

## CHAPTER-I

### Social Harmony

From the beginning of the ancient time, human beings have been living in the group sharing responsibilities and duties to run their daily lives smoothly. No human can live alone throughout his or her life. Therefore, people in the past lived together in particular areas sharing some laws, traditions, etc. But with the passing of time, people started to move to different places in search of better particular living. Today it is hardly found people living in a territory or area sharing same culture, religion, thoughts, tradition, interests, etc. Social harmony refers to a condition in which people from different races, countries, religions, interests, etc live together in a peaceful way agreeing with each other. In other words, social harmony is a bowl of salad.

Harmony and unity are two elements of a society. *Tongsing* entails these two elements, so it is called a social practice as it emphasizes these two social fundamental elements. *Tongsing* teaches and encourages Limbu individuals and families stand united and avoid jealousy, envy, hate, etc to make a society a better place to live in.

From the outset of the Limbu civilization, *Tongsing* has been working as a guiding force in the Limbu's community. It has been working as an unwritten law in the Limbu community from the ancient time. All the Limbus are abided culturally, politically and socially by the Mundhum, and rites and rituals of *Tongsing Takma*. During its performance, many rites are performed for the protection of the family, relatives and society. The Sambas separate the spirit of the dead persons from the living ones so that living person must not suffer from the dead spirit and its evil effects. He blocks the path of the dead by special rituals. Then he blocks the path of the envy and jealousy as well. The purpose of such

ritualistic exercises in *Tongsing* is to avoid misfortunes and wish for the peace and harmony of the family and society in the days to come. According to Bairagi Kainla, *Tongsing* is as a ritual of the Limbu community, which takes place on special social occasions with slight variations as per those occasions. “Sese Sangsang *Tongsing* is conducted as the part of the yearly celebrations” (Kainla 1). It is usually known as *Tongsing* only. On this occasion, Limbus gather together in the certain house and take part in various rituals of *Tongsing* with Samba or Yeba to avoid natural calamities, disasters and unnatural death. They wish for the happy and peaceful life of all relatives and members of the community. On the other hand, “Ighechchhing *Tongsing* and Ighepmasing *Tongsing* are conducted after the death of a close relative of a family member by a single family and by the group of families and all relatives” as a collective practice respectively (Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 158). Like most of the rituals, the communication in *Tongsing* takes place through symbols and emotions, rather than relying primarily on the words. Munhdum expert Bairagi Kainla opines “the language and phrases used in *Tongsing Mundhum* are very beautiful and highly symbolic” (5).

With the help of highly symbolic performative language of *Mundhum*, the Samba carries out different rituals addressing the supernatural and natural world. During the performance of *Tongsing*, the Samba involves himself in a narrative and ritual performance of *Mundhum* and he dramatically, physically and verbally interacts with a large number of addressees who help the shamans chase the evil spirits out of the human world and there is a communication; there is a mystic union between human beings and nature. They make a very symbolic journey across various locations that range from the beautiful Himalayas and steep hills, green forests, rivers, several other places, etc. They also address the actual human audiences. The addressers (performers) and addressees are thought to interact cooperatively

in those different places. That friendly interaction can be envisioned as one of the most vital social elements of social harmony.

### **Limbus' Culture and Religion**

Limbus are chiefly inhabitant of the eastern part of Nepal. The land of Limbuwan includes Mechi and Koshi zones of Nepal. Limbu actually refers to the ancient tribe of Nepal that are chiefly inhabitant in their own land traditionally known as Pallo Kirant. It lies east to the Arun River and west to India's West Bengal. Their land is known as Limbuwan which literally means the land of Limbus. Limbus are also known as Kirant or Kiranti. According to CBS, 2001, the total population of Limbus in Nepal is 359379 which constitute 1.58% of the total population in the country.

According to *Readmore's New Social Studies and Population Education Grade 6*, the stone inscriptions tell us that the Kirants probably ruled Nepal about 2700 years ago, even before the birth of Gautam Buddha. Yalambar was the first king of this dynasty. During the rule of the seventh Kirant King, Gautam Buddha visited Kathmandu and introduced Buddhism. The Mahabharat tells us that Jitedasti helped the Pandavas in the battle of Kurukshetra and the 14<sup>th</sup> Kirant King Sthunko offered valuable gifts to Yudhisthir on his coronation ceremony. The emperor of India, Ashoka visited Nepal during the Kirant period. He built four stupas in Patan and also erected the Ashoka pillar in Lumbini. Gasti was the last king of this dynasty. Kirants defeated Mahispals and started to rule Nepal. Altogether 29 Kirant kings ruled over Nepal for more than 1200 years. The last king of this dynasty was Gasti. The history of Nepal begins with the Kirants. We have some images and stupas built by them. The Kirants had rich civilization.

