

Chapter I

Maghi Festival and the Identity of Tharus

This thesis regards Maghi as the best cultural moment to watch the identity of the Tharus in vibrate form. Maghi is solemnized during Maghi Day-the first day of the month of Magh in Nepali calendar. Maghi is celebrated as the greatest festivals with the vision of New Year, Emancipation Day, and Harmonious Day. But beyond that Maghi is the period when Tharus start staging their own culture.

Identity is something one strives to ascertain about oneself. People want to have an identity, that is separate from others community. Identity comes from genetic markers as well as the world around the person. There is also resurgent ethnic identity that allows for the traditional and traditional identities to appear. In other words circumstances that may have occurred in the past can influence ones identity a hundred or even thousand year later.

Evoking this historical and psychological issue, Martin Sokefeld accounts:

People insist on a certain communal identity, they do so not because they entertain certain Psychological or sociological categories but because issues of power and resistance are today intrinsically connected with identity. To insist on an identity is also to insist on certain rights and to be denied an identity implicates a denial of rights.(534)

People love to preserve their identity. For this, they regard their profession as important means of expression. People love to have separate cultural identity. Identity is something that one does not simply have but that one has to achieve. Identity does important work within the social and cultural sciences. Erikson writes-"The term identity expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential characteristics with other" (Quoted in Martin Sokefeld 531). Identity, just like culture or tradition, is not simply a fact but a construct or in

other words identity does not explain anything; identity has to be explained. Identities are constructed not by impersonal historical or social forces but of course by human individuals within particular social and historical condition. Regarding this, Handler writes:

Identity, a concept developed within the western intellectual tradition, presupposes certain other ideas like that of a bounded and constant individual, an idea which psychological anthropology has shown not to be a universal rather cultures get constructed deconstructed and reconstructed as people pursue their identities. It is by no means immune against the dangers of reification "That's why identity is not a fixed things but an evolving, synthetic and omnivorous process that draws or rather selects form available aesthetic and ontological constructs to perform or manifest its ever-evolving, protean self. (Quoted in Martin Sokefeld 531)

Culture is the configuration of all value system, belief, tradition, custom, morals, ideals and knowledge of a specific social group. It is the sum of human behavior which neither instinctive nor genetically transmitted but socially transmitted behavior patterns that serve to relate human communities to their ecological setting. Jackson opines:

Group identities are firmly embedded in relationships and institutions, but they begin as ideas and concepts that people have about themselves and others. Culture is a learned behavior and involves sense making. Collective identities are products of this sense making process. (Quoted in Ilhan Kaya 315)

People know who they are by discovering and experiencing their tradition and ways of life. These understandings function to help people put them themselves in particular categories, whether part of the new culture or the old one, and form new communities. In this way Rodaway writes: "Identities are shaped not only in material relationship but also in the ways people imagine, think, and articulate themselves in relation to others" (Quoted in Ilhan

Kaya316). It includes the way of eating, performing rituals, life styles of that group. Cultural identity is not just defined by a group or culture; it also consists of racial, religious, class, gender, sexuality and familial identities. Ways to express cultural identity include –dressing in specific clothing, eating or preparing food a certain way, participating in rituals, traditions or rites of passage, playing music and sharing information about a culture with outsiders.

Tharus are indigenous people and their prominent occupation is agriculture. So, they are hard-workers and most of time they spend their time in the field working together. They are totally depended on agriculture that's why most of Tharus are economically poor because they exploit their physical body for physical labor. Work is an essential and universal human activity and has a crucial place in one's identity formation. In this regard, Ilhan Kaya writes:

One's social status in a particular society is closely linked to how one makes a living and what one does for a living influences who one socializes with and what social activities one participates in. As individuals are distributed into different classes and categories that the division of labor presents, group identity is a likely outcome. However, this is not a simply one way process, because through community - survival strategies, group identities such as ethnic identity offer important bases for the distribution of persons into particular categories and particular work places as well. (325)

This process reinforces identities by providing them with an organizational aspect while working either private or public work. As a result, work space is not just a place where people work, it is also where they come together, socialize, interact, share feelings and ethnic identity offer important bases for the distribution of persons into particular categories and particular work places as well as memories, transmit values and transform identities.

Nepal has a predominately centralized government, yet many communities are located far from the cities in which most government activities take place. Still, the state continues to

make policies and apply them to all areas of Nepal. However, Nepal is rich in the diversity of cultures and indigenous organizations. People inhabiting the rural areas have their own distinctive socio-cultures and their own political desires. They wish to preserve their right to practice their cultures and participate in the political sphere. Traditionally, Tharus were limited in cultural activities regulating their community. They didn't concern to external factors, but when a decade Maoist insurgency and 19 days long people's movement of 2006 breakout the system then they realized a sense of political identity and redefined their culture once again. Maghi is such a festival in which community members select or elect such energetic candidates (Barghar, Guruwa, Kesauka, Kulapani Committee, Chaukidar, Lohara) so that he / she can motivate community peoples. They are not limited to social work in community but also share political ideas with community peoples. As a result the mission of movement is emerged with great strength in the Tharu community, particularly concerning the inclusion of ethnic group, Tharu, and their traditional organization in the constitution. The Tharuhat movement was fought not just against the Brahman/ Chhetri autocracy. Social identity, cultural and political equality, and an inclusive democracy through state restructuring and forward moving reforms were the key issues.

Maghi opens up spaces for communality and mass participation despite societal differences in terms of class, race, income, intellectual pretensions or the memories from the lacerations of history. In recent years, Maghi has become an act of incorporation and atonement. It has become a ritual of purgation and regeneration. Maghi has come to represent a collective and dynamic process of subjectivity and creativity that enables Tharus to engage, rethink, redefine themselves and act out the contradictions of their histories. Carnival, thus becomes the festive and secular variation of the more serious and cultic tradition of ritual performances. Maghi, on the other hand, is a collective creation. It is this collective involvement that gives the performance of its historic and epic structure.

The synthesis of all the art form-music, songs, dance, mythic language, costume, incantation and so on - whose cumulative effect on the senses open up the subconscious and make ritual efficacy or transformation possible from one generation to another because when the people feel a sense of ownership and belonging and participation to the theatrical process of celebrating Maghi, the performance will embody and validate their experiences and cement their sense of community. The philosophy that theatre is a form of communal therapy whereby the society rewires the threads of human relationship that have been broken in the course of the year is very well-known by the entire community. Just as well, the theory that festival theatre is a ritual that allows us to enter into a state of consciousness that brings us into spiritual contact with eternal concepts like community, nationhood, democracy, collectivity, history, metaphysics and worldview is common lore. In this regard, Esiaba Irobi writes:

Collective memory in premodern societies was forged through song, myth, poetry, dances, drum language processions, mime and drama and expressed through the umbrellas of festival and ritual performance: initiations, rites of passages and naming wedding and funeral ceremonies. The primary function of these festival and rituals, at one level, is to reify and imbue historical values with recognizable meaning - as in the wedding ceremony. At the secondary level, they serve as processes for recalling and preserving the aesthetic used to structure the idea, experience of cultural value being expressed into a text for reenactment. (909)

Tharus are indigenous ethnic group of Terai. They are the inhabitants of Terai region.

Historians and activists blame that the state policy of Nepal had marginalized Tharus from every sort of opportunities. But Tharu people similar to other ethnic groups have their own

culture, costume, rites and languages that portray their distinct and unique identity. Regarding this ethnic group, Peter Murdock opines:

It is a social group in which there are many clans, nomadic bands, villages of other subgroups which usually have a definite geographical area, separate language, a singular and distinct culture and either a common political organization or at least a feeling of common determination against strangers.

(Quoted in Rajaure 31)

The traditional homeland of Tharus encompasses an area of Terai and inner Terai region, stretching from Jhapa in the east to Kanchanpur in the west, which is historically known as Tharuhat Province. The society also scattered in the adjacent Indian district of Champaran, Gorakhpur, Basti, Gonda and Naini Tal. There are also several endogamous sub- groups of Tharu, such as Ratgainya, Satgainya, Dahit, Kusumya, Pachhaldangya, Kathariya, Rana, Kochila and so on. However, Tharu people have their own typical culture, costume, language, geographical territory and communal stance they are undoubtedly ethnic group.

The Tharus have their own mother tongue, Tharu. Tharus have populated and generally scattered villages with minor distances. In the past, Tharus were always in search of good site for founding their village. A good site in their judgment must be an agri- land on a high level with proximity to river or some water supply, safe from flooding and inundation during rainy season. Their main occupation of Tharus is farming from time immemorial but due to impact of modernization and consciousness Tharus have taken other professions as well. Guneratne writes:

Culture and society are emergent forms. They are always in the process of becoming, shaped through the activity of conscious human agents who both reproduce and transform the cultural systems and social structures they inherit at birth which in turn provide necessary conditions for their activity. (190)

Tharus are one of the largest ethnic group of Nepal who are settled in 23 districts across the Terai region from east to west of Nepal. There are many feasts and festivals where they perform throughout the year that carry on cultural significance. Therefore, they keep on performing one after another. Tharus during such performances come together. To perform ritual is to carry something into effect- whether it is a story, an identity an artistic artifact, a historical memory or ethnography. Deborah A Kapchan accounts:

Performance genres play an essential role in the mediation and creation of social communities, whether organized around bonds of nationalism, ethnicity, class status, or gender. Yet performances provide an intricate counterpoint to the unconscious practices of everyday life in so far as they are stylistically marked expressions of otherness, lifting a level of habitual behavior and entering an alternate, often ritualized or ludic, interpretive frame wherein different rules apply. (479)

Culture and performance are both interdependent genre which are essential factors in human life and such ethos play the most significant role in the formation and reformation of societal ethos, norms and values. Culture is the framework of particular society. Evoking this side of culture, Alan Clarke writes:

A community festival is a series of events with a common theme and delivered within a defined time period. It is developed from within a community and celebrates and positively promotes what the community represents. Community festivals are about participation, involvement and the creation of a sense of identity and are important in contributing to the social wellbeing of a community. (9)

Maghi is the greatest festival among all year round festivals. It carries historical as well as cultural significance among Tharus. Though ways of celebrating Maghi is various among the

Tharus from east to west but they celebrate it giving with great importance. Specially, Tharus of western terai, as this thesis focuses on, celebrate it in special way with different terms.

