda*, is not in written form. It is derived orally from generation to generation. In Rai community, it is generally enchanted by a *Nakshong* (*Rai* priest) in different ceremonies, like wedding, *Mang Puja*, *Chawamang*, *Ubhauli*, *Udhauli*, *Chhonglak* and so on.

Rai is in fact a kind of designation given to some people of this community by the kings of the then Gorkha Kingdom, with the authority to collect tax of certain territory and rule over it under the direction of kingship. Later, this designation became the subject of pride and started to be known as a caste. Nowadays, *Rai* is known as a caste not as a designation though it is not. Today almost three dozen ethnic groups, including *Chamling*, *Bantawa*, *Puma*, *Sotang*, *Thulung*, *Kulung* and *Wambule* are known as *Rai*. Each *Rai*, today, is known as a sub caste of *Rai*, though some lingual and minorities right activist do not agree. Each *Rai* have different *pachha*. For instance, *Chamling* includes many *Pachhas* like *Dorochha*, *Sorochha*, *Padherachha*, *Ninamachha*, *Dobalichha*, *Kholapachha*, *Malekungchha*, *Butepachha*, *Birachha*, *Silahanchha*, *Dalahanchha* and *Mapahaccha*. *Pachha* refers to a group belonging to one clan or blood. The writer Bayan Singh Rai includes one hundred and twenty-two *Chamling pachhas*, in his book *Utpati Ra Paramparaka Chamling Mithakharu* (99-103).

Similarly, *Bantawa* also has many *Pachhas* like *Tamla*, *Rungbanchha*, *Mukarung*, *Mukmen*, *Ruchhenbung*, *Chhichhangchha*, *Dhichhangchha*, *Dilpachha* and *Luhun*. Likewise, each *Rai* has sub clans or *Pachhas*.

Each *Rai* caste has its own separate language. There are still about 26 languages existing and almost 6 to 10 languages are believed to be extinct. They also have some differences regarding the ways of celebrating culture and following rituals. But, the basic philosophy of the *Kirat Culture* is none the other than *The Mundhum*.

All the *Kirat Rais* worship the same deity. *The Mundhum* is the whole life vision of this community. In *The Mundhum* language, religion, lifestyle, culture, tradition, literature civilization, race, history, social norms and values, love, politics, economics and whole life style are included.

In *Kirat* religion, there are different festivals. Some of the festivals of *Kirat Rai* are *Chawamang*, *Mangpuja*, *Chhonglak*, *Maghe Sakranti* (New year of *Kirat Rai*), *Saune Sakranti*, *Udhauli (Sakela)* and *Ubhauri (Sakela)*. Among them one of the major festivals is *Sakela*, which is also described in *The Mundhum*. *Sakela* is known as *Sakenwa*, *Sakhewa*, *Bhume Sili*, *Segro Sili* etc.

Sakela

According to *The Mundhum*, *Sakela* is celebrated at the witness of Sumnima (the earth) and Paruhang (the sky). In *The Mundhum*, Sumnima and Paruhang are regarded as deities. *Sakela* means *sila* or stone. According to *The Mundhum*, the stone represents God. *The Mundhum* believes stone as the creator of the universe. So, stone is worshipped as God.

The mythological background of *Sakela* and its origin begins with the *Mundhum*. According to *The Kirat Mundhum*, all hitherto existing hearsays of the forefathers tell us the story about the *Sakela*. Bam Bahadur Rai in his book, *Pauranik Kirat Itihas* tells the story about the origin of the *Sakela*. According to it, Sumnima is the first being of the world, who is believed to be the first mother of *Kirat Rai*. She bore three sons. Among the four sons, her youngest son was the only human being.

Her first, second and third sons were animals. As the time passed, all sons grew up and started working. The first, second and third sons of Sumnima lived in the forest. Only the youngest son was with her. Sumnima started feeling loneliness and she decided that her youngest son should get married. She asked the hand of the daughter of Nakima (Indrani) to her son. Nakima happily accepted her proposal. Then a splendid marriage ceremony between the son of Sumnima and the daughter of Nakima happened.

In the farewell of wedding ceremony, Nakima gifted a *Chindo* (pot of gourd), a stone and a fist full of millet as the dowry to her daughter and son in law. Nakima made *Jand* (liquor made from fermented rice) from that millet. And she put it into the *Chindo*. She started to worship by sprinkling the *Jand* from *Chindo* to the surroundings. Today it is believed that the stone given by her is still inside the earth. According to *The Mundhum*, it is believed, the *Sakela* originated from that day. Here, the stone given by her was termed *Sakela* and it means the stone or *Sila*. That is why the stone is very significant in *Sakela* dance. The stone signifies the presence of the forefathers during the dance.

Later, the *Sakela* continued taking place as one of the major festivals in *Rai* community. *Sakela* is danced in circle. In this dance, the musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta* is regarded as invitation for everybody. People gather to dance as they hear the musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta*. The *Sakela* is a trained and disciplined dance connected to the musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta*. Every people of the *Rai* Community can take part in this dance. There is no restriction to anybody.

Sakela is celebrated twice in a year. In *Sakela* festival, Sumnima and Paruhang are requested to save the crops praying through the dancing. The dance is started when the *Nakshong* (a Rai priest) offers *Raksi* (liquor made from fermented rice) from

Chindo around the *Sakela Thaan* (a place made up of stone, bamboo branch, banana leaves, etc.) chanting the *The Mundhum*. Other follows the *Nakshong* and dance together with *Chamar* (yak's tail), *Seula* (bunch of green leaves), *Khurmi* (like a scythe), bow and arrow, *Dhol* and *Jhyamta* (traditional musical instruments sounding like tiger's voice). The musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta* makes people forget their pain and sorrow.

The dress of *Nakshong* is different. The *Nakshong* wears white colored clothes, traditional ornaments, with a crown made of feathers of the birds. Other dancers also wear traditional dresses and ornaments. The dress is an important part of the dance.

The celebration of *Sakela* takes place in *Baishake Purnima* which is known as *Ubhauli* and in *Mangsire Purnima*, which is called *Udhauli*. Both *Purnima* and the days are special for *Kirat Rai*. The time between *Baishake purnima* to *Mangsire Purnima* is called *Ubhauli*. Similarly, the time between *Mangsire Purnima* to *Baishake Purnima* is called *Udhauli*. *Ubhauli* means *up* and symbolizes the summer. In this time, the mythological bird *Karyangkurung* (a type of bird) goes up to the hilly area which is understood as the indicator - right time for new plant. *Udhauli* means *down* and symbolizes winter and time of harvesting. In this time, *Karyangkurung* goes down to the *Terai*. The timing of up coming and down coming of *Karyangkurung* is taken as the time of better planting and better harvesting.

Udhauli Puja or ceremony falls during the time of harvesting. But, the crops must primarily be offered to the ancestors and forefathers with due respect. It is believed that only after offering to the new crops to the ancestors, it will be ready to eat. The reason for offering the new crops in the name of ancestors is the belief that

all the crops are possible due to them and their blessing. Offering new crops also means making the forefathers happy and getting more blessings.

Beside the new crops, banana leaves are used to decorate *Puja Thaan* and *Chindo (Wabuk)* in *Sakela, Udhauli Puja*. Bow and arrows are other necessary things. Animals especially cocks are sacrificed. People dance and enjoy in the name of forefathers.

The method of worshipping in *Udhauli* and *Ubhauli* is almost same. But in *Ubhauli* bow, arrows, main pillar of the house and weapons, etc. are not worshipped animals and birds are not sacrificed. In *Ubhauli, Rai* people celebrate the festival keeping the planting season in mind. They, by dancing, make a wish for rain good and better production. In both *Pujas, Sakela* (stone) is the central attraction as it is associated with the first mother *Sumnima* and the agrarian system. The *Kirati* people celebrate the *Sakela* cheerfully to please *Sumnima* and *Paruhang* and the ancestors.

The purpose of all *Kirat Rai* is to please the deities and the ancestors, through the dance. So *Sakela* is a cultural and traditional dance of *Kirat Rai*. There are different *Sili* (dancing methods) in *Sakela*.

There are many types of *Sillis*. They differ according to the geographic location and language. The name of the sillies differs in each language and place. But the meaning does not differ. Chandra Kumar Hatuwali in his book *Sakenwa: Kiratharuko Mahan Chad*, names some of the Sillies. They are; *Mangchhama Sili, Chhongwalak Sili, Longlenchip Sili, Narokwa Sili, Berawa Sili, Chasumkopma Sili, Parulak Sili, Rohompara Sili, Chanukama Sili, Chathoma Sili, Kongthokchapak Sili, Narawa Sili, Sumnima Sili, Tayama Sili, Khyama Sili, Sumni Sili, Wapa Sili, Ngasa Sili (Fish), Fakleawa Sili* and *Chasuma Sili* 16-17.

All sillies are dedicated to god. Each *Sili* has the touch of nature. Among them *Chasuma Sili* is one. In every step of this *Sili* there is the description of nature and agrarian system. While dancing *Chasumaa* the *Rai* people treat the natural elements like earth, soil, water, air, fire and sky. *Kirat* mythology believes that all these things are the primary resources for living. *Kirati* people believe that *Sumnima* and *Paruhang* made these elements.

In *Chasuma Sili*, rivers, stones, earth and hills are worshipped. These nonliving things are animated. All these elements unite together and get changed in organic unity. And people worship them as human beings. The expression of the *Sili* and the activities of the hands and feet make the *Chasuma Sili* a well performed dance. *Chasuma Sili* is performed in the circle following the leader. The use of *Silimi* (a kind of knifelike musical instrument) and the *Chamar* show the change of another *Sili*.

The musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta* helps the dancers to dance in order and discipline. The dancers carry *chamar*, *seula*, *Dhol*, *Jhyamta* and *Silimi*. At least one of the dancers carries *Dhol*, who plays it inside of the group. The dancers dance according to the music of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta*.

The folk song of *Sakela* is one of the attractions of it. The fundamental songs of *Sakela* possess a rhyme that creates a suitable mood for captivating dance. Chandra Kumar Rai writes in *Sakenwa*,

Soisoila ho soisoila.....hurra ha ha ho hurra ha ha.

Soi Dhole soi arko Dhole khoi.....