The names of many places are derived from the Kirant words. For instance, Teku from Tengku, Tyagul from Tegval, Farping from Fanpring, Banepa from Bhajan, Khopasi

From Khurpasi, Khwapu (Bhaktapur) from Khopring, etc. The Kirant had their own script which was called Sirijanga. They worshipped Lord Shiva in the form Kiranteshwor Mahadev. They also worshipped serpent, tree, river, stone and lightning. The image of Birupaksha shows the standard of their sculpture. Buddhism flourished under the Kirants. The images of deities and the Ashoka stupas speak about their rich culture. The holy book of Kirant is called the Mundhum, in which the rites and rituals followed by Kirants are mentioned. The Kirants were short but stout. They had broad cheeks, flat noses, dark eyes and thin whiskers. They established many permanent villages in the valley. They cultivated land and raised cattle for agriculture, meat and milk. They lived in a joint family.

They had special festivals to mark by sowing and reaping. Their major food consisted of milk, meat, green leaves, vegetables, rice roots, fruit and fish. They regularly consumed wine. They enjoyed wrestling and bull fighting. They had established many law-courts to punish the criminals. The Kirants were simple by nature. Limbuwan has diversified geographical and cultural aspects. In the Limbu language, Limbuwan means the total land owned by bow and arrows. Many other tribes live here but we find Limbus in majority. So, the main cultural practices are Limbu culture originated in Limbuwan. It's famous for its natural beauty. The beautiful snow-capped mountains, green hills, rivers and the other historical places are noteworthy not only for their scenic beauty but they are also the reliable sources of income from tourism industry.

Tracing back to the pre-historical age of the beginning of civilization, Limbu scholar and historicist Chaitanya Subba claims Limbu as “the descendents of three stocks of earlier Kirants—a branch coming through the north, known as Lhasagotha, a branch coming through the south or southeast, known as Kashigotha and autochthons known as Khambongba-

Lungbongba” ( Shrestha 21). Still, there are Limbus who identify themselves either as Lhasagotra or Kashigotra. Some others claim them as Khambongba—Lungbongba i.e. originated in the land of Limbuwan itself.

According to Bairagi Kainla, their belief of origin of their race in the land of Limbuwan is related to linguistics. The term ‘Limbu’ is believed to be derived from the word ‘Lingwa’ which, according to the Limbu language, means self-sprouted” (Kainla 23).

Limbus associate the term with their own origin in the land of Limbuwan. Shiva Kumar Shrestha in his book, *Limbuwanko Aitihasik Adhyayan*, “That place is called Limbuwan as it was won by dint of arrows. ‘Li’ means ‘bow’, ‘Abu’ means ‘shooter’ and ‘wan’ means name or Limbuwan is the country won by dint of arrows in the Kirati language. So Limbus are shooters or archers. (30) Some scholars believe that the name ‘Limbu’ was not the name chosen by them, rather it is the name given to them by the people of other races. Previously the Limbus were hunters and their main weapons were bows and arrows. Therefore, they were called Limbus and their land which they had won was obviously come to be known as Limbuwan.

Limbus have a long history in Nepal. Their history refers back to the era of ancient Nepal. Historical facts tell us that Limbus were among the one who initiated civilization in Nepal. In the Kirat period, they were the rulers of Nepal. They were known as Kiranti then. Later in the period of Shah dynasty, they were granted with special privilege of local authorities in Limbuwan. The word ‘Limbu’ according to Chaitanya Subba, is the product of 18<sup>th</sup> century. He states: “Historical documents reveal that the term “Limbu” was used by Gorkha administration after BS 1774” (12). Limbus prefer to call themselves ‘Yakthumba’. The term ‘Yakthumba’ is derived from ‘Yaktumba’ which means very old or ancient’ (Lawoti 4). It can be further elaborated as: in the Limbu language, Yak means ‘fort’ or

‘capital’ and Tumba means ‘the elder member or the guardian in the fort’. It is believed that Limbus in the ancient time used to live under the guardianship of the eldest member in the fort. Tumba was the head in that Yak (fort). So they began to call themselves ‘Yaktumba’ which later became ‘Yakthumba’. Another view explains that ‘Yak’ means ‘fort’ and ‘Thumba’ means ‘Defender’. So Yakthumba means the defenders of the fort. They also call themselves ‘Yakthungsa Thibongsa’ which means the song of the eldest one or the son of the chieftains. In the Limbu language, ‘thibong’ means ten and ‘sa’ means son. It may be true that ‘in ancient time Limbuwan was won and established by the ten chieftains’ (Bista, *People of Nepal* 47).