Gopal Dahit writes:

Maghi is the most important, the biggest and identity of Tharus and national festival as well. They celebrate it in different terms like- New Year, Emancipation Day and Harmonious Day feeling of pleasures to provide gift to their sisters. Actually, it falls on 1st of Magh but they start preparation for it from a month ago. They prepare sweet alcohol manage wood, leaf, oil, practice singing and dancing in different groups. (51)

Maghi is celebrated in a grand manner. Whole community turns into a theatre; different songs and dialogues also take place. The theatre, since the time immemorial, has always served as mirror reflecting the actual circumstances of the human condition as well as served as a force expanding human's vision of his surroundings. Tharus celebrate this festival with the belief that the season changes. For this festival, the activities of preparation start from a month in advance. Though the custom of keeping Kamaiyas had been abolished by the Governments of Nepal, but now due to economic burden, small children still are kept in many houses secretly as Kamlahris to carry out the chores. Most of Kamlahris are from western Nepal-Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur. Many Tharu boys and girls work as domestic servant. During the occasion of Maghi they too return their home to celebrate Maghi festival. Each festival of the Tharus has their systematic pattern of celebration. Before celebrating any festivals, the Tharus decorate their houses in their cultural fashion. They prepare liquor for festivals because Tharus are concerned as one of the hardworking people; they depend on their physical work exploiting their physical labor. Preparation of liquor embodies the cultural importance because without wine no feast, festivals and rituals are celebrated in Tharu community. *Daaru*(Homemade liquor distilled

from rice) is considered as sacred liquor to be offered as *chhaki* (a sip of house made liquor) to deities to make them happy hoping that their deities will protect and secure them from all bad omen, plague, disease, evil eye and fulfill their all wishes and desires. So, alcohol is innately touched with their tradition. People collectively go for fishing to nearby river or stream at the end of poush. They make dry fishes for Maghi. They manage woods, plates of leaf, oil of mustard; do practice for dancing with their different peer groups. They grind the rice to make flour for *dhikri* (kind of sacred vapourized bread made of rice flour), *roti* (bread made of rice flour). At last day of pous is called '*Jitamarna Din*' (Day to chop pigs). People gather at *Barghar*'s yard and manage pig meat (pork) then they purchase meat according to their status. But nowadays people also manage the mutton. People stay vigil performing various cultural dances and folk songs like-*Maghauta*, *Chhokra*, *Daffa*, *Dhumru* (Tharu traditional dances and songs performed during Maghi festival) the same night and women are busy in preparing varieties of foods; *dhikri*, *roti*, meat, *tilkeladdu* (laddu of sesame) *sidhra* (dried fishes), *tarul* (yam), *gainji* (sugarcane), *khichari* (rice pudding), vapourized rice of anadi.

After the first crow of cock all the people go to nearby river/stream or well/tap for bathing and worship god. It is believed that the pairs who want baby should take bath and blessings from god. After worshipping, they receive blessing from their elders with white Teeka then have different varieties of foods and drinks. In Tharu community, Maghi festival indicates the celebration of New Year as the day of freedom, liberty to those who are scuffled to work night and day. It is also the day of bestowing souvenir to sisters known as *Nishrau*. The day is celebrated with merrymaking, eating, drinking and performing ritual *Maghauta Naachin* exuberantly mood. Regarding the Maghi festival, Dorna Prasad Rajaure accounts:

For Tharu community it is a day of freedom, merrymaking and doing no work at all. Even personal serf and employees get leave on this great festival. On this day amateurs and even children dance their cultural dance *Maghi Naach*

decorating with different jewelries and ornaments and dressing with colorful and winsome attires. They go each houses singing and dancing. (241)

After receiving blessings from elders, they go toneighboring house too to take blessings according to their age and relative. They are offered varieties of foods and drinks. This is the right time when misunderstandings between and among Tharus get settled or the demarcation of their enmity is vanished. In this way, this festival develops social secularism and considerable relationship among Tharus in community.

Tharu people respect their daughters/ sisters. They give important role to women in their family. So, they go to give *Nishrau*(presentation of grinded lentil, rice and salt to daughters or sisters)to their sisters in the second day. It provides a chance to meet their sisters and know the overall status of the sisters. If brothers do not go to sisters home then sisters become sad waiting for brother's whole day. Thus, this practice strengthens the relationship among siblings and makes it lively. Folk dances are also performed continuously till a week.

Every indigenous and tribal group has its own type of organizational system to regulate community works. Organization is managerial body that carries out every work systematically. And system is a procedure of carrying out the jobs in organized way. So, organizational system is an administrative and managerial body or structure that handles and completes the particular profession smoothly with good care. Like the same, the oldest indigenous community that is "Tharu" has also very old, genuine and traditional organizational system. Relating organizational system, GopalDahit opines:

Tharu organizational system is directly inherent to Tharu community which is derived from many years of experience and transforming from one generationto another. Under which each Tharu easily accepts and follows all the norms and values of it. It does not require written rules and regulations to

enforce them follow all the norms and values of Tharu organizational system.(160)

Tharu organizational systems are constructed in order to regulate their main occupation-agriculture. Though they have divided it into four groups to make it more specific and professional, namely, Barghariya System, Kulapani Chaudhary System, Family System, and Agro-Family System, Barghariya system is basically for village leadership and Kulapani Chaudhary system is for managing water for irrigation of paddy farms. Both organization systems are well established in the Tharu community. Family and Agro- family organizations are occupational leadership to sustain daily life of them. So, entire organizations have great importance in the daily life of indigenous Tharus. In the absence of these organizations, it is very difficult to run life cycle of them. So, it has big potentiality to boost the all-round development of Tharu people.

Each Tharu family has system of kisan, the head of house, who manipulates rest of the family members and bears all the responsibilities. Among the family member, eldest male is considered as a kisan or kisan might be next too. The kisan who is the supreme person of the house, formulates rules and regulations to be followed by family members, thus, he monitors and guides the entire members. He has responsibilities to provide all kinds of basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education, treatment and others. He plays the vital role for the guidance of the family and makes important decision for the welfare and betterment of house members. He assigns duties and responsibilities to each individual according to their age and sex. Wife of the kisan automatically becomes assistant kisan called *kisniniya*. She leads all the females of the family to agricultural or domestic indoor work. Management of the house, ritual, traditional performance, feast and festival are initiated on the leadership of kisan. He is managerial director of house and family members. So, he is duly respected person among the rest of the family members.

On the occasion of Maghi festival, the ritual of setting the solar calendar does not take place only for community but within family too for the year round. For this all the members of the family gather in their house and served with varieties of victuals and homemade liquor. In that merrymaking environment they discuss about many house hold agendas. In short, they discuss like selection of kisan, whether they migrate or not, whether they separate house or not, whether anyone get married or not, whether they keep/leave Kamaiyas/ Kamlahris or not, discussion about progress or loss within past year and setting the work plan for next year/current year. In this way they discuss about above mentioned topics. All the topics for discussion are not well documented within paper but it is set in their mind. After their homely discussion the responsibilities of each member of the family is also assigned. Moreover, carrying out responsibilities if any member of the family or selected persons of community make a mistake, the case is discussed during this festival. But discussion on such mistakes can take place before the festival. Even if they are not satisfied with the performance of the individual, he/she has to carry out the duties for one year. Except the Maghi festival, Tharus celebrate different sorts of feast, festival, ceremonies and rituals deeply rooted in culture and tradition foreground, enmeshed with various and typical forms of folk songs, folklores and folkdances such as *Barka Naach*(the greatest Tharu traditional dance that carries historical significance and includes the subject matter of Mahabharata), *Sakhiya Naach*(Tharu traditional dance performed in Dashain and Tihar that glorifies lord Krishna's youth life and glorious deeds), *Hurdunguwa*(traditional dance, performed during great festival Dashain on the occasion of lord Ram's victory over Ravan), *Jhumra*(dance performed in Dashain), *Maghauta*(cultural dance performed during the greatest festival Maghi), *Latthahwa* (stick dance), *Kathghorik Naach* (kind of Tharu dance riding on artificial horse which is made of bamboo), *Chhokra Naach* (dance performed by male dancer wearing female's costumes), *Daffa*(song without dance playing with musical instrument daffa) etc. In this way Harold O

Skar writes- “Songs and dances, drama in different genres as well as other cultural performances, have been used in attempts to develop a cultural unity among the Tharu people” (236).

For each cultural performances and festivals, they have separate and distinguished forms of dances and songs that whirl around a year. They often have seasonal songs and performances. Within a same category of songs and folk songs they have different forms of lyrics and vocal system for instance they have one lyric or vocal pattern in the evening but subsequently varies in nights, midnight, morning, day, noon respectively. Such performances and activities obviously shows the Tharus are profoundly rich in their cultural assets interconnecting with their unique identity embedded into it. Regarding such cultural traits Gopal Dahit opines:

The ethnic Tharus have their own language, literature, culture, tradition, costume, dances, folksongs, folkdances, folklores, residential territory and unique rituals that hails from the individual’s birth to death. They worship their gods and goddesses individually and communally for the welfare of community people, village, their assets from evil fortune and evil eye and they tended each celebration exuberantly which obviously manifests the unique identity of Tharu community. (My Translation 4)

Dance, accompanied by music, represents the supreme art, the art par excellence. Body is the major conduit of artistic expression whether it is a painting, a dance, singing, gesturing or performing. The ultimate source of signification is the human body. It is therefore because the body is the primary instrument for incubating, articulating and expressing all the ideas as well as transporting all arts. Regarding the dance, Paul Connerton contextualizes:

All cultures much of the choreography of authority is expressed through the body within this choreography, he argues, there is an identifiable range of

repertoires through which many postural performances become meaningful by registering meaningful inflections of the upright gesture. Such inflections recall a pattern of authority to performers and observers...culturally specific postural performances provide us with a mnemonics of the body. (Quoted in Esiaba Irobi 899)

Maghi, one of the most important festivals of the Tharus, has much significance. One of the most important tasks of them is the calendar-setting ritual. It is solemnized during Maghi. This annual calendar regulates many socio-cultural performances of the Tharus all the year round. For this ritual, Barghar calls for *forjutelha / khyala* (General Assembly) and Gardhuriyas (persons from every household) gather to Barghar's yard or public place. People have termed headman of village in different name but its essence is one. People of Dang district have named to headman-Mahataunwa, Barghar in Bardiya, Bhalmansa in Kailali district. There are some most important aspects discussed in that gathering. They conclude the past year and set new work plan for a new year. To regulate the community smoothly, they select *Barghar*(village leader), *Guruwa*(wizard), *Kesauka*(assistant wizard), *Chirakya*(person who takes care water for irrigation within a village), *Chaukidar*(watch man of a village), *Lohara*(professionally, blacksmith appointed to repair or made daily used equipments) and set a committee of kulapani who care for village. Since, new individuals are selected for handing over the responsibility of the village and this tradition is called *khajnibojni* (selection or election procedure of new or same candidate for a village by open discussion). Community people also discuss about how and how much labour charges are paid to selected persons. They discuss about which kisan sends how many numbers of people from his house to public work. Ex-kamaiyas celebrate as freedom day because they could decide whether they want to stay or not to same jamindar. Every activity should be finished at the end of Pous.