Batomuni dhakamaka aahai fula fulyo godawari semuna

Chelimaiti gaudai nachdai aahai gari jaun bidabari semuna. (51)

Chasuma Sili in *Sakela* dance has been the study of nature and its phenomena. There are some writers who relate the text with *Paruhang* and *Sumnima*, the first beings in the world who taught their children about agrarian culture. *Kirat Rai* people dance and celebrate the *Sakela* in the name of God. *Chasuma Sili* is especially dedicated to *Sumnima*, the mother. The *Rai* community spiritualizes the dead ancestors on the stones before starting the *Sili* or *Sakela*. The people from *Rai* community worship the stone like the human being offering it the food that human beings eat. They see the spirit in the river, hill, earth, air, stone, fire and nature. So, they treat whole nature as a human being. In this context, *Chasuma Sili* is all about nature.

The things like *Chindo*, three stones, bow and arrow for the preparation of the *Sakela* (*Bhume Puja*) are used in the ritual. Besides them, there are many cultural and traditional items like *Raksi*(*Aarakha*), *Jand* (*Umbak*) , fruits and crops which are offered to god. *Nakshong* is necessary for the worship. According to the *Kirat Mundhum*, *Kirat Rai* worships the nature and its phenomena. They are called *Prakriti Pujak* (nature worshipper) and *Bhumi pujak* (earth worshipper). Bhakta Kumar Rai, in his book, *Sakenwa Kina?* , writes:

According to *Chasuma Sili*, when *Paruhang* and *Sumnima* originated human beings, *Paruhang* taught them to destroy the forest and plough the farm. Similarly *Sumnima* taught her children planting farm for food. In this *Sili* the dancers act in the circle imitating agrarian system in the steps of dance with the help of the dance leader. The steps like destroying the forest, plough fields, seeding, growing, planting, taking weeds out, cutting down, heaping mud, chaffing, drying, sifting and to act and imitate of eating rice and to put inside of pocket are the steps of this *Sili*. (17)

In the above line, Bhakta Kumar Rai considers *Chasuma Sili* as natural imitation and dedication towards it. This *Sili* shows how to plant crops, plough fields, seeding, growing, uprooting weeds around the plants, cutting down, heaping mud, chaffing, drying, sifting, etc. All these things are shown by dancing. For example, dancers bows down and imitate the action of planting in order to make understand the process of planting. Similarly, they took their hands up and makes their hands act in such a way that every people understands rainy season is about to begin. Likewise, each and every of agricultural process that peasant has to follow is suggested in the dance. The dance suggests the whole process from praying god for good rain, seeding, planting and growing to harvesting. It also suggests even eating.

Praying for Rain God, planting, growing, harvesting and eating process or the agrarian process follows natural phenomenon. In this *Sili* the dancers act in the circle imitating agrarian system in the steps of dance. There is pervasiveness of the nature in *Chasuma Sili*.

Eco criticism focuses on the alternative ways and systems of business, industry and daily to do so that it harms less to ecology. The agrarian system highlighted in *Chasuma Sili* is one of them. This agrarian system follows the simple ways of agriculture. It encourages on the use of traditional equipments and ways of farming. It focuses on the use of human muscles and animal power in the whole process from ploughing filed, planting crops to harvesting as writer Bhakta Kumar Rai mentions in above lines.

Chasuma Sili, *Sakela* and the *Mundhum* do not speak about the use of heavy and complex modern machines. The story mentioned in *Chasuma Sili*, *Sakela* and the *Mundhum* are may be the story of primitive may of that time when language in oral or written form did not exist. People use signal and sound to convey message. Still,

Sakela is danced making physical signal. At that time, there were no science and modern equipments. So, it does not focus on the use of modern complex machines and the ways and system of agrarian system described in *Chasuma Sili* and *Sakela* is eco friendly. Eco criticism focuses on conserving the nature, environment and the whole ecological system. It, for example denounces heavy carbon emission that is decreasing ozone layer and paving the way for ultra violet rays to enter in the earth.

Ultra violet rays, for example is the source of numerous disease, even up to cancer. This is the result of too extent destructive forms of industrial development. We are facing global environmental crisis like global warming which will have huge impact on costal countries and high altitude area. The consequences of human actions are damaging planet. Because of this, many eco critics engaged searching alternatives. They looked into indigenous non-industrial cultures and explored the possibilities of alliance between these cultures and wider environmental movement. Text like Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) is the product of this exploration. This text highlights environmental values of Native American cultures to resist white industrial capitalism. Silko's *Ceremony* in fact has been a representative text of all indigenous cultures highlighting sustainable natural interdependency which correspondence with indigenous Kirat Rai cultures i.e., *Sakela*.

Chasuma sili is the major part of *Sakela*. Here, Chandra Kumar Hatuwali's remark on *Chasuma Sili* would be remarkable. In his book *Sakenwa: Kirat Haruko Mahan Chad*, he reasserts the fact: "*Sili* is the heart of *Sakela* ... the activities of nature and animals and social activities are imitated by the *Sili*. The sillies are named as the natural elements" (13).

Chandra Kumar Hatuwali further says:

Chasuma Sili is also called *Sumnima Sili* or mother *Sili*. According to Kirat mythology *Sumnima* is the earth and mother of *Kirat Rai*. She is worshipped with great respect as the first mother of agrarian system. The process of agrarian system is pervasively found in *Chasuma Sili*. The steps like destroying the forest, ploughing, seeding, uprooting, planting, weeding round the plants, cutting down, heaping, chaffing, drying, weighing and to act or imitate of eating rice and to put rice inside the pocket are basic elements in *Sili*. (16)

Each *Sili* is about the natural aspects. In the above mentioned lines Chandra Kumar Hatuwali makes clear that *Chasuma Sili* rounds surrounding the natural sources. The presence of natural elements in each *Sili* makes clear that *Sakela* is the festival of the nature.

Similarly, Tanka Bahadur Rai, in his book *Kiratharuko Dharma Ra Sanskriti-Samchhipta Adhyayan*, writes, '*Sakela* is the festival of *Kirat Rai*. It is based on natural Kirat Mundhum' (48). Here, Tanka Bahadur Rai thinks nature is the base of *Sakela*. So it is very clear that nature is very important for *Kirat Rai* people.

Another writer Gangaraj Rai (Hatuwali), in his article "Rai Samajma Chandi Naach Harsa Ra Umangako Jagaran" says, "Even though there is difference among the *Rai* people in accordance with the place, they celebrate *Sakela* in the same way and the *Sakela* is a festival it is totally based on agrarian system and natural aspects" (10). Here, Gangaraj Rai (Hatuwali) also explains that nature is inseparable aspect in the *Sakela*, a festival of *Kirat Rai*.

Like other writers, Bayansingh Rai, in his book, *Utpati Ra Paramparaka Chamling Mithakharu*, remarks, "*Kirat Rais* believe that everything happens in this world because of the nature. So, *Kirat Rais* worship nature and follow *Sakela Sili*

oriented to the nature and they believe that life is possible because of the nature” (37-38). He too thinks that nature is as important as our life.

Since nature is the most important aspect in *Rai* community, Om Aastha Rai, in his article, “Sanskriti, Kirat: Shaharma Sakela” writes, “Though there are various *Sillies* in *Sakela*, the only purpose of *Sillies* is to worship nature and its aspects” (48).

According to all these writers, the *Sakela* is mostly oriented to nature. It is very clear that it is the festival of nature. Especially, *Chasuma Sili* is nature oriented. It is all about ecology. The concept of organic whole prevailing in *Chasuma Sili* is the manifestation of the ecological awareness of *Rai* community, one of the major indigenous ethnic communities of Nepal.

CHAPTER II: ECOCRITICISM

The Mundhum

The *Mundhum* is a holy and religious oral text of *Kirat Rai*. It is a philosophical text about all human beings (Kirats). It determines the norms and values of the *Kirati* people.

Like four Vedas (*Athurveda*, *Samveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Rigveda*) and Geeta of Hindus, Bible of Christians and Koran of Muslim *Kirati* has *Mundhum* as their holy text. In *Kirati* community, it is also called *Thuthure veda* because *Nakshong* (*Rai* priest) vibrates his body when he enchants *Mundhum*. *Thuthure* in Nepali language means *rapid and continuous vibration of body*.

The *Mundhum* explains the origin of the earth, human beings, animals, plants and all the natural things (whole universe). The *Mundhum*, though today is found in written form, is transmitted generation to generation orally as the *Nakshong* enchanted it. The *Nakshong* enchants the *Mundhum* in all the *Kirati* ceremonies and festivals like *Chawamang*, *Chachhuwa*, *Nwagi*, *Chhonglak*, *Thampuluk*, *Helawamang*, *Saptenmag*, *Replamang*, *Samkhamang*, *Henkhamang*, *Udhauli*, *Ubhauli*, *Sakela*, *Mang Puja*, *Gunuecholi*, *Chhewar*, *Pasni* and wedding ceremony. *Mundhum* is the life vision of the *Rai* community in which they believes in.

The *Mundhum* not only explains the concept of the *Mang* (God) and the creation of the 'universe' but also illustrates the origin of the creature on the earth and the first forefather of human being Paruhang and Sumnima. It determines dos and don'ts of *Kirati* lifestyle. According to the writer J. P. Rai in his article, Nipsung, "Kirat Dharma Ra Mundhum", mentions about the *Kirat* religion and *Mundhum*. Rai says, "Sumnima and Paruhang, preached seven things that are not allowed in *Kirat*

religion are; not to beg, not to steal and cheat, not to keep extra marital affair, not to be greedy, not to be jealous, not be proud and not to murder human beings" (29).

He says about the *Kirat* religion and the *Mundhum*:

The *Kirat* religion is developed as an established before Hindu and the Buddhist religion. Before Buddhism and Gautam Buddha, first *Kirat* king Yalamber followed *Kirat* religion. In his nation there was *Kirat* religion as the national religion and *Mundhum* was the main instrument to rule the nation. Yalamber ruled the nation through the preaching of Sumnima and Paruhang based on the *Mundhum*. (27)

The *Mundhum* determines the *Kirat*'s culture, tradition, literature, civilization, social norms and values, love, politics, economics and whole lifestyle. All the *Kirati* festivals have its origin in the *Mundhum*. *Mundhum* is necessary from birth to death in *Rai* community.