It is remarkable to state that the Limbu community has a diverse range of sub-division within Limbus, there are variations in their sub-clans which are known as ‘thars’. Studies have shown that there are nearly 300 sub-clans (thars) of Limbus. Some of them are Wonem, Lawoti, Sherma, Chonbang, Maden, Pandhak, Lingden, Sereng, Angdembe, etc. Dor Bahadur Bista adds a further insight to our understanding of the Limbu community and its further division:

The Limbus are divided into number of clans or thars. Some of the thars are further sub-divided, each sub division having a separate name of its own. Most of the thar members live together in more or less defined localities. Some names are identical with the place name or residential group. Each of these sub-divisions is again sub-divided into family groups which are strictly exogamous intolerant of incest. (51)

Limbus are still known as ‘Subba’ which is a political term. In the past, Subbas were privileged with certain rights and responsibilities. Subbas owned a piece of revenue free land which was known as ‘Kipat’. It was a local administrative body of Nepal government in

Limbuwan. This political system was abolished in 1962 AD. However, all the Limbus are not Subbas though all the Subbas in Limbuwan are from the Limbu community. So, it will be wrong to assume that Subba as an equivalent term to Limbu. But, many Limbus still are using the term 'Subba' as their sub-clan or 'thar' which, in fact, is totally wrong. The term 'Subba' has nothing to do with the present as it has already become the thing of past and history. The land of Limbuwan includes the area, east of the Arun River extending to Nepal's eastern border with India's West Bengal. For Bista, the area of Limbuwan includes "the districts represented in whole or in part in Tehrathum, Sankhuwasabha and Dhankuta in Koshi Zone and Taplejung, Panchthar and Ilam in Mechi Zone" (47). Subba asserts that its land chiefly covers the area 'between the Arun River in the west, the border with Sikkim and west Bengal of India in the east, the northern parts of the plains of Morang, Sunsari and Jhapa in the south, the border with the Tibet, China in the north, almost covering an area of 11,655sq, kilometers'' (1).

It is worth writing that 'Limbuwan, which was known as *Phedap* before the arrival of ten Limbu kings, now refers to the six districts including Dhankuta, Terathum, Sankhuwashabha, Taplejung, Panchthar, and Ilam'' (Shrestha 28). Limbus are densely populated in the eastern part of Nepal. Terathum, Taplejung, Panchthar Dhankuta and Ilam are the chief districts of Limbu settlement.

Nevertheless, they are also found in other districts like Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Sankhuwasabha, etc. Although in minority, they are also found in other districts and urban areas like the Kathmandu Valley. Wherever they are, the land of Limbuwan includes the

land within the Arun River in the west, India's West Bengal and Sikkim in the east, Bihar in the south and Tibet, China in the north. The total population of Limbus in Nepal is 3, 59,379 which constitutes 1.58 per cent of the total population in the country.

S.N.	Caste	Population	Percentage
1	Chhetri	35,93,496	15.80
2	Brahamin	28,93477	12.74
3	Magar	16,22,421	7.14
4	Tharu	15,33,879	6.75
5	Tamang	12,82,304	5.64
6	Newar	12,45,232	5.48
7	Kami	8,95,954	3.94
8	Yadav	8,95,423	3.93
9	Muslim	9,71,056	4.27
10	Rai	6,35,151	2.79
11	Gurung	5,43,571	2.39
12	Damail	3,90,305	1.72
13	Limbu	3,59,379	1.58
14	Sarki	3,18,989	1.40
15	Others	55,53,279	24.42
	Total	2,27,36,934	100.00

(qtd. in Maharjan and Chapagain 6). If we talk about the graduation by ethnicity, according to the book, *From Exclusion to Inclusion Socio Political Agenda for Nepal*, Limbu graduates have been growing since 1991 AD. In 1991, 528 Limbus graduated, whereas in 2001 2,382 graduated. This table shows that Limbus are slowly becoming aware of the importance of education and their participation in socio-political scenario.