Tharus are indigenous people of Terai. They are so honest that it is believed that they don't know any diplomatic ideas of behind to each other. Evoking this side of Tharu psychology, Guneratne writes:

Tharus had no attachment to any given piece of land. Land was relatively plentiful and because of labor scarcity, could be had for the asking. This is no longer the case the intensive settlement of the Terai, the clearing of forest and wood land, and the cultivation of pasture land closed off the land frontier. The agrarian reforms fail to benefit most Tharus because they did not understand the significance of registration of land. Lastly, many of them lost some or all of their lands to immigrants through chicanery and fraud. (195)

Here, land, as an abstract concept, is necessary for a farming people to reproduce their existence because land is both a symbol of identity and the root factor in the development of ethnic consciousness. But, in the aftermath of Malariya Eradication Project, Government of Nepal encouraged hill people to influx Terai and revenue collection policies during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century had created a new landlord class very unlike the peasant cultivators who had provided a livelihood and a degree of security to their kamaiyas—a class comprising absentee hill people of high caste who were appointed jamindars (revenue collector) or who had received *birta* (a tax – free grant of land made by the state to one of its officials as compensation for service) and *jagir* (tax – exempt land grants made to government servants in lieu of salaries) lands and including the Tharu headmen (*talukdar*) they appointed to manage their lands in their absence. This new landlord class was socially and ritually removed from the Tharu society it came to dominate.

On the leadership of Barghar, all the kisans make some rules and regulations to be followed by each village members. Barghar is the ruler of village; he leads and works for all the village and villagers. He makes important decision for the village and villagers, reconciles

any sort of conflict on the mutual understanding of villagers and gives his final decision. If anything happened to any individual, he/she goes to the Baghar's lap to ask for justice. Any sorts of cultural, ritual performances begin from the courtyard of Barghar's house on his leadership. On his leadership, all village people organize community –based worship for the welfare of village. He takes the responsibility of whole village. He is duly respected not only by his villagers but equally by the other villagers too.

Religion is conventionally defined as referring to something which has to do with belief in superhuman or supernatural beings. The Tharus are adherents of Hinduism but few of them are also adopted Buddhism and Christianity. They celebrate their great festivals according to the Hindu philosophy. Therefore, it must not be misunderstood and misinterpreted that their culture is an autonomous culture having no relation with the mainstream or rest of the cultures. It naturally interacts with other culture too. They worship various gods and goddess in the form of animals and plants such as horse, tiger, elephant, snake, bar-peepal etc. Village or community-based pujas are accomplished on the leadership of *Bhuinhaar/BarkaGuruwa* and *Kesauka* at *Devthanuwa*(deity place). Almost all Tharu individual family has their own statue of traditional gods and goddesses. Before celebrating any festivals and rituals, they purify the sacred place of deities smearing with cow-dung and spraying *sun-pani*(sacred water touched by gold)and then enhance their cultural activities. To plead gods and goddesses family members often sacrifice animal blood, milk and milk products. They sacrifice animals like piglet, he goat, ram, and birds like chicken and pigeon, likewise silk cloth is also offered. Regarding the supernatural spirit Guneratne in his book, *The Shaman and the Priest* writes: “Tharus believe in the existence of malevolent spirit known as *bhut*(ghost), spirit of human being who has died an untimely death of whose funeral rites have not been performed" (10).

Guruwas (wizards) are intermediary between human society and that of supernatural spirit. Guruwas are wise and devotee people who learn Tharu Mantars from Tharu Guru and perform shaman work for taking cure of sick people through using the knowledge of sacred Mantars or medical plants. Just reverse those who use this knowledge against the wellbeing are named as *Boksa* (male witch) or *Boksinya* (female witch). Both *boksa* and *boksinya* are vile persons, bad wisher, dirty gamblers, impurity thinkers and evil eye. They spend their lots of time becoming problematic to human life. So, those Guruwa who can solve the problem created by *boksinya* and *boksa* is called successful Guruwa. He uses mantars to solve problems of sick people. Tharu Mantar is that empirical, ethical, spiritual, celestial, and sacred knowledge which was originated by wise Tharu as per needs and priorities based on spiritual salvation, divine grace and devotion of powerful goddess, which has been transforming from particular one generation to another in the oral form and /or learn through family members that has been using for taking cure of needed living beings. Tharus strictly believe that their gods have capacity to cure and heal the sickness, disease, plague and exorcise the evil force. According to Tharu legend, Tharu bestow *bhakal* (promise) to convince their deities as a promise if their deities listen and solve their problems. Guruwa(Shaman) with his incantation, beating drums and offering sacrifices attempt to appease gods. The Tharus believe that all sorts of problems predicaments, misfortune, sickness, plague and drought come when their deities are discontent and at that time devils and demons are at activated phase.

In every village there is one village level Chaudhary who is called Chirakya. He does all the works to supply water to their respective famers; thereby helping chief Chaudhary to construct main dams and cannels. They do managerial and coordination role to supply water. Chaukidar is a watchman of a village. He takes care for village even at night time. His duty is to inform villagers to gather for doing public work. He has to go anywhere if Barghar

orders. Loharais the ironsmith whose job is to construct weapons that are needed for agriculture and daily use. But he is not allowed to make other weapons like khukuri, knife, gun, sword etc. in village area.

As far as their food and drink items are concerned, their main food varieties are Bhat, Daal, Kapuwa, (made from rice flour)Chatani, Tarkari. Pork is their main meat item in each festivals and ceremonies they serve pork varieties, besides that they also eat chicken, mutton, fish etc.Crab and Ghonghi, (snail like creature) rat are also their eating items. The Jaand and Jaandakjhor(variety of ale) made from Anadi rice and daaru prepared from fruit of Mahuwa(a tree having sweet fruits) are considered as the best drinking items. These above mentioned victuals and drink bear the cultural role to make the feasts, festivals, rituals and communal stance charismatic, rejoicing, pleasure which endorse the sense of unity, fraternity, equality and healthy relation among the community members of Tharu. Such drinking items eventually instigate to expose the suppressed hearts to subvert the demarcation between destitute and sophisticated, male and female, master and servant. The intoxicated person often involves in dance performance by hooting, whistling, singing, dancing and playing Mandra(tom-tom) which brings charisma and entertainment in Naach. Therefore, in Tharu cultural feasts, festivals, rituals and performance there is communal behavior and stance having no any sense of hierarchy, domination, discrimination between or among sex, gender, class and race because it also equally welcomes the individuals from other class. Thus, the cultural practice in this ethnic group strongly manifests the equity among the male and female having egalitarian ground.

As concern to dress, Tharu women wear *Choliya*(kind of blouse fringed with thread and strings on the back to tie it up), *Blouse*, *Lehenga*(skirt like dress made of cotton fabric with particular floral design), *Agharan*(dress used to cover the breast over the blouse), *Goniya*(kind of white skirt)and men wear *Jhuluwa*(shirt), *Bheguwa*(a lining cloth used to

cover only sex organs), *Dhoti* (white cloth used to wear at waist) which manifest their cultural costume. However, in recent time they have altered in their attire, they wear vogue and common dresses as others do. Tharu women adorn with varieties of ornaments and jewelries for instance *Tikli*(kind of ornament used to put on forehead made of grass plastic or gold), *Nathani*(nose ring made of gold), *Phephi*(a large sized of ornament to wear in nose), *Phuli*(small sized ornament to wear in nose made of gold), *Kensari*(a kind of necklace), *Taunk*(kind of ornament used to wear around the neck), *Tariya* (an armlet made of silver), *Guriya*(kind of necklace), *Mala*(kind of necklace strung with silver coin) *etc.* almost all the ornaments are of silver and very few of them are of gold.

Like other existing groups, Tharus also have their own characteristic forms of art which they take care of it and pass to their descendants. Each art acts as a mirror to reflect on the people who produce it and his cultural site. Life and art are inseparable entity which is interwoven with each other. However, life passes whereas art remains to speak about the creators. It is an only thing that is permanent and a source of knowledge of the past civilization that came and vanished. Tharus are very skillful in their artifact because the raw materials needed for artifact are locally available. They make different types of handicraft for different purpose like-*Delwa*(basket made of kusha grass hanged and designed with all round oyster shell and fringe), *Dhakiya*(an open plain or colorful basket made of kusha), *Panchhopni*(colorful plate made by kusha grass used to cover pots of water), *Dehari*(grain silos made of mud), *Berri*(circular mat made of straw), *Sirhatta*(pillow), *Gondri*(kind of mat made of a special kind of plant which is near water), *Machiya*(special types of small bedstead used to sit by single person), *Khatiya*(large sized bedstead made of wood and rope), *Laharu*(small bull cart), *Larhya*(large sized bull cart), *Suppa*(winnowing tray), *Bena*(hand fan made of bamboo stick), *Helka*(kind of hand net for fishing), *Bhauka*(colorful or plain big sized basket with cover woven by kusha grass, which is hung in antler of deer),

Dhenki(wooden husking equipment), *Dokni*(a slab of wood for grinding spices), *Nonbokni*(a special designed salt and chilly carrier made of wood), *Har*(wooden plough) and many others.