The *Mundhum* and *Kirati* Cultural Activities

The *Mundhum* keeps special relationship with the birth to death cultural activities of *Kirat Rai* community. The *Mundhum* is necessary in the naming ceremony of the newborns. The *Nakshong* prays to God enchanting the *Mundhum* for better life of the baby. According to the *Mundhum* the baby is believed ready to face the ups and downs of new world and forthcoming situation only after the naming ceremony. To face the ups and downs of new world and forthcoming situation, plough, bow and arrows are provided. The new born is blessed to assimilate with the harshness of nature. The writer Bayan Singh Rai cites a glimpse of the *Mundhum* in his book, *Utpati Ra Paramparaka Chamling Mithakharu*,

You live the world in a better way from the hilly area to the seashore.

You go to anywhere of this world without any difficulties. You rule the

world beautifully. Each organ of your body would grow up well. And make your world beautiful as the world of Sumnima and Paruhang.

You will not face the bad and evil things in your life. And make your future bright. We wish you for your bright future. (47)

The *Rai* people worship the *Chula* (oven). According to the *Mundhum*, all the good things and the spirits of the forefathers live in the *Chula*. The *Chula* is made from the three stones. Stones, here, signifies nature and to state of closeness of *Kirat Rai* community to her. Non *Rai* is not allowed to touch and go around the *Chula*. In The *Chula Puja*, cock, *chindo* (bottle gourd), ginger with the leaves, banana leaves, pure *jand* (liquor made from fermented rice) and millet is needed. The *Nakshong* enchants the *Mundhum* and makes wishes for the goodness of the living members in the family. He tries to make happy the spirits of forefathers. He makes the wishes for wealth, good crops, knowledge and in the family.

In the ritualistic ceremonies like *gunue-choli* and *chhewar*, the parents and the relatives bless the children. They are blessed to be like *Paruhang* and *Summina* which is significant here in the context that they both taught their children to use the nature for agriculture. Most of the *Mundhum* recitals have messages for the well being of the people. One of the *Mundhum* recitations of *gunue-choli* according to the writer Bayan Singh Rai in *Utpati Ra Paramparaka Chamling Mithakharu*, reads:

Have a bright future. Get peace in your life. Be a gentle and intelligent person. Try to be like foremother Sumnima (Naima) and forefather Paruhang. We are very happy in your ritual ceremony. Try to do well in your life and we wish you the growth of your knowledge in a better way". (55)

The *Mundhum*, that guides the most important cultural festival of *Kirat Rai* is *Udhauli Puja* and *Ubhauli Puja*. *Ubhauli Puja* is done at the time of preparation of new planting. *Ubhauli* time is the time when earth begins to green everywhere. *Kirati* people believe a good plantation for a good harvest is only possible by the blessing of forefathers and prays by dancing and singing to make them happy. This shows the strong belief of *Kirat Rai* community in agrarian system.

In the time of *Ubhauli*, the *Nakshong* enchants the *Mundhum* requesting the forefathers and Sumnima-Paruhang the first deities of *Kirat Rai* for good rain for the better harvest. They wish for wealth, peace and prosperity, knowledge, intelligence and rationality. The stupidity, poverty, enmity and anger should be avoided and people should be dominated by the love and respect with each other.

In the time of *Udhauli*, all the crops are ready to harvest. In this ceremony, the *Nakshong* wishes for the good future of all with the forefathers and Sumnima-Paruhang as they believe the time the *Udhauli* is the result of the bless of forefathers. The *Nakshong* prays enchanting the *Mundhum* and tries to make happy to the forefathers. Bayan Singh Rai, in *Utpati Ra Paramparaka Chamling Mithakharu* says, "We are the race of *Kirati*; we are the organ of yours and we have arrived again in this ritualistic festival, so that you bless us well in upcoming days (58)".

In the time of *Udhauli*, new crops are offered to the forefathers (God). Without offering new crops to God, it is not considered ready to be eaten. These crops offering ceremony to forefathers is *Udhauli Puja*. In this ceremony, crops are offered singing the *Mundhum* by the *Nakshong*. According to the *Mundhum*, the *Nakshong* prays to the god and forefathers wishing to be wealthy, rational, powerful, and peaceful in the society. He also asks sorry for the mistakes. He prays forefathers for

keeping the living people away from poverty and anxiety and to save from the enemy, to teach share love equally and respect each other.

The *Udhauli Puja* and *Ubhauli Puja* is the festival of nature. It is as a whole, known as *Sakela*, *Sakhewa*, *Sakenwa* in different *Rai* Communities. It is associated with the nature.

The *Mundhum* also also dictates marriage ceremony. According to the writer Rajan Mukarung in his book *Kirat Sanskar*, “there are two types of marriages in *Rai* community. The first is the arrange marriage and the second is *Chori Bibaha*” (45).

The first marriage is possible with the permission of the parents and the girl should be ready as well. The agreement of the girl and the parents is very significant in arranged marriage. There can be different ways of the *rit* (cultural procedure of marriage) in arrange marriage.

The second marriage is *Chori Bibaha*. In this marriage, the girl elopes with the boy as if, the girl is theft. And, this type of marriage is later legalized. In both marriages, the old person is very important as everybody accepts the decision of the old person. The *Mundhum* is used in both marriages.

A part of the *Mundhum* from the book of Rajan Mukarung, *Kirat Sanskar*, portrays the text as follows:

We keep the good relationship with the forefathers who maintain the good relation to the villagers. We pray the king who makes us strong and the powerful, today we have brought as the gift of marriage. We have offered you the foods like *jand*, *raksi*, fruits, ginger, banana, rice, sweets. We have decorated the *chindo* with flowers. These all things have been brought for you. So try to be pleased. Always keep the feelings of love and prosperity with everybody. Sumnima kept the

wind as the *kaliya*. Like wise Paruhang kept the cloud as the *kaliya*.

That is why they were couple of *kaliya*. (52)

In this way, the wedding ceremony ends in *Kirat Rai* community. This is totally cultural and traditional. The *Mundhum* entirely guides this ceremony.

Finally the *Mundhum* guides another important *Kirati* culture, funeral ceremony. According to the Hindu religion, the dead body is burnt. Unlike in it, in *Kirat* religion the dead body is buried with the wooden box. *Kirati* people believe that their body is the part of very earth and they have to assimilate their body to the earth after death. And a feather of the chicken is kept in the dead body thinking that the soul of the dead body could fly and get the forefathers quickly. A text of the *Mundhum* recited in funeral ceremony of the dead body from the book of Rajan Mukarung, *Kirat Sanskar*, reads:

Now you have been the residential of the forefathers in the sky. We love you. And we keep your memories in the *kul chula*. We offer the good thing for your better soul. We wish you to have peace in your soul. No obstacles should come in your way. You go to the place of the forefathers. We try to make you happy. (58)

The *Nakshong* enchants the *Mundhum* during the funeral ceremony. The *Nakshong* again prays to the dead body singing the *Mundhum*. A glimpse of the final part of the *Mundhum* is used in funeral ceremony, from the book of Rajan Mukarung, *Kirat Sanskar*, “Now we have made a grave home for you. From now on, you stay here. It is your house and everything. You go to the place of forefathers. We ask you through the *Nakshong* where you will stay either inside of the *kul chula* or outside of the house” (60). According to the writer Bayan Singh Rai, in his book *Utpati Ra*

Paramparaka Chamling Mithakharu, the *Mundhum* is very necessary in funeral ceremony. A text of *Mundhum* from his book explains:

From now on you have been away from us because of your death. You go in your way. Whatever you have the obstacles you solve it. And if you have taken the soul of the living members, children, relatives and neighbors, please leave it. If you don't free it no one will forgive you. Nobody wants you. We have made house for you. We have managed the rice and kitchen appliance for you to cook. Now you get up, cook and eat. (64)

In this regard, *Mundhum* keeps especial relationship in *Kirati* cultural activities and festivities. Without the *Mundhum*, *Kirati* cultural activities are unfinished. The *Mundhum* is infact is the life style of *Kirat Rai* community. It determines the social norms and values of the Rais. It opens the ways of culture, tradition, religion, literature, race, history, love, politics, prosperity and economics.

Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is literary and cultural criticism that examines and evaluates texts from an environmentalist viewpoint. It studies the relationship between literature and environment from an earth- centered approach. It judges the state of natural interdependencies i.e., appropriate place for every species in the nature, in terms of environmentally harmful or helpful effect. Ideas and beliefs in this regard are assessed in terms of their environmental implications. Ecocritics analyze the nature from every aspect to understand the cultural developments that have led to present global crisis.

US critic William Rueckert is first person believed to have used the term 'ecocriticism' in 1978. But few works like Britain Raymond William's *The Country and the City* (1973) and USA Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* (1975) are said

to have been ecocriticism before the term was invented. Comparatively a new genre, ecocriticism became a recognized movement only from the beginning of 1990s.

Frustrated from the too extent destructive forms of industrial development, many ecocritics engaged searching alternatives. They looked into indigenous non-industrial cultures and explored the possibilities of alliance between these cultures and wider environmental movement. Texts like Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) highlights environmental values of Native American cultures to resist white industrial capitalism. Silko's *Ceremony* in fact has been a representative text of all indigenous cultures highlighting sustainable natural interdependency which correspondence with indigenous Kirat Rai cultures i.e., *Sakela*.

Sakela, by the means of dancing, put emphasis on agriculture, farming and hunting which is against the capitalism and industrialism, the cause of today's global environmental problem of climate change. By dancing *Sakela*, Sumnima and Paruhang are requested to save the crops.

The dance is started when the *nakshong* (a Rai priest) offers *raksi* (liquor made from fermented rice) from *chindo* around the *Sakela thaan* (a place made up of stone, bamboo branch, banana leaves, etc.) chanting the the *mundhum*. Other people from the community follows the *nakshong* and dance in circle together with *chamaar* (yak's tail), *seulaa* (bunch of green leaves), *khurmi* (like a scythe), bow and arrow, *dhol* and *jhyamta* (traditional musical instruments sounding like tiger's voice). It is believed that the musical sound of *dhol* and *jhyamta* makes people forget their pain and sorrow. *Raksi, chindo, Sakela thaan* made up of stone, bamboo branch, banana leaves, etc., *chamaar, seulaa, bow and arrow, dhol* and *jhyamta* are the things gained directly from nature.

Kirat Rai people, from birth to death, worship nature. They worship sun, sky, river, stone, and fore fathers and so on. Because of this they are known as Prakiti Pujak (Nature worshipper). They believe they are the creation of earth and bury their body in the earth after death. They believe that they are the son of the nature earth and identify themselves as Bhumiputra (son of the earth) and think to assimilate body to earth after death is their duty.