But the bitter fact is that the cultural performances are deteriorating day by day in the name of modernization. Only few people have realized its values and started working with it. Such cultural performances are limited to the illiterate people of remote villages, and it is about to vanish, if not preserved immediately. Thus, this research on performing Maghi and redefining Tharu identity focuses on the cultural perspective and will be studied based on performance theory. Maghi is solemnized during the month of Magh in Nepali calendar, which portrays the gender equality, fraternity, unity, harmony having no sort of constraints and hierarchy among the Tharu community members.

Chapter II

Performing Maghi and Redefining Tharu Identity

Culture is at once traditional, a whole way of life passes on through generation, and creative, the processes of discovery that lead to new ways of thinking and doing. Performance is the act of performing, of doing something successfully, using knowledge as distinguished from merely possessing it. Culture and performance are both interdependent genre, which are essential factors in human life and such ethos play the most significant role in the formation and reformation of societal ethos, norms and values. Cultural performance represents the particular culture of community, people, and society and subsequently enrolls to delineate and discern their entire life pattern.

Cultural performances are related to cultural history and visualize the culture in front of onlookers and spectators who hail from different cultural sectors. Ritual is a sort of creed and belief enmeshed into natural power. It is prevalent and dominant in each community or ethnic group celebrate and perform their ritual according to their norms and values. Cultural performance portrays the hidden feelings, emotions, grief and pain and expresses those pang, and it becomes the effective medium to reveal indirectly such pains in front of community people and audiences. Performance is the sort of acting pattern which is accomplished with discussing, singing, dancing, acting and entertaining in the benign, superb and enthralling movements of the body. Furthermore, cultural performance is performed and accomplished with the participation of females who play the dominant roles in ritual and cultural performance. Through cultural performance, females express their hidden reality, feelings emotions. In performance, they do not feel sense of inferiority complex, domination and exploitation, so, they do not hesitate to reveal their suppressed

desires. In the festival, young and old generations get together in the same place but now days both generations present separately. The younger generations follow traditional norms and values in different way whereas old generations follow traditionally. In this regard Elizabeth Bell writes:

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

Similarly, for the performance there must be the particular venue where performance takes place. Performers select the particular venue where they can play their performances called the stage. However, place or the stage depends on according to nature of performance. Performance, which is cultural, is performed on the open area, space, community center. Likewise, religious performance is carried out nearby the bank of rivers and nearby temple. In space, there is expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community in those spaces where reality is being performed. Therefore, no performance takes place out of spatio-temporal framework. In this sense Milton Singer characterizes cultural performance into five components: a limited time span, an organized program of activity, a set of performers, an audience and a place and occasion of performance (Quoted in Elizabeth Bell 131). Performance often follows rules according to the calendar schedule and its regularity of time. For instance, the Tharu cultural festival Maghi is

celebrated solely in the month of Magh in Nepali calendar which falls in between Jan-Feb. Performance is the effective means to comprehend the world, reinforce their notion and transformation of it to the young generation. Performance can be exploited for orthodox and revolutionary dogmas. Orthodox does not want to see any diversion or change in performance. It reinforces in morality either the performance is running according to current situation or not, so, they never need any transformation in performance. However, in revolutionary forces the performance activities always needs to attempt to restructure the social order omitting the incompatible activities, ethos, norms and values through redefinition. Revolutionary forces always try to run according to current fashion and time amending the same change in orthodox dogmas and belief. However, there is symbiotic relationship between old and young generation. It is challengeable to change old customs immediately. Festival in every age takes a new avatar as it has to create new systems of celebrating festivals abreast of time. To give pleasure, entertainment and convey the mass awareness messages is the basic work of performance. In this regard, Victor Turner accounts:

Cultural performances are not just mirrors but active agents of change. As reflexive, cultural performances provide moments to enact comment on, critique, and evaluate the norms and values of the culture. Performance reflexivity: a socio-cultural group turns, bends, reflects back on itself, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other components that make up their public selves. (Quoted in Elizabeth Bell 137)

Maghi, a dominant festival among the festivals, carries the historical as well as cultural significance. Maghi has been celebrating by all the Tharus living from east,

Mechi to west, Mahakali. It is national festival too. All the Nepalese celebrate Maghi for few days whereas Tharus celebrate it for a long time with different events. They do not have relation with cultural, historical and mythical importance for celebrating Maghi. Though ways of celebrating Maghi among all Tharus is different but they celebrate Maghi giving it great importance. However, there are variations in celebrating Maghi from eastern to western Tharus due to place and advent of non-Tharu culture. Western Tharus, in comparison to eastern Tharus, celebrate Maghi in special way. It is celebrated in various forms like New Year, Emancipation Day, and Harmonious Day. In this festival, Tharus sing different cultural songs, perform dances. So, this ceremony not only gives the glimpse of merry making and entertainment but also their cultural dances, communal behavior, gender equality, fraternity, affection, moral lesson and unity in Tharu people. Although, Maghi is celebrated in the month of Magh in Nepali calendar but preparation for the ceremony starts from a month ago.

Preparation:

For the preparation of Maghi, they make sweet cider of *anadi* (a kind of paddy) and *daaru* (homemade liquor distilled from rice). They collect fire woods and timbers from the forest because they do not only cook foods with woods but also they lit the fire in fireplace / veranda to cheat them cold. They pluck the green leaves of Sal or *Nimrain* (a species of trees) from forest to make *Donnya and tepri* (kind of small and large sized plates made by green leaves) because invited relatives and neighbours come to salute or celebrate the festival. And it is not possible to serve them varieties of victuals in the metal plates. They manage pure mustard oil too. They purchase new clothes for whole family members. They invite to their relatives and call to family members, who are away from home for earnings or work for others such as

Kamlahsris, to celebrate the festival. Each festival has systematic pattern of celebration; and before celebration of Maghi, they make their house neat and clean and decorate in their cultural fashion. They go for fishing in the river with the help of *Helka, Cheundhi, Pakhai, Jal, Tapi*(manmade nets for fishing) in groups of males and females that epitomize the glimpse of art of fishing in Tharu community. They make dry fishes (sidhra) especially for Maghi Day. They make the preparation for *jitamarna*. And for this, they make a list of meat purchaser that Gardhuriyas of the village have required. They make only one list of meat purchaser within a village, if possible or they make the list within their cluster area. After the listing out the lists of meat it is easy to estimate the meat that how much it is demanded for. *Dhikri* is one of the important varieties of foods that are eaten during Maghi and for it they grind rice into flour before 2/3 days of Maghi. They also grind anadi rice for Roti. People, who are interested in music and musical cultural songs, make clean and clear to their percussions like *Mandra* (Tom-Tom), *Daffa* etc. by rubbing with mustard oil. *Bhansariyas* (cook women) wash *paina and Paines topi*(kind of baskets woven by kusha and that is used to steam traditional bread dhikri) with water and dry it up in sunlight. At last day of Poush called *Jitamarna Din*, all the Gardhuriyas swarm up in the particular venue in the morning time and chop down the pigs according to the demand of estimation. They make small pieces, divide it and purchase as their status and numbers of family members. While dividing the meat, they separate meat for *pakuwa*(roasted meat) in the house of which they have cut down the pigs. They have to share a *Doniya* of meat and daaru provided by householder as a gift of cutting down his pigs. Other groups of amateur or young girls and boys rehearse the cultural songs and dances like *Maghauta, Chhokra, Dhumaru, Daffa*. They wash and make clean to their cultural costumes like *Choliya, Goniya, Blouse, Lehenga,*

Jhobanna(ribbon), *Jhuluwa*, *Dhoti* and musical instruments- *mandra* (tom-tom) and *manjaira* (cymbal).

Maghi Celebration:

Maghi parba commences from the last day of Pous or *Jitamarna Din*.

Performers / people stay vigil throughout the night singing *Dhumaru* and *Daffak*

Geet(traditional and cultural songs of Tharu) and dancing *Maghauta Naach*, *Chhokra*

Naach with exuberantly and having sweet cider of *anadi*, *daaru*. After first crow of

cocks, all the performers as well as people depart to nearby river or stream to take for

bath playing with daffa, mandra, manjaira and singing dhumaru or daffa. Before

bathing they sing dhumaru song like-

Deo deo mairi mora aangakahi angiya

Mai chali jaibun Ganga snan

Chali jaibun Ganga snan re lala

Chali jaibun Ganga snan

Deo deo mairi mora fanraki patukiya

Mai chali jaibun Ganga snan

Chali jaibun Ganga snan re lala

Chali jaibun Ganga snan

In this song, a young boy is requesting to give his different clothes from top to bottom

like – shirt, towel, patuki, pant and so on, while going to take bath in the Ganga

(river) early in the morning. Then mother provides those demanded clothes to him.

Thus, this song is in dialogic form between mother and son.

All the people, except the very old persons and *bhansariyas*, go to take bath into nearby river. They take bath at nearby well or canal because of their business in preparing foods like *Dhikri*, *Roti*, *Tilkeladdu*, *khichari*, Steamed rice of Anadi, Fish,

varieties of meat items including meat of pork, liquor, *Gainji* (sugarcane), *Tarul* (Yam). All the victuals have cultural as well as scientific significance because it provides carbohydrate and heat to the body. At the same day, it is believed that if any pair is not afford of bearing child or their children die after born, their infertility is turned into fertility after worshipping and getting blessings from gods. While bathing, one has to take holy dip in the river considering that all the sins for a year are washed and leave two piece of copper coin within the water. After bathing they keep some rice grain, flowers and coin in *lohota*(a metal gourd, commonly used for drinking vessel) with water and dedicate to stone god.

They come to home; receive white Teeka and blessings from the hand of the eldest one. According to Tharu culture, Tharus should take white Teeka made of rice flour but now a day red Teeka is also in practice because of the influence of Hindu worship. Then the program of *Nisrau Kaharna* starts. For this, bhansariya has to keep rice, salt and pulse separately in a room then all the males have to put separate place to it from which bhansariya has kept before. This process is called *Nisrau Kaharna*(preparation of souvenir to give their sisters or daughters). Later bhansariya adds in separated nisrau and varieties of victuals. After program of *Nisrau Kaharna* is over then salutation begins. They salute all of them to each other according to their age and relatives within their home and receive blessings from elders. All the members of the household sit round the fire to make their body warm and have varieties of foods and drinks. They take enjoyment altogether as once again that they gather collectively on the occasion of this festival. Because of the sense of unity in the Tharu community, they are not confined within their house for salutation, so they go out-door or neighbouring house for obeisance and are offered varieties of foods and drinks there. They go even such houses where their relation is destroyed before and

are heartily welcomed. Thus, it is an occasion in which the demarcation of their enmity is vanished and they do have drinks and foods sitting together in jolly mood. Thus, the act of obeisance among the Tharu people indicates how emotional, esteemed to their elders or progenitors maintaining their culture alive the Tharus are. People in their peer groups dance different dances and songs like *Maghauta*, *Chhokra*, *Dhumaru* and *Daffa* etc. The entire environment of the village is panoramic and jubilant with various decorations and various cultural dances having the performer's wearing their attractive cultural costumes and ornaments and spectators with vogue attires who often enrapture by such decorative, enthusiastic and energetic performance of Maghauta Naach. In this way this festival develops social secularism and considerable relationship among the Tharus in community.

Maghi commemorates the end of the enslavement that their people were forced to endure for centuries. Tharus have given social significance-and not religious significance-to the celebrations which coincide with the beginning of the new fiscal year according to the traditional calendar. The government of Nepal has recognized Maghi as national festival and started giving public holiday for only one day but Tharu community celebrates Magh from the day of jitamarna din to a week, all the boys and girls are set free to take enjoy in full of Maghi festival. Even milking animals are not milked rather they are set free for celebration in Maghi. Boys and girls gather and dance different cultural dances like *Maghauta*, *Chhokra* exuberantly. So, Gopal Dahit in his book puts:

During the Maghi festival, from the day of Jitamarna to the first week of Maghi, all the family members... become free from works... they form their own group to dance and sing. The dances like Maghauta and

Chhokra are performed visiting house to house ... they pick up money (paisa lootna) offered by landlords. (My Translation 54)

Dance is considered to be the most primitive and sophisticated art among the arts. Dancing, for Tharus, is a way of expressing their joy and a popular form of entertainment. There are no professional dancers among Tharus; anyone interested can take part in dance. Tharu dances are mainly in groups. A person who dances is Nachuiya, and the one who plays the mandra is Mandariya. In fact, Tharus have own traditional style of dancing which is repetitive, slow, uniform, common and mostly style of tarantella. Nevertheless, Tharu dancers are capable of keeping their spectators spellbound with their dazzling multicolored attires and heavy jewelries and enthralling movements of the body. Furthermore, performers use different means to convey the meanings to the audiences. Audiences and spectators grasp the meanings through their gestures and symbols. The songs of *Maghauta Naach* carry different themes and motives of the Tharu culture. They reflect their pathos, pangs, love affairs, wishes and misery of their different agricultural life through songs. The duet songs of Sali and Bhatu carry the theme of love affair and hardship of Tharu people respectively. The songs are mixed with Nepali language because of external influence. The traditional songs which are practiced among Tharu people are purely innocent, natural and spontaneous show their art of creativity. The songs are enriched with the literary devices such as simile, metaphor, refrain, stanza, assonance and alliteration. Such devices make the songs artistic and melodious. The close analysis of their involvement in Naach as a performer or as an audience exhibits the Tharu's way of making and taking pleasure that voices their cultural and aesthetic part of life. The enjoyment of *Maghauta Naach* is displayed through the unity of dance, the music and the theme of songs. Performers wear formal dresses, which obviously show the

traditional splendid cultural costume. The melodious sound of *Manjaira* (cymbal) and *Mandra* (tom-tom) coexist along with the mellifluous tone of dancers. This phase is the most attractive, interesting and rejoicing phase of dance. Due to this beautiful and delightful panorama, the whole village merges into its enthralling phenomenon. Their program of obeisance is continued performing *Maghauta Naach* in the first day. In that day they sing such songs like-

Mayari kokha dadu jalampaili, jalampaili

Dharti mata tonhar saran aili

Baras din aina Maghak mahina, Maghak mahina

Aashis lenadena chalan rahna

Through this song, they magnanimously appreciate this festival because they come out on the earth in the same way however, sisters have to go others house, so, siblings are separated. But it is the month that comes once in a year, which brings them together. And how great this festival is, because there is the ritual of exchanging and appreciating love, respect to each other on this occasion.

The second day in Maghi Dewani, all the people get together at Barghar's house and initiates performing cultural dances in every house. In such songs, there are double competition between boys and girls, lover and beloved that songs carry on the message of love, fraternity, unity among Tharus. For instance, *Maghauta* song like-

Babaki sagar gainu muriya lahan re haan

Sakhiya ho sendura chhotal paani ghaat

Babaki sagar gainu muriya lahan re haan

Sakhiya ho tikuli chhotal paani ghaat

Swami mora gaila dakhina bazariya re haan

Sakhiya ho swami mora lani dehi sendura bazaar

Swami mora gaila dakhina bazariya re haan

Sakhiya ho swami mora lani dehi tikuli bazaar

It is the song of reminiscence, which the narrator remembers the events happened in the past. She remembers the day, which she had left her different ornaments and clothes. She had forgotten top to bottom ornaments and clothes like – tikli (teeka), sindur (vermillion), sandals and so on, there in the river at the time of bathing. Again, she remembers appreciating her dotting husband's gratefulness because he fulfilled all those things, which were left in the river by her. Hence, it is also the song of dedication between spouses.

In this way during the Maghi week, there appear several male and female groups of dancers in their special colorful and charming attires. Household chiefs provide money for singing and dancing from one house to another. The most fascinating and majestic part of this dance is *paisa lootna* (picking money with mouth or eyes). It is an act of picking money from the floor by bending waist that the main dancer has to pick up the money, offered by the landlord, with her tongue or eye by falling upside down.

In addition to these, Tharus have unique style of singing for their numerous indigenous songs popular amongst themselves. While singing and dancing are complementary, in some of the cases there is no dance in Tharu songs. Therefore, both males and females love to sing when there is no dancing. As a result, people dance only on the special occasions and burst in singing on the special occasions. A unique feature among the Tharu songs is that men and women never sing together. Even during mixed songs and dances they sing separately in chorus one after another. As younger and energetic generations are busy involving in cultural dances and older people are busy in songs like *dhumaru and daffa*. Music, which is considered as the

soul of dance and song, also fused in Tharu dances and lyrics with the different musical instruments. Among the percussion instruments, the important and essential musical instruments are *Mandra*, *Daffa*, *Dhol*, *Manjaira*, *Basiya*(flute)and *Latthi*(stick). The major musical instrument *mandra* is used in each type of dance. The typical instrument *daffa* is used only in *dafak geet* in Magh and *Dhurheri* (holi). It is very simple but unique in its structure and form made of leather beaten by *chapni* (very tiny stick). For instance, Daffa song like-

Chhai: Kai din rakhabo kuwanre mor baba...2

Maiyak hate khelti michchhainu, babai dekhke lajainu

Khojeu re baba saas sasuiya, sasura khojeu bara dur

Kai din rakhabo kuwanre mor baba...2

Baba: khojabun re dhiri saas sasuiya, sasura khojabun bara dur

Chhai: piya more khojeu gavaru jawan, luhai luhai ninda aihin

Kai din rakhabo kuwanre mor baba...2

Baba: khojabun re dhiri saas sasuiya, sasura bara dur

Pare jo paibo chhailak haate phula has jaibo kulmulai

Chhai: kai din rakhabo kuwanre mor baba...2

Through this song, daughter is requesting with her father to search for husband, who should be young and handsome. She complains that how many days will you keep me unmarried; I am tired of playing at the hand of my mother. She requests to search her husband's house very far from her birth place. But father is convincing her as she is still young and not to be in hurry. He assures her to search for her husband slowly, because she will be withered like a flower as she is not matured yet. Hence, this song is in dialogic form between father and daughter using figurative language.

Beside this, Tharus have popular sports of their own which is another form of entertainment. The worth noticing features of Tharu game is there is no age bar for the participation, for instance, even an old man can join with his grandchildren to play. The sports played in different occasions are known by different names. Gopal Dahit has grouped Tharu games into three main categories: the games of between males, the games of between females and the games of between males and females. There are many games played by Tharus like *Ghoghorani*, *Koilididi*(traditional tharu games played by girls), *Murgalarna*(cock fight), *Gharbasawar*, *Baghagoti*, *Tyura*(traditional Tharu games played by two persons exploiting the mind), *Pokrimar*(hide and seek), *Lochidanda*, *Gobardhan*, *Bukribhara*(traditional Tharu games) *etc.* But on the auspicious day of Maghi they play the games like *Khoppi*(game played with coins), *Goli*, *Ghutthiphor*(games of played with marbles), *PathrakGoli*(game played with big stone marbles), *Chhilli*, *Hirgodna*(traditional Tharu games) *etc.* All the aforementioned sports are played with two or more than two persons. Tharu games are not so extravagant, so it can be easily played. Through these games, they maintain unity, gender equality and physicality. From the games like *Baghagoti* and *Tyura* it helps to develop their intellectuality. Most of Tharu games are related to their profession, agriculture, and those games are played according to season and festivals to take enjoyment.

The second day of Maghi is Maghi Diwani. In this day, people invite their relatives and friends to celebrate Maghi because everybody becomes busy in the first day of Maghi within their homes. They serve their invited guests as well as friends with various cultural foods. Brothers go to give *Nisrau* as souvenir to their sisters. They are heartily welcomed there by their sisters, and offered varieties of foods or delicious meals. This ritual provides a chance for brothers to meet their sisters and

know overall status of them. If brothers do not come to their home then they become sad waiting for brothers whole day. Thus, this practice strengthens the relationship among the siblings and makes it lively. Different cultural dances and songs are constantly performed by different peer groups till a week from Maghi day.