All these things emphasize the importance of nature to Kirat Rai community and its status in Kirat Rai Culture. The use of only natural things in every ceremony suggests us to go back to the nature, but not to the industrialized, polluted and capitalist world. It further can be understood and explained as a kind of pressure to assimilate nature and culture in a sustainable way. In this regard, writer Cheryll Glotfelty in his article *Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis* published in the Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm edited book *The Ecocriticism Reader* explains:

Despite the broad scope of inquiry and desperate level of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes its subject the interconnection between nature and culture. (IX)

Similarly, Richard Kerridge in his text *Environmentalism and ecocriticism* published in the book *Literary Theory and Criticism* which is edited by Patricia Waugh, describes:

Ecocritics worry that too much attention to nature as a cultural and ideological construct, or rather a multiplicity of constructs made by different groups, will lead to neglect of nature as an objective, material,

and vulnerable reality. From an environmental justice perspective, however, attention to these diverse meaning is precisely what ecocriticism needs, to expose the fissure of race, gender and class that environmentalism must recognize before alliances can be built. (531)

Ecocritics are often regarded as anti-Marxist as Marxist focuses on industrial development. But ecocriticism means not to give too much attention to the nature, which is clarified in above lines which focuses on the sustainable use of nature i.e., environmental justice. Environmental justice or the appropriate space for every species with affecting the physical world could happen only after exposing the crevices of race, gender class and so on.

In the same way *Chasuma Sili* considers nature should be used to create appropriate space for every species but not destroyed. According to Bhakta Kumar Rai, in his book, *Sakenwa Kina?* In *Chasuma Sili*, Paruhang taught his children to destroy the forest and plough fields and Sumnima taught her children planting farm for food. Even today, Rai people perform *Bhume Puja* to make happy the earth for better crops. This signifies that *Chasuma Sili* put emphasis on the sustainable use of nature.

The thought we find in this *Chasuma Sili* is a dominant thought which has been a most serious concerns of the today critics. Even the Joseph Meeker has put serious concern. He, in his *The Comedy of Survival* puts a serious question for balanced ecology. He says:

Human beings are the earth's only literary creatures . . . If creation of literature is an important characteristic of human species. it should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human

behavior and the natural environment- to determine what role, if any, it plays in the welfare and survival of mankind and what insight it offers to human relationships with other species and with the world around us. Is it an activity which adapts us better to the world or one which estranges us from it? From the forgiving perspective of evolution and natural selection, does literature contribute more to our survival than it does to our extinction? (3-4)

Examining and practicing *Sakela* or *Chasuma Sili* is one of the very appropriate answers to this question. Because, we are living in a horrible world which Glen A.

Love describes:

The catalogue of actual and potential horror is by now familiar to us all: the threats of nuclear holocaust, or of slower radiation poisoning, of chemicals or germs warfare, the alarming growth of world's population (standing room to only few centuries at the present rate of growth), mounting evidence of global warming, destruction of planet's protective ozone layer, the increasingly harmful effects of harmful acid rain, overcutting the world's last remaining great forest, the critical loss of topsoil and ground water, over fishing and toxic poisoning of the oceans, inundation in our own garbage, an increasingly rate of extinction of plant and animal species. The doomsday potentialities are so real and so profoundly important that the ritual chanting of them ought to replace the various nationalistic and spiritual incantations with which we succor ourselves. (226)

This text in *Revealing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism*, edited by Patricia Waugh and published in the book *Literary Theory and Criticism* depicts the real

picture of the world we are living in. If not to exaggerate, this planet is heading towards a great collision due to unruly human activities. Yes, we cut down the trees, we heavily industrialized the world and emitted carbon which is destructing planet's protective ozone layer, created ground for global warming and we made the species of plant and animal extinct. So, it is the time to back to nature as a notable poet William Wordsworth had said. And we are already getting late. In this situation, the only way to protect this planet is the sustainable use of nature which is the centre of study of eco criticism. So, *Sakela* and *Chasuma Sili*, which we dance to enjoy and dance to save culture is relevant here because it focus on ecological justice and sustainable use of nature.

CHAPTER III: KIRAT RAI CULTURE

Sakela: A Festival of Nature and Ecology

There are different festivals in *Kirat* religion. They are namely *chawamang*, *mangpuja*, *chhonglak*, *maghe sakranti* (New Year), *udhauri puja (sakela)*, *ubhauri puja (sakela)* and *sime bhume puja*. *Sakela* is the major festivals among them. Each festival is described in *The Mundhum* and in each festival, *The Mundhum* is enchanted. *The Mundhum* plays significant role in *Kirati* cultural. According to *The Mundhum*, the first beings Sumnima and Paruhang are central attraction in *Sakela*. The *nakshong* enchants *The Mundhum* at the beginning of the dance.

Each Rai have different languages to communicate. And, each Rai performs *Sakela* with slight modification in dancing techniques and steps. For instance, Bantawa from Bhojpur dance *Sakela* in comparatively slow steps than Chamling of Khotang. Chamling of Khotang may or may not sing songs while dancing. But, for Bantawa of Bhojpur, song is a vital part of dance.

The *Sakela* is named according to different languages. Among the thirty six Rai languages believed to be existed in the past, twenty six languages are recorded and ten are believe extinct. According to the different clans in *Rai* community, the *Sakela* called as *sakenwa*, *sakhewa*, *segro sili*, *bhume sili lak*. All the different forms of *Sakela* share the same meaning. All the names signify the stone. In other words *Sakela*, *Sakenwa*, *Sakhewa*, *segro sili*, *bhume sili lak* mean the *sila* or stone.

Origin of Sakela

Sakela means *sila* or stone. Stone is a natural thing. According to *The Mundhum*, the stone, or can say nature, symbolizes god or the creator. And the stone is supposed to be the forefathers of the *Kirati*. *The Mundhum* describes the mythological background and origin of *Sakela*. According to *The Mundhum*, all

hitherto existing hearsays of the forefathers and the old person in the society tell us the story about the *Sakela*. There are different thoughts about the origin of *Sakela* in the *Rai* community. But the date of the origin of *Sakela* is still unknown. People have different views about the origin of *Sakela*.

Chandra Kumar *Hatuwali*, about the origin of *Sakela* in his book *Sakenwa*, opines, “It (*Sakela*) was supposed to begin about one thousand three hundred and forty nine years ago or in 606 B.S” (5). According to *Hatuwali* in his book *Sakenwa*, *Sakela* begins with the word ‘*chhongkha*’. *Chhongkha* is the word taken from the language of *Bantawa*. The word ‘*chhong*’ means *simal* (a type of tree). And ‘*kha*’ means *ghari* (bush).

Chhongkha is also the name of a village of Bhojpur district. According to the writer, this village is the historical place of *Kirat Rai*, where *Sakela* is supposed to be originated. *Hatuwali* doesn't further elaborate about the origin of *Sakela*. But, he clearly mentions that it is originated *Chhongkha* or in *Simal Ghari*.

According to *Hatuwali*, *Sumnima* (*Naahimaa*) and *Paruhang*, were *Suntums* (the creator in *Rai* language). They had three sons. The first son was *Chikiwa* (the tiger) or *Chapcha* in *Chamling*, the second was *Narawa* (the bear) or *Berpa* in *Chamling* and the third one was the human being, *Hengkubung* (*Minihochha* in *Chamling*). The three sons had different attitudes. By nature, the tiger and the bear were wild. This elaboration about the human origin suggests that even the animals like tiger and bear are the sons of same forefathers as human beings do and they have equal right and space in this very earth. From *Hatuwali's* elaboration, we can conclude every species in this earth should have equal space, which is the core concern of environmentalists, animal right activists, nature writers and eco critics.

Hatwali elaborates that all the sons of Paruhang and Sumnima grew up under their care. But, as *Henkubung* was only human being, he was not wild in nature like his other brothers. He had got human intuition and intelligence. So, he learned many things like skill of hunting and the knowledge of archery.

Among the three sons, both animals were proud and stupid. But *Hengkubung* was intelligent, and had knowledge of everything. He was very clever. Sometimes, the tiger and the bear would attack him. But, he could easily escape and handle the situation. As the time passed their enmity grew up and they could not live together.

Because of the enmity, once, *Henkubung* killed his brother, tiger. But, Sumnima by chanting the *The Mundhum* and with the help of *sila* (stone), *bechhup* (ginger), rice, bottle gourd with the yeast, *Seula* (bunch of leaves), *Khurma* (knife) revived him. Then she gave *Chikiwa* and *Narawa* the forest to live in and *Henkubung*, the home. This narration suggests that from the very beginning of the existence of life, Gods or the forefathers had given all the species an adequate and equal place to live in. Eco criticism judges the state of natural interdependencies among the species which we find in primitive *Kirat* culture narrated especially Hatwali and others.

As *Henkubung* was blessed with clever mind and intelligence, he had to follow the *Rit* (traditional culture) established by forefathers. *Sumnima* passed the responsibilities of performing the *Rit* to her son *Henkubung*. She advised him to make happy the soul of the parents worshipping *Sakela* (*Sila*) in every six months; in *Baisake Purnima* and in *Mangsire Purnima*. From that day, the stone, which itself is the symbol of nature is worshipped as the *Suptums* (creator) and the dead souls of forefathers. During the *Puja*, everyone is blessed for good health, peace and fulfillment of the wish. In *Sakela* dance and the *Puja*, musical instruments, *Dhol* and *Jhyamta*, sword, knife and yak's tail, are used as a vital part.

Bhakta Kumar Rai in his book, *Sakhewa Kina* tells something different about the origin of *Sakela*. According to him, a clever *Kirati* was carrying a heavy stone from the grave of a *Kirati* king at Kathmandu to Bhojpur. He got heavily tired when he reached Dolakha and took rest there. All of a sudden, he fell asleep at the place dreamed *Nakshong* asking him to worship the stone (*Sakela*). He got up from the dream and worshipped the stone making a *Than* and dancing *Sakela* there. From that day, it is believed *Saleka* begun and *Kirati* people started worshipping stone as the God.

Bam Bahadur Rai has another story about the origin of *Sakela* which is one of the most popular and entertained in Kirat Rai community. In his book, *Pauranik Kirat Itihas*, he has written that Sumnima, the first human being, bore four sons. Among them only the youngest one was human being and others were animals. They slowly and gradually grew up. The first, the second and the third sons started to live in the forest. The youngest son only was with her. Sumnima started feeling lonely and she decided that her youngest son should get married. She than asked the hand of the daughter of Nakima (Rainbow) to her son. Nakima happily accepted the proposal and a splendid marriage ceremony was done.