Household activities during Maghi:

Each Tharu family has system of *Kisan / Gardhuriya*, the head of the house, who, manipulates rest of the family members and bears all the responsibilities. Among the family members, eldest male is considered as *Gardhuriya*. He has responsibilities to provide all kinds of basic needs such as, food, shelter, clothing, education, treatment and others. Management of house, ritual, traditional performances, feast and festivals are initiated of the leadership of *Kisan*. Females specially indulge in domestic indoor works but males involve in outdoor works. In this way, family members are hierarchically divided into different level as per their roles within own household. Maghi is such a festival in which it provides an opportunity to change their role or duty in the household. In the third day of Maghi, all the members of the household holding communal banquets discuss about regulating their household behavior. Like the selection procedure of *Barghariya*, they conclude or review the past year and set work plan for oncoming year. In detail, they discuss different agendas like selection of *Gardhuriya*, whether migrate or not, whether separate the house or not, whether anyone will get marriage or not. They discuss about condition of land owner or land cultivators, keep or make free to labours, discuss with whom they concern for financial support, to whom to make leader worker. Furthermore, they decide who will take responsibility of *Kisanwa*, to plant specific crops in particular field, to make new house or not, provide suggestions to *Gardhuriya* whether to renew or select new *Barghariya*, *Guruwa*, *Kesauka*,

Chaukidar and Lohara etc for village. The responsibility of each member of the family is assigned. Moreover, while carrying out responsibilities, if any member of the family makes a mistake, the case is discussed during this festival. But discussion can't take place before the festival. Even if anyone is not satisfied with the performance of the individual, he /she has to carry out the duties for one year. In the process of keeping Kamaiyas, all Kisan and Kamaiya negotiate contracts annually during the same day of Maghi Dewani. The negotiation of the contract is not formal in a juridical sense but clearly specifies the rights and obligations of each party to another. The Kisan explains to the Kamaiya the current status of the *sauki*(the loan of a Kamaiya) and asks whether the Kamaiya wishes to stay or leave. If the Kamaiya stays, the Kisan offers alcohol and a meal and work proceeds from the next day. In order to leave, Kamaiyas must first pay of their debt, either from their own resources or by finding another kisan who will make the payment and accept him as a Kamaiya for the following year.

In some respects the differences in status between Kamaiya and Kisan are very clearly marked in Tharu society. Kamaiyas, for instance, do not participate in village meetings called by Barghar, locally elected traditional village leader. They, therefore, have no voice in the political, economic and juridical matters of concern to the village as a whole. Moreover Kamaiyas are explicitly counted as part of a Kisan's wealth and patrimony. Within a Kisan's household, although Kamaiyas rarely face over violence, they suffer from the symbolic violence entailed in dependency on the Kisan's patronage. In these respect Kamaiyas clearly do not enjoy the same rights of membership as Kisan. Though government of Nepal declared them free promising that they would get jobs, land and education but the promises are yet to be realized. They are living nomadic lives, faced with illiteracy and landlessness. In actuality, they

were transferred from the captivity of a landlord to the dungeon of poverty and penury and due to this their condition is deteriorating. In this regard Katharine N Rankin puts:

Kamaiyas are being compelled to cultivate the land in the form of *Adhiya* (sharing crops in fifty-fifty) which is registered in the name of pahadi jamindar to maintain their livelihood and uplift their status. Cultivators are powerless to organize collectively against their jamindars, because they fear this kind of physical abuse and are trapped by total economic dependence. Those seeking to overcome their dependent status through *adhiya* tenancy, often encounter terms with their jamindar similar to those of Kamaiyas. *Adhiya* contracts are also yearlong, and negotiated in Maghi. *Adhiya* tenants are expected to perform menial tasks for the jamindar's household such as collecting firewood and even helping with the harvest and they can accrue debts with their jamindar in exactly the same way of Kamaiyas. (Quoted in Harold O Skar 38)

Similarly, though custom of keeping kamaiya has been abolished by the government; small children still are kept in many houses secretly in the form of Kamlahri to carry out the chores. Kamlarhis are the girls who work as an indentured labourer mostly in city areas, from western Nepal- Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur.

Landless Tharus have no means of earning wages so they are allowed to work on the fields of landowners in exchange for daughters working in their homes. Some families are given compensation as low as NRs 2000-5000 for the year the girls live with Malik as domestic servant. Tending to chores like cutting grass, grazing animals, cooking, cleaning and anything else the Malik requires, most girls never step into a classroom rather some Kamlahris are sexually abused. On the occasion of Maghi, a

Kamlahri's agreement with her Malik can be annulled or renewed for another year, she can opt to go to a different house or stay at home. Sometimes, though girls want to come home during Maghi but Malik does not allow them to come home.

Now, FNC, Non-government organization, is working in this sector to make them free from Maliks and helping them for schooling.

Community based social activities during Maghi:

Before the advent of the modern state, communities from all over the world developed their indigenous institutions and governance mechanisms. Organization is managerial body that carries out every work systematically. And, System is a procedure of carrying out the jobs in organized way. So, Organizational System is the administrative and managerial body of structure that handles and completes the particular profession smoothly with good care. Likewise, Tharu organizational system is directly inherent to Tharu community, which is derived from many years of experience and transforming from one generation to another. Under which each Tharu easily accepts and follows all the norms and values of it. It does not require written rules and regulations to enforce them to follow all the norms and values of Tharu organizational system. Tharu organizational systems are constructed in order to regulate their main occupation, agriculture, social traditions, etc. There are four organizational systems consisted in the Tharu communities: Barghariya Organizational System, Kulapani Chaudhary Organizational System, Family Organizational System and Agro-family Organizational System. Barghariya system is basically for village leadership and Kulapani Chaudhary System is to manage water for irrigation of paddy farms. Both organizational systems are well established in Tharu community. Family and Agro-family systems are more inter-related to each other.

One of the most important tasks of them is the annual calendar setting ritual and it is solemnized during Maghi. This annual calendar regulates socio-cultural performances of Tharus all the year round. Every month has its astrological and astronomical significance as the Sun is the prime source of life giving energy and moves from one station to another, creating new weather conditions, new energy and renewed commitment of man with nature. Tharus believe that the position of the earth in relation with the Sun becomes most propitious on the month of Magh. So, setting of a new work plan is, therefore, believed to bear the most advantageous result because with the coming of Makara, the gloomy, hazy and cold month of Poush presided over by Dhanu. Earth's northern region gets closer to the Sun where it remains for a longer time making longer, warmer day and with the coming of Maghi, people tend to forget the harsh and cold days of Poush. So, it is another reason with one harvest season just complete, the farmers prepare themselves for another season in the near future.

The festival of Maghi connects these farm related events in an atmosphere of harmony, respect to culture, entertainment and management of several governing issues within their family, community and a whole spectrum of inter-ethnic relation. Regarding the ritual Catherine Bell opines that "Ritual action is communal, involving groups of people who gain social solidarity through their participation. The action is traditional and understood as carrying on ways of acting established in the past. Ritual is rooted in beliefs of divine beings." (Quoted in Bell Elizabeth 128) As ritual is communal involvement, Barghar summons the *jutelha* (General Assembly) at particular venue either his own yard or any public place. *Gardhuriyas* (representatives of a house) from every house hold gather at that venue. They discuss about some important agendas in that gathering. As the new fiscal year is commencing, they

review and conclude the past year and set new work plan in community for a year. Villagers select or elect certain representatives for different sectors to regulate the community or their dominant occupation, agriculture. In the past there was no participation or involvement to females in such gathering but now a day all males and females are equally participated in *jutelha*. In that meeting, if anyone is absent they are fined so everyone has to participate. After gathering all, Barghariya starts the meeting and also puts their experience of last year, then other interested participants also put their views. At that time, they also review the works of previous Barghariya and its team member. The meeting goes on free and open discussion of all participants. During this meeting every participants are free to express the opinions. So, it is very democratic exercise. Thus, they review the activities and progresses made on last year's plan, development works and progress activities and collaborate to create a new plan for coming year. For this, they try to select or nominate Barghariya either by consensus or elect by voting. After selection of Barghar, villagers renew or select other candidates like *Guruwa*, *Kesauka*, *Likhandariya*, *Chirakya*, *Chaukidar* and *Lohara* and form a Kulapani committee for different sectors. All the chosen candidates are for one year. When the selection procedure is over, under the leadership of Barghariya, they set yearly plan to be followed by community people for a year.

Barghar is the topmost hierarchy among them. Many of our social roles depend on cooperation with others, so, team members must trust and depend on each other to perform their roles properly in front of the villagers to achieve their purpose. So, they make some rules and regulations to be followed by villagers. Barghar works as voluntary service for betterment of village whereas villagers pay paddy to the others to acknowledge their service. Since, new individuals are selected for holding

over the responsibility of the village and this tradition is called *khojnibojni*. Villagers also discuss about how and how much remuneration are paid to selected persons. They discuss about the number of workers that should be provided by each household is dependent upon the amount of land belonging to given household. So, it functions to avoid a form of social injustice as it creates a balance in which those with little land do not have to provide as much as those with more. All the aforementioned decisions are decided in that *jutelha*. So, *jutelha or Khyala* (General Assembly) is one of the most important events of indigenous traditional organizations like *Bheja* in Magar, *Choho* in Tamang, *Ttho and Gola* in Gurung, *Guthi* in Newar. It is integrated into the social structure of the Tharu village. Depending on the district, this deader is referred by different names: *barghar* in Bardiya and Banke, *Mahatawan* in Dang valley, *Kakander* in Deokhuri, *Bhalmansa* in Kailali and Kanchanpur, *Gachchhadar* in Sunsari and Morang, *Jamindar* in Chitawan, *Mukhiya* in Bara and Parsa, *Manjan Mukhiya* in Siraha and Saptari, *Gumasta* in west Champaran, India. However, a form of Barghar exists among Tharus in the eastern and central regions but is less established and adhered to than in the west because of dominant influence of other communities.