In the farewell of the wedding ceremony, Nakima put a stone and worshipped it by sprinkling *jand* (liquor made from fermented rice made by using millet as chemical) from *chindo* (pot of gourd). She sprinkled the *jand* from *chindo* around and on the stone. According to *The Mundhum*, the *Sakela* originated from that day. Nakima than gifted the *chindo*, stone and a fist of millet to the new couple. And, it is still believed that the gifted stone is still inside the earth. Here, the gifted stone symbolizes *Sakela*. The words *Sakela* and *sila* are interconnected with each other. Both signify the stone. For this reason the stone is very significant in *Sakela* dance. In

other words, *Sakela* is celebrated to glorify the wedding ceremony of the son of Sumnima and the daughter of Nakima.

Though we find different thoughts and stories about the origin of *Sakela*, they all focus on the same thing; worshipping nature in the form of stone and equal space and opportunity to every species on this earth. In Hatwali's story *Chapcha*, the tiger is revived though it was killed by *Henkabung*, the human. This story symbolizes the right of life to every species on this planet as they are the children of God. Bam Bahadur Rai and Hatwali narrates that animals were given forest to live in and human, home. This suggests that God has given adequate space to all in the earth. And, all three stories have one of a single similarity of worshipping stone. The stone symbolizes nature which is very significant to prove the claim of *Kirat Rai* community as 'Nature Worshipper'.

Basically, frustrated from the Western industrialization and its severe negative impact on the earth, the critics lately flourished Eco writing and Eco criticism. Such writers and critics want to save the planet for tomorrow's generation by saving nature. Their main quest in this regard is how the planet's life can be extended. In order to achieve the goal, they have developed a common kind of understanding, i.e. develop eco friendly industries, cut carbon emission, use alternative energy, minimize the use of pesticides etc. In other words, they seem agreed in ecological justice and sustainable use of nature, which we already do have in *Kirat* culture.

From the day of the marriage of the son of *Sumnima* and the daughter of *Nakima*, *Sakela* continued and today it is celebrated as the greatest festival of *Rai* community. Government offers public holiday in *Skaela*. In *Sakela*, there is no need of invitation to anybody. In that day people starts to play *Dhol* and *Jhyamta*. By hearing the musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta*, people gathers and dance. They

dance in disciplined manner, i.e., following the norms, rules and steps of the *Sakela*. They follow and change the steps according to the sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyampta*. *Sakela* is danced in circle and everyone can take part in it. There is no restriction to anybody to dance *Sakela*. The mother Sumnima and the Father Paruhang are central attraction of *Sakela*. And, everyone is believed to have the right to remember, pray and glorify the mother Sumnima and the Father.

The *Kirati* people believe that *Sakela* became possible due to *suptums*. It all happened because of good influenced spirits. And, *Suptums* are the creator of the *Kirati* people who have good spirits. *Sakela* is celebrated in their memory.

***Sakela* as a Dance**

Sakela is the cultural dance and festival of *Kirat Rai*. Dancing *Sakela*, the *Suptums* are prayed to save the crops. *Sakela* starts when the *Nakshong* (a *Rai* priest) offers *Raksi* (liquor made from fermented rice) from *Chindo* sprinkling around the *Sakela Thaan* (place where *Sakela* is established). The *Sakela Thaan* is established by using stone, bamboo branch and banana leaves. *Sakela* is known as *Sakenwa Lak*. *Sakenwa* means *Sakela* and the *Lak* means dance in *Rai* language. In the beginning of the *Sakela* dance, the *Nakshong* completes the ritualistic activities of the dance, like verbally praying and glorifying the *Thaan* and sacrificing animals.

The *Nakshong* chants the *The Mundhum* dancing around the *Sakela Thaan*. He sprinkles the *raksi* from *chindo* around and on the *Than*. He recalls the *Suptums* and the forefathers. When the *Nakshong* performs the starts dancing, other *Rais* follows him. The dancers dance holding *Chamar* (yak's tail), *Seula* (bunch of leaves), *Khurmi* (scythe), bow and arrow, *Dhol* and *Jhyamta* (traditional musical instruments sounding like tiger's voice). The musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta* makes people forget the

sorrows they have. There is peace in nature. Even worshipping nature provides peace to everyone.

The *Nakshong* appears in unique clothes and seems unique and identical among dancers. He wears garland of coins and feathers of birds in head. His uniform differs from other dancers. Especially, he wears white colored clothes. And he puts different types of ornaments on his body. The garland is kept around the body. The crown with the feathers of the birds is the attraction during the dance. During the *Sakela* the *Nakshong* is the leader. Other dancers wear the traditional uniform and the ornaments. The *Sakela* is performed in the circle. It needs wide ground. Even childrens can dance *Sakela*. But non-Rai are not allowed to dance. They can only observe the dance from a distance.

The celebration of *Sakela* falls twice a year, once in *Baishake Purnima* called *Ubhauri* and another in *Mangsire Purnima* known as *Udhauri*. The time between *Baishake Purnima* to *Mangsire Purnima* is called *Ubhauri*. Similarly, time between *Mangsire Purnima* to *Baisake Purnima* is called *Udhauri*. *Ubhauri* and *Udhauri* are associated with the changing of the season. *Ubhauri* is the time of planting. The farm is muddy because of the rain. Similarly, *udhauri* symbolizes the time of winter and time of harvesting new crops. *Sakela* occurs according to the change in nature. So, it is identical with nature. In other words, no nature no natural changes and no natural changes, no *Sakela*. Therefore, *Sakela* is deeply intertwined to nature.

The bird *Karyangkurung* plays a significant role in *Ubhauri* and *Udhauri*. According to *the Mundhum*, *Karyangkurung* belongs to the clan of forefathers. In the time of *Ubhauri*, *Karyangkurung* flies toward the hilly area messaging- it is the time to plant new crops. Likewise, in the *Udhauri*, *Karyangkurung* flies down to the Terai region suggesting good time for harvesting and storing the crops. *Ubhauri* means up.

And, *Udhauli* means down. In the time of *Ubhauli*, Terai region is hot and *Karyangkurungs* cannot settle there. They shift to the hill side. And in the time of *Udhauli*, it gets down to the Terai because of the cold weather in hillside. They fly in group to hillside at the time of *Ubhauli* and flies back to Terai at the time of *Udahuli*. So, *Karyangkurungs* is associated with the nature. Their movement according to the change in season is believed designed to suggest the Rai community about timing of farming and harvesting. Good harvesting depends on the good understanding of climate change. And, the bird *Karyangkurung* provides the good knowledge of natural change or climate change. *Kirat Rai* people, in order to have good harvest, follow the nature according to the movement of *Karyangkurungs*.

The bird *Karyangkurung* is the mythological character that symbolizes unity among the *Rai* community. *Karyangkurung* in group makes a harmonious fly in the sky. Their togetherness in the sky is tuneful. The movement of the wings and body sets rhythm as of music. Similarly, the Rais make a circle of unity in *Sakela* dance. The unity of dancers is seen even in the every gestures and movements. This dance resembles the flying *Karyankurungs* too.

In *Sakela* dancer follow the musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta*. The gestures of feet and hands depend on the music. If the rhythm of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta* is made fast, the dancers speeds dancing steps fast. And, if the musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta* is slow, the dancers seem dancing slowly.

Sakela is danced according the *Sili*. And there are many *Silies*. A *Sili* is a dancing method or a step in *Sakela*. The dancers cannot dance in many *Silies* at once. They dance each and every *Sili* one by one in a chronological order that follows the story of the story of this universe and forefathers. Every *Sili* has a story that *the Mundhum* tells about the origin of human being and the world. In other words, the

Silies are designed to tell the story of the origin of human being, the world and glorify the fore father and their deeds. So, each and every *Silies* should be danced coherently so that the dance could tell the story meaningfully and spontaneously. For this reason, dancing *Sakela* is a very difficult job and it needs a lot of practice. Dancing *Sakela* is a natural and cultural phenomenon or the lifestyle of every member of Rai community. From the very childhood of every member of this community has experienced *Sakela*. They have rehearsal it a lot before taking part in this dance. This is called *Sop Lak* and *Sopthek Lak* in Rai language. *Sop Lak* and *Sopthek Lak* mean the rehearsal of the *Sakela*. *Sop Lak* and *Sopthek Lak* are popular in the Rai community. They train the dancers to help them perform well. They fall a month before of the *Sakela*.

Dancing *Sakela* is different according to the place and sub clan of the Rai community. For example, the Rai of Bhojpur dances *Sakela* differently than the Rai of Khotang. The Rai of Solukhumbu, Sankhuwasava, Okhaldhunga, Dhankuta and so on differs in dancing style. But, the sole aim of dancing *Sakela* does not differ according to the place and sub clan.

In Bhojpur, *Sakela* is identified from the *Pachha* of Rais like *Hatuwali*, *Aamchoke*, *Dilpali* and *Chhinamfule Bantawa silies*. Likewise in Khotang, the *Sakela* is identified as *Chamling*, *Dumi*, *Koyu* and *Puma*. In other words, if a group of people are dancing *Sakela* in the fast beat of *Dhol* and *Jhyampta*, people says- this is Chamlinge (of Chamling) dance. Likewise, the dance differs in the slight modification of dancing steps or the sillies. In Solukhumbu district the *Sakela* is known as the *Segro sili*. *Segro* is very popular in Bahing Rai community.

Though there are dissimilarities in the Rai sub clans, they share the same belief and ideology and worship the same God. All the sub clans believe that the

Karyang kurungs are their forefathers. They worship the *Sakela* with the same motto. The stone is spiritualized in the *Sakela* of each and every sub clans. Even all the writers share same methods of worshipping *Sakela*. All of them dance the *Sili* spiritualizing the stone as an image of God. They use the same musical instruments and things that need in *Puja*. The lingual differences among the sub clan have no effect in it. Even all the writers share common characters as the forefathers in their story of the origin of *Sakela*. They believe that the tiger, bear and the man were the children of the same mother *Sumnima*.

Udhauli Puja falls at a time when the crops are ready to harvest. The crops are not allowed to consume before they are offered to the ancestors. Offering the new crops to forefathers is called *Nwagi*. After the new crops are offered to the forefathers with respect, it is believed ready to consume. Here, the forefather equally signifies stone or the nature.

Beside the new crop, banana leaves are very necessary in *Udhauli puja*. They are needed to decorate *Puja Than*. *Chindo*, bow, arrow are other necessary things. Banana leaves cannot be substituted by other leaves or anything. In other words, it is a must in *Udhauli Puja*. Animals especially cock is sacrificed to please the ancestors. *Kirat Rai* do believe that all good crops are possible due to the blessing of ancestors. So, they make their dead forefathers happy by offering new crops first to them. They dance and enjoy in the name of forefathers. They also seek blessing of the forefathers in the occasion of *Udhauli*. This celebration is called *Sakela, Udhauli Puja*.

The method of worshipping *Udhauli* and *Ubhauli* is almost similar. But in *Ubhauli* bow, arrow and main pillar are not worshipped. As it is the time of new planting, *Rai* people celebrate the *Sakela* keeping the new planting in the mind, not hunting. In *Ubhauli*, *Sakela* is danced wishing for better crops. They wish and ask for

better rain by worshipping the forefather Chawamang. Chawamang is the deity of the rain. And, they try to make the deity please.

In both *pujas*, *Sakela* is the central attraction. The *Sakela* is the central attraction among all the *Kirati* festivals. This festival is associated with the mother Sumnima and the agrarian system. The agrarian system itself is significant for the human beings. It is a way of surviving. That is why, *Kirati* people celebrate the *Sakela*. The *Rais* dance *Sakela* to please Sumnima-Paruhang and the ancestors in the occasion of *Ubhauri* and *Udhauri* forgetting everything. Every dancer is energetic and the energy is believed comes automatically through the musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta*. Though there is crowd or mob due to *Sakela* dance there is oneness. The purpose of all *Kirat Rai* is one, to please the deities through the dance.

During the dance, the excited young people forget each and every tension. All dancers are busy in catching the *sili* exactly from the *Sili* master called *Silimoppa*. *Silimoppa* is the person who is the expert in dance. Everybody follows him while dancing *Sakela*. *Nakshong* is not always and to every group available to be followed in the dance. In the absence of *Nakshong*, *Silimoppa* leads *Sakela* dance. In *Sakela*, there are many groups and most of them is led by *Silimoppa*.

In *Sakela* the vibrant shake of *Silimi* (a kind of knife) and the *Chamar* indicates the change in *Sili* or the dancing steps. These things are on the hands of *Silimoppa*. The vibrant shake of *Silimi* and making upper hands show that there is change in *Sili*. The *Sili* dancers should understand the symbolic meaning and activities of the team leader. The musical sound of *Dhol* and *Jhyamta* helps the dancers to catch the *silis* or the steps exactly.

All the dancers are disciplined. They are not allowed to dance as they wish. The dancers must be under the norms and values. The women and the girls wear

beautiful traditional uniform and ornaments. The men wear traditional uniform. The folk song of *Sakela* is one of the attractions. *Soisoila ho soisoila.....hurra ha ha ho hurra ha ha. Soi dhole soi arko dhole khoi...* are some of the fundamental songs of *Sakela*.

Soisoila, one of the popular words in the Rai folk song of the *Sakela* is taken from the name of female *suptums*. So, the *Kirat Rai* takes her name to recall her through the song. *Soisoila* is popular in Khotang. And the dancers, from Bhojpur use *Semuna* instead of *Soisoila*. *Semuna* follows at the last part of each sentence. A glance of the song from the book of Chandra Kumar Hatuwali, *Sakenwa*,

Aakasaiko kalo mailo aahai badalule hoki semuna

Jethi vanda kanchhi ramri aahai gajalule ho ki semuna

Aakasako gadyang gudung aahai patalaiko vuichal semuna

Marne jati kailasaima aahai banchneko yo chhal semuna

Aakasaiko jhilkemilke aahai ek tara khasai deuna semuna

Yo man jasto tyo man vae aahai dilma basai deuna semuna.

The Bantawa dancers sings:

Cheptesun kanma kumkumko

Vet vayo aaja thumthumko

Soi soila ho soi soila

Salala pani nau muni

Binti hai garchhu pau muni

Soi soila ho soi soila.

The song is sung beautifully by the chorus of dancers. They pick up any type of subject like love, harshness of life etc. immediately, convert it into the song and sing it beautifully. In *Sakela*, songs are sung when the dancers finishes dancing a particular

Sili and are about to dance another one. In another words, they choose the leisure time in between the two *Silies* to sing.

In the Dumi Rai, the song of *Sakela* is followed by *syamuna*, like:

Pani paryo rimijhimi chhataile tarkaune a hoi syamuna
Dadai kati gaera pani man yatai farkaula a hoi syamuna
Hwa hwa soi soi
Goruko masu dhanko vat
Kiratiko yahi ho jat
Hutityauko pasula
Ghumi ghumi nachula.

The dancers get excited while singing such song and dancing *Sakela*. Similarly in Puma Rai, the *Sakela* song is slightly different. The song is as follow:

Rato na vale seto kan
Vanumati ganga devi than
Soi soila ho soi soila
Aaiyabari lai lai kurra ha ha
Hoi syamuna.

Amber Bahadur Rai sings a song as follow:

Simali seuli gadera
Purkhako riti garera
Soisoila ho soisoila
Nau mati baja dhol bajyo
Etikai belama yo riti vayo
Soisoila ho soisoila

Such folk songs are the heart of *Sakela* dance. These songs provides refreshments to the dancers in the after dancing every *Silies*. These folk songs often change into question and answer form between the groups of boys and girls. Especially, the group of boys tries to lure the groups of girls. They express their love to the girls and ask their hand for life. But the groups of girls often deny their proposals through song and mock them of being unqualified to get their hand. Such kinds of song regarding love, denial and attraction to each other are natural phenomenon that create excitement, entertainment, humor and energize to dance. Without these songs, the *Sakela* dance will like the curry without salt. In all the songs there is the connection of the natural phenomena. Moreover, through the song, the boys and the girls get chance to understand each other keep the feelings to the girls. *Sakela* is also one of the occasions where girls and boys have the chance to select and get engaged each other.

The *silies* in *Sakela*

There are different *Silies*. The sillies can be found of many types. They can differ according to location, language, clan and sub clan. The name of the *Sillies* can be found different according to place and language. But the meaning of all the *Silies* is same. Chandra Kumar Hatuwali in his book *Sakenwa: Kiratharuko Mahan Chad*, names some of the sillies. They are: *Mangchhama Sili*, *Chhongwalak Sili*, *Longlenchip Sili*, *Narokwa Sili*, *Berawa Sili*, *Chasumkopma Sili*, *Parulak Sili*, *Rohompara Sili*, *Chanukama Sili*, *Chathoma Sili*, *Kongthokchapak Sili*, *Narawa Sili*, *Sumnima Sili*, *Tayama Sili*, *Khyama Sili*, *Sumni Sili*, *Wapa Sili*, *Ngasa Sili* (fish), *Fakleawa Sili* and *Chasuma sili*.

All the *Sillies* are dedicated to god, nature and animals. Each *Sili* has the touch of nature. For example, *Wapa Sili* is dedicated to Cock and has got a glorious space in the *Mundhum*. By dancing this *Sili*, the contribution and the role of cock in human life

is glorified. Similarly, dancing *Ngasa Sili*, the role of fish in nature and its role in the human civilization is glorified. Animals like cock, fish and so on are taken as God and worshipped. In other words, Kirat Rai people are nature worshipper and they only worship what is found in the nature.

Among the *Silies*, *Chasuma sili* is major *Sili* dedicated to the nature. It is also called the mother *Sili* as it has the touch of nature and in every steps and movements. This *Sili* describes and teaches agrarian system.

The writer Bhakta Kumar Rai also explains some of the *silies* in his book, *Sakhewa Kina?* They are *Faklewa Sili*, *Chasum Sili*, *Shikiwa Sili* and *Narokwa Sili*. All the *Silies* are dancing methods of the *Sakela*. *Faklewa Sili* is supposed to be the first *Sili* of the *Sakela*. According to *The Mundhum*, this *Sili* was originated *sili* earlier than any other *Silies*. *Chasum Sili* is the *Sili* of farming. It is the *Sili* of the nature. *Shikiwa Sili* is the *Sili* of art and handicraft. In this *Sili*, the dancers act as making and knitting the cloth. They try to continue and imitate in the dance. They imitate the handicraft and the art of the forefathers which they did in the past. *Narokwa sili* is the *Sili* of the birds. *Narokwa* is the name of the bird in *Rai* language. The bird *Narokwa* is *Karyangkurung*.

Chasuma Sili in Sakela

Chasuma Sili is one of the dancing methods in *Sakela*. “*Chasuma*” refers nature. In *Chasuma Sili*, the *Rai* people treat the natural elements like earth, soil, water, air, fire and sky as human beings. It deals with the agrarian system and talks about the nature.

In Hindu mythology, there are *Pancahamahabhut*. They are water, fire, soil, wind and sky. Because of these elements, the world is possible. Similarly, *Kirat* mythology also believes in these elements water, soil, air, fire and sky. *Mundhum*

believes that all these things are the primary resource that made this world possible. The tiny particles of these elements of united together and make this organic world possible. *Kirat* people believe that Sumnima and Paruhang made these elements.

Chasuma Sili is danced to worship especially river, stone, earth and hill. They are treated as living being. All these things are glorified by animating them because they are the elements that made all the lives possible. So *Chasuma Sili* is the major part of *Sakela*. It is the most energetic, exciting and entertaining part of the dance. The expression and the physical activities during the dance are well-performed. The circular shape of the dance symbolizes the unity between these elements that made the life possible. It is believed to be a god-gifted dance that makes people forget every trouble and feel relaxation.

Chasuma Sili is all about agrarian system. Writers relate it with *Paruhang* and *Sumnima*, the first beings who made this world possible, taught their children about the agrarian system. So *Kirat Rai* people dance and celebrate the *Sakela* in the name of god i.e., *Paruhang* and *Sumnima*.

Chasuma Sili is especially dedicated to Sumnima, the mother. The *Rai* community spiritualizes the dead ancestors on the stones before starting *Sakela*. They worship the stone like the human being and offer food and sacrifices animals. They also see spirit in the river, in the hill, in the earth, in the air, in the stone, in the fire and everywhere in the nature. So, they treat the whole nature as a human being. They sacrifice cocks, offer *Akshata* (rice), *Bechhuk* (ginger), *Wasim/Arakha* or *hengma* (alcohol) to the earth, the water, the fire, the hill and the whole nature believing that these things are consumed as human beings do.