Traditional roles and responsibilities of Barghars:

Over the generations, the Tharu community has developed the Barghar system and their lives have evolved around it. Barghar System is considered by many Tharus as integral to their economic, social and cultural life. Barghar is responsible for village-wide affairs and their roles, particularly in mobilizing communities to contribute labour for infrastructure development and in mediating local disputes, is well organized within the community. But now days, Barghars are not confined within community works. Due to changing the political sphere in the country, they are

enhancing the sense of unity to maintain their traditional organizations. The basic rights and duties of Barghariya in Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Surkhet and Rupandehi are similar. Barghars stress that they should be consulted for any development, administrative, or justice in their communities. However, local authorities do not acknowledge the barghar system as there are no provisions for it under national law.

Barghariya has mainly six functions. These are leadership role, judicial role, planning and development role, ritual role, administrative role and unity role. He performs all these roles by taking help of their subordinates and villagers. Under leadership role, she/he plays the role of village leader and sometimes modern leadership, to be elected representative of VDC. He, under judicial role, solves the disputes amicably at village level which is very prestigious subject for Tharu community. If anything happens to any individual, s/he goes on the barghar's lap to ask for his/her justice. He makes important decisions for the village and villagers, reconciles any sorts of conflicts on the mutual understanding of villagers and gives his final decision, thus, he plays the role of adjudicator. For the planning and development, they plan to make culverts, bridges, link roads, school buildings, irrigation canals and dams etc. by taking help of villagers. They also coordinate with external opportunities to mobilize resources for their village development and facilities. They also make plans for the selection of *Deshbandhya Guruwa*, *Kesauka Guruwa*, *Chirakya*, *Chaukidar* and *Lohara* (blacksmith). Another, the most important role of Barghariya is to perform ritual works. Under this system, they lead the selection of *Deshbandhya* and *Kesauka Guruwa*, *Chirakya* and conduction of common worships for village like *Hareri Puja* (a kind of social worship, which is done during Shrawan willing to be green crops), *Dhuriya Puja* (kind of social worship done in Jeshtha to protect crops

from insects, plague and wishing their canal be well), *Lawangi Puja*(social worship done in Bhadra with the belief to secure village from, epidemic, plague and natural calamities), *Bhajahar Puja*(kind of collective worship, which is done for getting rainfall at the time of draught), *Nikasi puja*(social worship is done around the territory of the village to protect from epidemic diseases)etc. because these pujas are compulsorily done in a year round within a village. They also manage and facilitate for doing folk dances, festivals, and marriage/death ceremonies. In administrative role, he appoints and instructs supporting officials and plays the role of executive, directorial and managerial. Unity is the ornament of Tharu society. In the leadership of Barghariya, all the villagers always have same voices; they do all the works jointly by doing unanimous decision. Work space is not just a place where people work, it is also where they come together, socialize, interact, share feelings and values. That's why they automatically unite into one.

Under the leadership of Barghar, community people appoint *Barka Guruwa and Kesauka Guruwa* to take care of ritual as well as different worship practiced in Tharu community. Tharu Guruwas, in general, are the real practitioners of Tharu Mantars in Terai. They do shaman work and use medicinal plants to cure of sick people, protecting people from evil eyes and conducting domestic and common worship for village. They are wise and devotees of divine power. It is believed that they are also the mediators between living beings and divine powers, gods and human being. In other words, Tharu Guruwas are wise and devotee people who learn Tharu Mantars from Tharu Guru and perform shaman work to taking cure of living beings through using the knowledge of sacred Mantars or medicinal plants. Regarding the Tharu Guruwa System Gopal Dahit in his book, *Tharu Indigenous Knowledge and Practice* writes:

Tharu Guruwa system is a continuous process of taking care of living beings and plants using empirical, ethical, spiritual and celestial actual knowledge which was originated by wise Tharu as per needs and priorities based on spiritual salvation, divine grace, strength of Mantars and devotion of powerful goddess, which has been transforming from particular one generation to another in the oral form of learn through family members that has been using for taking cure of needed living beings. (144)

Tharus strictly believe that their gods/devtas have the capacity to cure and heal the sickness, plagues, calamities and exorcise the evil forces. According to Tharu legend Tharus bestow bhakal (promise) to convince their gods if they listen and solve the problems. Most of Tharus are agrarians, so, they are directly or indirectly affiliated with nature. Their communal worship and activities are concerned to nature. Almost all the Tharu individual family has their own symbol and statue of traditional home deities. They worship various home deities in the form of animals and plants such as Horse, Tiger, Elephant, Snake, Ox, Cow, Peepal etc. Regarding the worship of animals, Harold O Skar in his book Nepal: Tharu and Terai Neighbours writes:

Traditionally, Tharus were forest people and had developed similar lifestyles over generations, adopting to the environment and each other. There was impenetrable forests that was home of wildlife, such as, tiger, elephant, snake, rhinoceros etc. There was harsh and extreme of temperature, precipitation as well as many tropical diseases, including malariya existed. And to secure from it, they have adopted some of the ways of their new neighbours to gain acceptance and to add new spiritual power to their own lives. Forest is considered as the

house of evil spirit/force which emerges at times to afflict people: ceremonies have had to be developed to chase these evil spirits back into the forest. Prayers will pacify those ferocious ghosts who destroy the harvest. So, each family, each village does different pujas to improve matters.(152)

There are some collective pujas that must be performed in a village in different season for a year round like *Hareri Puja*, *Lawangi Puja*, *Dhuriya Puja*, *Bhajahar Puja*, *Nikasi puja* and *Nagahar puja*(collective worship by special group of people at the day of Naag Panchami to update and refresh their Tharu Mantars) etc. All these pujas are performed for the improvement of agricultural works preventing from natural calamities, epidemic or external factors by *Barka Guruwa*. Similarly, household pujas like *Dhurra Lausarna*(worship done to maintain fertility power of women), *Tokta*(worship to make free the ill man from the evil of the ghost), *Ghotaili Puja*(worship done after recovering from illness), *Bahau Puja*(worship done to get rid of epilepsy), *Luggabar banaina*(worship done when patient is not interested to eat foods), *Sato banaina*(worship done when one's sense is lost from mind by sudden startle of fear to bring back it up the same spirit) etc. are done by *Guruwas*. In the similar way, *Likahndariya* keeps all the record files of the village and writes minutely. *Chirakya* lights the oil lamp in *Deuthan* (deity place) and welcomes bride people lighting on the way. *Chaukidar* (watchman) watches the village. He takes care for village even in night time too, so, he always carries a long bamboo stick with him. He informs community people to gather the certain venue for public work. He plays the role of herald or carries letters for village, if Barghar orders. *Lohara* is a blacksmith by his profession. He mends and constructs weapons that are required for agriculture and daily use like *Hasiya* (sickle), *pharhwa*(spade), *Bancheri*(small sized axe),

Kurhar(large sized axe), *Khurpi*(a tool to use for weeding), *Kodri*(small sized spade), *Basla*(tool to scrap wood), *Banka*(a kind of long sickle) etc. but he is not allowed to construct weapons like knives, khukuri and others.

Kulapani Chaudhary System is basically for managing water to irrigate agricultural land. Tharu's prominent occupation is agriculture, so, Tharus have developed well-established Kulapani Chaudhary System. Under this system, the Kulapani Chaudhary is the topmost designation, who leads all the managerial, executive and planning works etc. The beauty of this system is to construct main and secondary dams, make canals and distribute water through mobilizing public labour and local resources through free and open discussion and making unanimous decisions. This practice is still working in Dang- Deukhuri, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur. For this mechanism, every year during Maghi villagers select or elect three persons in a word of irrigation committee so that they can choose able and energetic main kulapani Chaudhary. For the main Chaudhary election, all the village committee members from every mauja (village) gather in the office of main Chaudhary or other suitable venue. During this meeting they submit yearly progressive and financial reports, and do free and open discussion. Then they complete selection/election procedures of main Chaudhary and other subordinates. In relation to Babai Irrigation in Bardiya, there is a main committee led by main Chaudhary. From this Babai Irrigation fifty seven maujas are involved and directly benefitted. Main committee has appointed three *Nandaruwas*(a person appointed by main committee, who divides the task of corvee to different villages), one office secretary, one peon, three *Panichirakiya*(a person, who divides water in the canal as per need of villages), two *Pani Guruwas*(person who performs worship to protect canal from being destroyed)and one *Dhakehruwa*(person who beats the drum while

shaman performs worship of canal). They are remunerated by salaries like NRs. 16000/person/year, NRs. 5000/month, NRs.3000/month, NRs. 15000/person/year, NRs. 5000/person/year and NRs. 3500/year respectively.

Because of their inhibition in the Terai, they wear very little and light clothes. Tharus women wear Choliya, Blouse, Lehenga, Goniya. Lehenga is made of cotton fabric with particular floral design and Choliya has strings on the back to tie it up. Men wear *Jhuluwa*, *Bheguwa*, and *Dhoti* which manifest their cultural costume. However, in recent time they have altered in their attire, they wear vogue and common dresses as others do. Tharu women adorn with varieties of ornaments and jewellerys, for instance, *Tikli*, *Nathani*, *Phefi*, *Phuli*, *Kensari*, *Mangauri*, *Taunk*, *Tariya*, *Guriya*, *Mala*, *Sutiya* etc almost all the ornaments are of silver and very few of them are of gold.