Chasuma Sili is performed twice in a year, once in the *Ubhauri Puja* or *Sakela* in the day of *Baisake Purnima* and another in *Udhauri Puja* or *Sakela* in the day of

Mangsire Purnima. In the day all the people from *Kirat Rai* community seems assembled into one and pray together with the *Nakshong*. All the participants offer *Akshata* (rice), *Bechhuk* (ginger), *Wasim/Arakha* or *hengma* (alcohol) in the *Puja* to the god and try to make happy the *Suptums*. They, by praying, wish the blessing of *Suptums* for the better life and better harvesting.

All the participants sing the *Risiwa* (song) while performing *Puja*. The *Nakshong* enchants the *Mundhum* and *Rai* people offers *Rato Bhale* (cock with red colour) in the *Sakela Thaan* which is sacrificed to please the God. The hunter endowed with the bow and arrow enters the *Sakela Than* first. A person with sword and knife follows him. After them the *Nakshong* enters *Sakela Thaan*. The *nakshong* is with *White Pheta* (white cloth covering the head by folding). He holds *Soleima Chindo* on the right hand and *Khokpi* (small knife) on the left. Many people surrounds the *Sakela Thaan* and the *Nakshong*. They sing *Risiwa* and walk together toward the *Sakela Thaan*. People of every age even the children are allowed to enter and are present at the ceremony.

Two girl carrying *Sambicha Pandur* (millet), *Wasim* (homemade beer), *hengma* (homemade alcohol), *Chayak* (rice), *Kaglogma* (maize), *Bechhuk* (ginger), *Akshata* (rice) and the flowers in *Thunche/Dhobe* (typical almost cylinder shaped basket made from bamboo) enters the *Sakela Than*. After them the group of the dancers with *dhol* and *jhyamta* enters and starts dancing forming a circle around the *Sakela Than*. They move around the *Sakela Thaan* singing the *Chhamlusa* (song about the crops) with the musical sound of *dhol* and *jhyamta*.

The ultimate goal of dancing, singing and sacrificing *Rato Bhale* is to please *Paruhang* and *Sumnima*. The *Nakshong* and the elder people pray *Sumnima* and *Paruhang* singing *Chhamlusa* and enchanting the *Mundhum*. The group rounds the

Sakela Than three times dancing and singing and the *Sakela* begins formally. Then they come out from the *thaan* to the dancing ground, which is wide and green. The whole group sings the *Chhamlusa*, song about the *chasuma sili*. They sing about the agrarian system as well. The dancers dance acting the farming. They express how to plant and how to harvest. They express it through the sign of hand and foot.

At the beginning of the dance, the dancers cut down the forest. Then they seed the plant. They try to make feel that they are expressing as the real. Then they uproot the plant, as it is real. They make over doing all the works of farming. Finally they harvest and act as they are eating the food after cooking. And they again pray for the *Suptums*.

The *Nakshong* and the dancers pray to the *Suptums*. They do not forget that these all the crops are possible because of the blessing of the *Suptums*. The *Nakshong* makes a promise to offer the foods and new crops again in next year. He requests with the *Suptums* to protect from the trouble. And he requests to bless in upcoming days. All the dancers offer new thing to the *Suptums* while the *Nakshong* enchants the *Mundhum*. All of them make a wish to be blissful, powerful, wealthy and healthy. The dancers and the *Nakshong* dance singing the *Mundhum*. While they dance they are totally dedicated to the *Sumnima* and *Paruhang*. It is the one of the way to make happy of their forefathers. The *Rais* believe that their forefathers eat the foods offered. They, in this way, treat forefathers as living being. So *Chasuma sili* or the *Chasum Lak* is the *Sili* dedicated to nature. Therefore, this *Sili* is embedded with full of ecological consciousness.

The things like *chindo*, three stones, bow and arrow for the preparation of the *Sakela (Bhume Puja)* are used in the ritual. Besides it, there are many cultural and traditional items like *Raksi*, *Jand*, fruits, and crops, which are offered to the god.

According to *Kirat mundhum*, *Kirat Rai* is nature worshipper. They worship the nature and it's a must phenomenon. They are called *Prakriti Pujak* (nature worshipper) and *Bhumi Pujak* (earth worshipper). Bhakta Kumar Rai in his book, *Sakenwa Kina?* Explains:

According to *Chasuma Sili*, when *Paruhang* and *Sumnima* originated human beings, *Paruhang* taught them to destroy the forest and plough the farm. Similarly *Sumnima* taught her children for seeding on the farm for their food. In this *sili* the dancers act in the circle imitating the steps of agrarian system by the help of the dance leader. The steps like destroying the forest, ploughing, seeding, uprooting, planting, weeding round the plants, cutting down, heaping, chaffing, drying, sifting and to act and imitate of eating rice and to put inside of pocket. (17)

In the above lines, Bhakta Kumar Rai considers *Chasuma Sili* as natural imitation and dedication towards it. There is pervasiveness of the nature in *Chasuma Sili*. Likewise, Chandra Kumar Hatuwali also remarks *Chasuma Sili* in *Sakela* is as the imitation of the nature and its worship. In his book *Sakenwa: Kiratharuko Mahan Chad*, he reasserts the very fact:

Sili is the heart of *Sakela*. It is the method of *Sakela* dance. It becomes different according to place and caste. There is the change in the movement of hand and foot according to the change of *Sili*. The activities of nature, animals and social activities are imitated by the *Sili* along with the dancers. The sillies are named as the natural elements.

(13)

Chandra Kumar Hatuwali further says about *Chasuma Sili*:

Chasuma sili is also called *Sumnima sili* or mother *Sili*. According to *Kirat* mythology *Sumnima* is the earth and mother of *Kirat Rai*. She is worshipped with great respect as the first mother of agrarian system. The process of agrarian system is pervasively found in *Chasuma Sili*. The steps like destroying the forest, ploughing, seeding, uprooting, planting, weeding round the plants, cutting down, heaping, chaffing, drying, weighing and to act or imitate of eating rice and to put rice inside the pocket are basic elements in *Sili*. (16)

Each *Sili* is about the natural aspects. In the above-mentioned lines Chandra Kumar Hatuwali makes clear that *Chasuma Sili* rounds surrounding the natural sources. The presence of natural elements in each *Sili* makes clear that *Sakela* is the festival of the nature.

Similarly, Tanka Bahadur Rai, in his book *Kiratharuko Dharma Ra Sanskriti-Samchhipta Adhyayan*, writes, “*Sakela* is the festival of *Kirat Rai* and it is based on natural *Kirat mundhum*” (48). Here, Tanka Bahadur Rai thinks nature is the base of *Sakela*, so it is very clear that nature is very important for *Kirat Rai*.

Another writer Gangaraj Rai (Hatuwali), in his article “*Rai Samajma Chandi Naach Harsa Ra Umangako Jagaran*”, says, “Even though there is difference among the *Rai* people in accordance with the place, they celebrate *Sakela* in the same way and the *Sakela* is based on agrarian system and natural aspects” (10). Here, Gangaraj Rai (Hatuwali) also explains that nature is inseparable aspect in the *Sakela*, a festival of *Kirat Rai*.

Like other writers, Bayansingh Rai, in his book *Utpati Ra Paramparaka Chamling Mithakharu*, remarks, “*Kirat Rais* believe that everything happens in this world because of the nature. So, *Kirat Rais* worship nature and follow *Sakela Sili*

oriented to the nature and they believe that life is possible because of the nature” (37-38). He too thinks that nature is as important as our life.

Since nature is the most important aspect in *Rai* community, Om Aastha Rai, in his article, “*Sanskriti, Kirat: Shaharma Sakela*”, writes “Though there are various Sillies in *Sakela*, the only purpose of sillies is to worship nature and its aspects” (48).

According to all these writers, the *Sakela* is mostly oriented to the nature. It is very clear that it is the festival of nature. Especially, *Chasuma Sili* is nature oriented. It is all about the ecology. Organism prevailing in *Chasuma sili* is the manifestation of the ecological awareness of this community.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

Chasuma Sili: Aa a Symbol of Ecological Consciousness

The *Rai*, one of the major ethnic communities living in the eastern part of Nepal belong to *Kirat* religion. The *Mundhum* is their vital philosophy that guides their lifestyle as *Vedas* to Hindus. The *Mundhum* drives all the cultural activities of the *Kirati*. The *Kirat Mundhum* regards *Sumnima* and *Paruhang* as their deities.

Sakela is one of the major cultural activities described in the *Mundhum*. It is a cultural and traditional dance which keeps *Sumnima* and *Paruhang* or, and the nature in centre. All the forms of *Sakela* signify the stone which is supposed to be the symbol of the God or the creator. In the *Sakela*, the forefathers are requested for a good harvest, to save the crops and wished for timely rain. Moreover, the dancers believe that they can make the rain by dancing. The celebration of *Sakela* falls twice in a year; once in *Baishake Purnima* called *Ubhauri* and another in *Mangsire Purnima* called *Udhauri*. *Ubhauri* and *Udhauri* are associated with the changing of the season. *Ubhauri* symbolizes the time for planting and *Udhauri* represents the time of harvesting.

Sakela is danced in various steps called *Sillies*. They differ according to location and the language. The name of the *Sillies* differs according to the place and the language but the meaning of all the *sillies* is same. Some sillies are namely *Kongthokchapak Sili*, *Narawa Sili* (human), *Sumnima Sili*, *Tayama Sili*, *Khyama Sili*, *Sumni Sili*, *Wapa Sili* (cock), *Ngasa Sili* (fish), *Fakleawa Sili*, *Mangchhama Sili*, *Chhongwalak Sili*, *Longlenchip Sili*, *Narokwa Sili*, *Berawa Sili* (bear), *Shasumkopma Sili*, *Parulak Sili*, *Rohompara Sili*, *Chanukama Sili*, *Chathoma Sili*, and *Chasuma Sili*. All sillies are dedicated to the nature and the god. For example, *Ngasa Sili* is dedicated to fish. In this *Sili* dancers perform to glorify fish and its activity. Similarly,

Berawa Sili is about bear and *Wapa Sili* is about cock. So, each *sili* has the touch of nature.