Terai and inner terai area are very hot areas and always remain problem of epidemic diseases. Tharus have tradition of eating those foods which protect them from epidemic diseases like malariya, cholera. There is still a problem of poisonous snakes, scorpions and insects bite in terai area. So, Tharus also drink wine and liquor which can help them to get relief from. There are a lot of causes of eating different varieties of food and drink items by the Tharus in order to maintain their daily life. In this regard Gopal Dahit in, *Tharu Indigenous Knowledge and Practice* , writes- “Tharu foods and drinks are those items, which were invented and have been eating / drinking by Tharus for many years of which knowledge is transforming from one generation to another to sustain their daily life and be alive in the area of terai and inner terai” (144). Their main food varieties are Bhat, Daal, Kapuwa (made from rice flour), Tarkari, Dhikri, Roti, Chatani. Pork is their main meat item that is served in each festivals and ceremonies. Beside this, they also eat chicken, mutton, fish, crab,

rat ghonghi (snail like creature). Tharus drinking items are Jaanr and Daaru. Anadi liquor juice is more popular in western Tharu communities. One song is very popular that is *Sakhiya Ho Maghak Pili Guri Guri Jaanr* (Oh friends, let's have sweet cider of ale on the occasion of great festival Maghi). Preparation of Daaru embodies the cultural importance. Without daaru no feasts, festivals and rituals are celebrated in Tharu community, thus it bears cultural significance. The practice of worshipping Supreme Being is universal phenomenon. So, Tharus also worship their Bhutuwa (deities). Daaru is considered as sacred liquor to be offered as Chhaki (A sip of homemade liquor) to deities to make them happy hoping that their deities will protect and secure them from all bad omen, plague, disease, evil eye and fulfill their all wishes and desires.

Many of food and drink items does not match with other caste and communities like *Dhikri, Khariya, Kapuwa, Kanjuwa, Mar, Jhajhara roti* etc. that carry the unique feature of Tharu foods. Tharus also have their own characteristic forms of folk art, which they take care of it pass to their descendants. Aesthetic is cultural universal, which includes in itself all sorts of arts and crafts, festivals, dance, drama and music. Each art acts as a mirror to reflect on the people, who produce it and his cultural site. Life and art are inseparable entity, which are interwoven with each other's. However, life passes whereas art remains to speak about the creators. It is an only thing that is permanent and a source of knowledge of the past civilization that came and vanished. The brilliant architect is noted as we glance at Tharu buildings, which are simple but environmentally sophisticated and climate responsive structures. Tharus are very skillful in their artifact because the raw materials needed for are locally available. They make different sorts of handicrafts for different purpose like- *Delwa, Dhakiya, Panchhopni, Dehari, Berri, Sirhatta, Gondri, Machiya,*

Khatiya, Lahar, Larhya, Suppa, Bena, Helka, Bhauka, Nonbokni, Dokni, Har etc.

Tattooing, an art of imprinting on human skin by punching with needles, is practiced among Tharu women, which shows their respect and fascination towards beautification of human body. There exists certain way of sanctifying individuals for the preparation of better life in the other world. It is the process through an individual passes and gets his cultural identity. Therefore, Tharus also observe lifecycle rites- *Ghatuwa Karaina*(to make pure to both mother and newly born child by bathing and washing clothes in the river / stream after sixth day of delivery), *Murbhoj*(the solemn ceremony of cutting unsacred hair of the boy by his maternal uncle), *Bhoj Karna*(get marriage) and *Sat-Gat Lagaina*(funeral procession, the last stage of life cycle). In the process of cortege, Sat-Gat is the first death custom, Marni-Karni is the last custom and Pittar Dena (sahrad) is the perpetual custom, which is performed in each year during Dashain festival according to Tharu tradition; that make them Tharu.

In the same way, Tharu concept of compact settlement pattern further clarifies their belief in humanity, peace, love, cooperation, coexistence and fraternity. Perhaps this is the reason, Tharu love living in joint family, and the proportionate division of works according to their age by the head of the family is well practiced among Tharu, which can be taken as an epitome of democratic practice within the family. In this way, all the aforementioned basic features of indigenous Tharus and their ways of performing every rituals as well as festivals portray distinct culture of Tharuness because celebrating styles of cultures and other features of Tharus do not match with other non-Tharu people.

The nature or activities of Maghi festival bears the qualities of Schechnerean model of natural theatre comprising of gathering, performing and dispersal.

Schechnerean believes the performance takes place in two modes of natural theatres:

Eruption and Procession. Eruption is a kind of natural theatre where heated performance is performed at the centre of a circle created by audiences. This model of performance does not have any fixed destination and certain route as the procession model. There is no obligatory force to audiences and spectators to stay along the performance rather they are free to come in the rim and go out of the rim. Similarly, Procession is another kind of natural theatre where performance has fixed route, halts and desired known destination where audience can join according to their desire and will and go along with performers to its destination. Therefore, these two modes of performance can be perceived in the Tharu cultural festival, Maghi.

Maghauta and Chhokra Naach, during Maghi, follow the Schechnerian pattern of performance: gathering, performing and dispersal as eruption theatre. For the performance of Maghauta Naach a group of young boys and girls swam at particular venue especially at the yard of Barghar's house where they initiate their dance. Barghar's yard becomes the center of performance (stage). Performers present their performance with their great vigor and immense emotion and feeling in the yard to entertain the audiences. Similarly, audiences gather at Barghar's house where the performance takes place. They form cool rim around the heated performance. They watch the attractive traditional attire of Tharus and splendid performance which gives them pleasure and entertainment. As the eruption performance audiences are not bound to watch the dance compulsorily until its completion. Spectators are free to come in the rim and go out of the rim. The final phase dispersal occurs when the performance wraps up. When the performance is over, all the performers leave the place and go their respective houses returning to their usual life.

Similarly, traditional organization of Tharus, *Jutelha*, also strongly embodies the procession model of performance specially calendar setting ritual during Maghi.

All the performers or Gardhuriyas swam on a particular venue or Barghar's house. They enhance their performance in that venue, thus, that place becomes origin place of their designated performance. The performers culminate to their fixed destination with many halts and discussions. While debating or marching ahead many audiences come and join them but it is not compulsory for audiences to join the performance until its destination or full-fledged selection procedure of candidates for a village. At last of dispersal phase Gardhuriyas disperse from that performing place fetching the news of new candidates and convey that news to their family members.

Chapter III

Conclusion:

An Umbilical Connection between Maghi Festival and Tharu Identity

Tharus are the largest and oldest ethnic group inhabited in the low land Terai-Tharuhat. They have own language, culture, unique food habits, skills and aptitudes. The productivity, creativity and uniqueness of Tharu culture is observed in Tharu festivals, rites and rituals. Tharus have opulent traditions and socio-cultural life having unique personality. The traditional performance of Tharus, which are ancient and transmitted properties of society, can't be totally transcribed on pages, so, most of their major cultural performances are foregrounded on orality. The pure aesthetics of performance can only be realized and felt at the time of real performance. The cultural performance disseminates culture, tradition, artistry, skill and knowledge from one generation to another to make them sustainable and alive. Their culture has communal spirit that shows the unity, affection, fraternity and harmonious relation among the Tharu ethnic. The compulsory involvement of Tharu people at Barghar's house in the celebration of festivals epitomizes the communal stance. Maghi which is one of national and dominant festival of Tharu community that advocates for the preservation of culture, establishment of harmonious relationship in their society that strictly reduces the gap between male and female, rich and poor having sense of equality.

Most of the Tharu cultural performance and dance are at the verge of extinct and some of them have disappeared. So, in the contemporary period the Tharu cultural performances are at jeopardizing state because some cultural performance are elapsed they are not at all in practice due to the impact of modernization. Therefore, Maghi tries to best to preserve the cultural heritages through different mass awareness

songs of *Maghauta Naach*, *Chhokra Naach*, *Dhumaru*, *Daffa* and to bring change in incompatible thoughts, beliefs and norms according to the demand of time and situation in contemporary period in front of audiences or community members and transforming the cultural assets to their upcoming progeny. One of the sapient features of Maghi performance is communication. As the dance reduces the gap between the males and females, they interact in household activities, *jutelha* and share their feelings with no hesitation or embarrassment and that develops their personality and communicative capability having no any sense of hierarchy. Similarly, Tharu people attend Maghi festival with communally who hail from the different socio-economic background and status or gender share their emotions, feelings and enjoyment having no sense of biasness and hierarchy between penury and destitute, males and females, which shows the egalitarian system in Tharu community.

Maghi is such a festival that brings all the family members together once again in a year. While celebrating Maghi they take a holy dip ritually in the river then salute each other according to their age and relatives. This act obeisance is continued throughout the Maghi Day; and holding communal banquets with varieties of delicious foods that salivates the mouth, they take enjoyment with cultural dances and songs *Maghauta Naach*, *Chhokra Naach*, *Dhumaru* and *Daffa*. Although the steps in the performance are very difficult for amateurs they obviously manifest dexterity of the performers, which enraptures and attracts the attention of onlookers giving optimum pleasure and entertainment. Culturally, Maghi is celebrated in different forms: New Year, Emancipation Day and Harmonious Day. Unlike in the past, the festival has not been confined to mere enjoyment. It is also an occasion for advocating the rights of the backward ethnic community. So, they have to do homework within home and community to ameliorate their way of life.

Every village comprises with *Barghar, Guruwa, Kesauka, Chirakya, Chaukidar and Lohara*. Community people select or elect these representatives in Maghi festival with the vision of *Afno Gaun Aafai Banaun*(let's make our village ourselves). All the candidates play the prominent roles for developing, protecting village from epidemic, plague, evil spirit and preserving their distinct cultures. Previously, indigenous Tharus were marginalized and ostracized from the mainstream and the Government policy shunned them from every sort of opportunities. They did not concern about Government policy rather they were limited to their community. But with the change of political sphere, village leaders also became aware of their community from external factors. They realized the necessity of movement as different political issues were being raised in the country. Although, traditional organizations are non-political institutions, however, they played important roles to mobilize people in movement for demanding their issues. Thus, Barghar System is one mechanism that could serve to increase participation among Tharus in democratic processes. In recent years, Barghars have sought official recognition by the Government as well as greater role within Government structures. That's why; Government must address and bring it under legal provision to Tharu's traditional organizations.

To sum up, the celebration of Maghi manifests the Tharu culture, beliefs, ethos, pathos, norms, values and sense of unity, harmony and cooperation among the people of community. Moreover, it strictly reduces the disparity between and among the rich and poor, males and females and advocates for equity based on egalitarianism. Thus, the motto of Maghi is to preserve and promote cultural dances, songs and traditional organizations and transmit to their upcoming generations making it alive based on egalitarianism, manifesting the true identity of socio-cultural and aesthetic aspects of Tharu life style.

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