Chasuma Sili is the major *Sili* dedicated to the nature. The base of *Chasuma Sili* is the agrarian system. *Chasuma* itself refers to the nature mother. In the *Chasuma Sili*, the *Rai* people treat the natural elements like the earth, the water, the air, the fire, the hill, the stone and the sky as human beings. They sacrifice cocks, offer *Akshata* (rice), *Bechhuk* (ginger), *Wasim/Arakha* or *hengma* (alcohol) to the earth, the water, the fire, the hill, the stone the sky and the whole nature believing that these things are consumed as human beings do.

Through *Chasuma Sili*, the *Rais* worship mainly the river, the stone, the earth and the hill. These non living things are animated as they are offered *Akshata*, *Bechhuk*, *Wasim/Arakha* or *hengma* and provided red cock's blood believing they will consume beings do.

The *Mundhum* explains the origin of the earth, human beings, animals, plants and all the natural things (whole universe). The *Mundhum* keeps special relationship from birth to death of the *Kirat Rai* community. The *Mundhum* is necessary in the naming ceremony of the newborns, *Chhewar/Guneu-choli* ceremony, planting and harvesting crops to funeral ceremony. So, it is associated to the life cycle and life style of the *Kirat Rai* community. The *Nakshong* prays to God enchanting the *Mundhum* for better life of the new born baby. The *Rai* people worship the *Chula* (oven made by three stones) as they believe the spirits of the forefathers live in it. These three stones of the *Chula* signify nature. In the ritualistic ceremonies like *Gunue-choli* and *Chhewar*, the parents and the relatives bless the children to be like *Paruhang* and *Summina* which is significant here in the context that they both taught to use the nature for agriculture. *Kirati* people believe that their body is the part of

nature earth and they bury the body enchanting the *Mundhum* after death to assimilate it in the earth.

Eco criticism focuses on the alternative ways and systems of business, industry and daily to do so that it harms less to ecology. The agrarian system highlighted in *Chasuma Sili* is one of the alternatives that focus on the sustainable use of nature. The agrarian system highlighted in *Chasuma Sili* follows the simple ways of agriculture. It encourages on the use of traditional equipments and muscle/animal power for farming.

Chasuma Sili, *Sakela* and the *Mundhum* do not speak about the use of heavy and complex modern machines that emits carbon heavily and destructs nature. So, *Kirat* culture is eco friendly. Eco criticism, in the same way focuses on conservation of the nature, environment and the whole ecological system. It, for example denounces heavy carbon emission to not to harm the planet protecting ozone layer.

Today, we are facing global environmental crisis like global warming which will have huge impact on costal countries and high altitude areas. The consequences of human actions are damaging planet. Because of this, many eco critics engaged searching alternatives and looking into indigenous non-industrial cultures. They explored the possibilities of alliance between these cultures and wider environmental movement. They are highlighting environmental values of Native cultures to resist white industrial capitalism and focusing on sustainable natural interdependency which is exactly identical with indigenous *Kirat Rai* culture, *Mundhum*, *Sakela* and *Chasuma Sili*.

In Eco criticism, ideas and beliefs are assessed in terms of their environmental implications. Texts are analyzed in terms of its harmful and useful effects to nature. Eco critics analyze the nature from every aspect to understand the cultural

developments that have led to present global crisis. *Sakela*, by the means of dancing, put emphasis on agriculture, farming and hunting which is against the bad effects of consumerism developed by capitalism and heavy industrialism, the cause of today's global environmental problem of climate change.

Sakela starts with the *nakshong* (a Rai priest) offering *raksi* (liquor made from fermented rice) from *chindo* around the *Sakela thaan* (a place made up of stone, bamboo branch, banana leaves, etc.) chanting *mundhum*. Other people from the community follows the *nakshong* and dance in circle together with *chamaar* (yak's tail), *seulaa* (bunch of green leaves), *khurmi* (like a scythe), bow and arrow, *dhol* and *jhyamta* (traditional musical instruments sounding like tiger's voice). It is believed that the musical sound of *dhol* and *jhyamta* makes people forget their pain and sorrow. *Raksi, chindo, Sakela thaan* made up of stone, bamboo branch, banana leaves, etc., *chamaar, seulaa, bow and arrow, dhol* and *jhyamta* are the things gained directly from nature.

Kirat Rai people, from birth to death, worship nature. They worship sun, sky, river, stone, and fore fathers and so on. Because of this they are known as *Prakiti Pujak* (Nature worshipper). They believe they are the creation of earth and bury their body in the earth after death. They believe that they are the son of the nature earth and identify themselves as *Bhumiputra* (son of the earth) and think to assimilate body to earth after death is their duty.

All these things emphasize the importance of nature to Kirat Rai community and its status in Kirat Rai Culture. The use of only natural things in every ceremony suggests us for the sustainable use of, but not to the industrialized, polluted and capitalist world. It further can be understood and explained as a kind of pressure to assimilate nature and culture in a sustainable way. Eco criticism also takes its subject

the interconnection between nature and culture'. It talks about environmental justice perspective and tries to expose the fissure of race, gender and class.

The concern of eco critics is addressed in *Chasuma Sili*. It considers nature should be used to create appropriate space for every species but not destroyed.

Chasuma Sili describes how Paruhang taught his children to destroy the forest and plough fields and Sumnima taught her children planting farm for food. Even today, Rai people perform *Bhume Puja* to make happy the earth for better crops. This signifies that *Chasuma Sili* put emphasis on the sustainable use of nature.

The thought we find in this *Chasuma Sili* is a dominant thought which has been a most serious concerns of the today critics. This planet is heading towards a great collision due to unruly human activities. Trees are cut down, the world is heavily industrialized, and the planet's protective ozone layer is destructing, due to global warming many species of plants and animals are eloping from the world. So, it is the emergency time to think about nature. And we are already getting late. In this situation, the only way to protect this planet is the sustainable use of nature which is has been the centre of study of eco criticism. So, *Sakela* and *Chasuma Sili*, which we dance to enjoy and dance to save culture is relevant here because it focus on ecological justice and sustainable use of nature. Because the stories about the *Sakela*, focuses on the same thing; worshipping nature in the form of stone and equal space and opportunity to every species on this earth. For instances, *Chapcha*, the tiger is revived though it was killed by *Henkabung*, the human. This story suggests the right of life to every species on this planet as they are the children of God. Similarly, animals were given forest to live in and human, home. This story suggests that God has given adequate space to all species in the earth. And, all the myths about *Sakela* and *Chasuma Sli* have a single similarity, worshipping stone, earth, air, river, fire,

sky and the hill. These things symbolize nature which is very significant to prove the claim of *Kirat Rai* community as 'Nature Worshipper'.

Frustrated from the Western industrialization and its severe negative impact on the earth, the critics lately flourished eco writing and eco criticism. Such writers and critics want to save the planet for tomorrow's generation by conserving nature. Their main quest in this regard is how the planet's life can be extended. In order to achieve the goal, they have developed a common kind of understanding, i.e. develop eco friendly industries, cut carbon emission, use alternative energy, minimize the use of pesticides etc. In other words, they seem agreed in ecological justice and sustainable use of nature, which we already do have in *Kirat* culture i.e. *Chasuma Sili*. So, *Chasuma sili* is the manifestation of the ecological awareness of this community, one of the major indigenous ethnic communities of Nepal.

Works Cited

- Glotfelty, Cheryll. "Introduction: Literary Studies in the Age of Environmental Crisis." *The Ecocriticism Reader*. Ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Georgia: University of Georgia Press. 1996. Print.
- Hatuwali, Chandra Kumar. "Lakchhamharu." *Sakenwa: Kirat Raiharuko Mahan Chad*. Kathmandu: Bantawa Anusandhan Pratisthan, 2007. 44-57.
- Hatuwali, Chandra Kumar. "Sakenwa Lak Siliharu." *Sakenwa: Kirat Raiharuko Mahan Chad*. Kathmandu: Bantawa Anusandhan Pratisthan, 2007. 16-17.
- Hatuwali, Chandra Kumar. "Sili Utpatiko Katha." *Sakenwa: Kirat Raiharuko Mahan Chad*. Kathmandu: Bantawa Anusandhan Pratisthan, 2007. 13-15.
- Kerridge, Richard. "Environmentalism and Ecocriticism." *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Patricia Waugh. New Delhi: Brijbasi Art Press Ltd., 2006. Print. 531.
- Meeker, Joseph W. *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*. New York: Charles Suscriber's Sons, 1974.
- Mukarung, Rajan. "Bibaha". *Kirat Sanskar*. Kathmandu: Sathi Prakasan, 2004.45-55.
- Mukarung, Rajan. "Chhewar/ Gunuecholi". *Kirat Sanskar*. Kathmandu: Sathi Prakasan, 2004. 45-47.
- Mukarung, Rajan. "Udhauli/ Ubhauli". *Kirat Sanskar*. Kathmandu: Sathi Prakasan, 2004. 18-20.
- Rai, Bam Bahadur. "Sumnima Kal". *Pauranik Kirat Itihas*. Kathmandu: Megha Offset Press, 2001. 3-4.
- Rai, Bayan Singh. "Balakko Annaprasan Karyabidhi". *Utpati Ra Paraamparaka Chamling Mithakharu*. Kathmandu: Bayansing Rai, 1998. 50-52.

- Rai, Bayan Singh. "Yayachhawa Baimako, Khammako Tuingo Baimarichu." *Utpati Ra Paraamparaka Chamling Mithakharu*. Kathmandu: Bayansing Rai, 1998. 45-47.
- Rai, Bhakta Kumar. "Chasuma Sili". *Sakhewa Kina*. Bhojpur: Kirat Rai Yayokkha, 2001. 17-19.
- Rai, Bhakta Kumar. "Sakhewa Sili". *Sakhewa Kina*. Bhojpur: Kirat Rai Yayokkha, 2001. 16-17.
- Rai, Gangaraj (Hatuwali). "Rai Samajma Chandi Naach: Harsa Ra Umangako Jagaran." Kathmandu: Kirat Rai Yayokkha. *Nipsung* 15 (2002): 10-14.
- Rai, J.P. "Kirat Dharma Ra Mundhum." Kathmandu: Kirat Rai Yayokkha. *Nipsung* 15 (2002): 27-30.
- Rai, Om Aastha. "Sanskriti Kirat: Saharma Sakela." Kathmandu: Bhrikuti Prakasan. *Samaya* 17 (2008): 48-49.
- Rai, Tanka Bahadur. "Sakela Siliko Pradarsan." *Kirathauko Dharma Ra Sanskriti: Samkshipta Adhyayan*. Kathmandu: Kirat Bhumi Nepal, 2003. 48-49.