### **The Limbu Language and Literature**

As one of the distinct nationalities, Limbus have their own language, script, and literature. Limbus call their language 'Yakhtumpan'. The Limbu language is very old probably as old as their origin. There is no doubt that the Limbu language is one of many members of Tibeto-Burman linguistic group. Many linguists and scholars agree with this view. 'The Limbu language is a member of Tibeto-Burman linguistic group. Limbu script



was developed from Brahmin script after the sixth century AD' (Kainla, *Tongsing Takma Mundhum: Aakhyan ra Anusthan* 3-4). Sociologist Harka Gurung also agrees with this view:

The Limbu language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family and has a pronominalised structure like those of the Rai. Although the Kiranti script of the Limbu was introduced in the early tenth century AD, it is restricted to the scriptural texts of the Mundhum tradition. (67)

The Limbu language has well-developed and standard alphabet which consists of 10 vowels and 25 consonant characters. Most of the Limbus in Limbuwan area speak the Limbu language as their mother tongue. It is a chief lingua franca in the eastern Nepal. The Limbu language is written in 'Sirijanga' script. It is named after King Sirijanga who 'in late 9<sup>th</sup> century AD developed this script and taught the Limbus the art of writing by inventing a kind of character'' (Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 31). Though rarely, somehow it managed to come into existence for some hundred years after the death of King Srijanga. In course of time, Limbu turned ignorant and forgot about their written language which was 'revived by Sirijanga II in the 18<sup>th</sup> century'' (Vansittart 102).

Chaitanya Subba asserts that the Limbu language is one of the major spoken and written languages of Nepal. (31) According to Subba, there are four major dialects of the Limbu language. They are: "Panthare dialect, Tamarkhola dialect, Phedape dialect and Chhathare dialect'' (31), Panthare dialect is spoken in Panchthar and Ilam districts. Tamarkhola dialect is spoken in most of the parts of Taplejung district, whereas Phedape dialect is spoken mainly in the northeast part of Terathum district. Chhathare dialect is spoken in the southwest part of Terathum district. The Limbu language is rich in vocabulary and dialects. It is an independent language with its own distinctive linguistic features. According to a linguist Madav Prasad Pokhrel, the Limbu language has:

mono –syllabic root of the verb, placing of the verb at the end of the sentence, closed syllables or nasal and plosive consonants at the end, glottal stops, absence of the third person singular number, inclusive and exclusive distinction in dual and plural numbers in the first person, vowel length in closed syllables, absence of gender etc ( Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 31).

The Limbu language is widely spoken in Taplejung, Panchthar, Ilam, Dhankuta, Terathum, Sankhuwasava. Besides, it is also spoken in many places of the Limbu community in Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari districts. Moreover, this language is also spoken by Limbus who live outside Nepal such as Assam, Nagaland, Sikkim, Bhutan and other parts of India. There are many books written in the Limbu language and Sirijanga script. But, it is still at infancy stage as it was not encouraged in the past. The enthusiasts of the Limbu language and literature were always suffering and discouraged in the past because the cultural identity and the language of any caste or community was taken as a threat to the national unity by ruling elites until the recent years.

It was banned frequently in the past. Despite such hardships, the Limbu scholars like historicist Iman Singh Chemjong, Limbu priest and social reformers Falgunanda Lingden, Lalshwor Sendang have contributed greatly to the development of the Limbu language and literature.

Now, many books of folk literature, poetry, novel, story, biography, one act play and plays, journals and newspapers have been published in and outside Nepal. The Limbu language and literature is taught up to university level in Sikkim, India. Birahi Kainla writes:

Lomenchongsum is a treaty. It is done with equals. It is of Sikkim king.

Bhote king did the treaty by winning the hearts of Limbu and Lapche, but as

soon as he rose to power, he forgot Limen-Chosungsumlai and compelled Limbus to learn Tibetan script after making pemayonchi and Tasiding gumbas. After this, Sirijanga Teangsi entered Sikkim and started to publicize Limbu script (Kainla 29).

Similarly, Limbus are the followers of Yumaism. Yumaism is one of the oldest religions of the world “founded by King Mabohang in 865 AD” (Nembang 3). Yumaism is animalistic. Limbus worship various powers and manifestations of nature such as the sun, the moon, the sky, the fire, the earth, the air, the hills and hillocks, etc. The followers of Yumaism, thus believe that every object of nature is inclusive of human beings which has souls. So, they do not worship temple, mosque or monastery: they do not worship idols. Rather they worship their own home as their holy temple. They have a separate room for worshipping in their home. Limbus worship many gods and goddesses. The gods and goddesses they worship are more or less representatives of nature in one or other ways. They worship the forest (*sing*), stone (*lung*) and soil (*khang*) deities twice a year. Some of their gods are offered animal sacrifice in special occasions. In this practice in animal sacrifice, Yumaism seems similar too many other world religions like Hinduism, ancient Greek and Roman religion. Yumasamang is the goddess of the earth. He-goats and, cocks and pigs are offered to Yumasammang. Thebasammang is the god of war and bravery.

Okwasammang is the god of underworld. Okwamasammang is worshipped once a year and after building a new house. Limbus worship him for the protection and safety of the house. He is offered piglets. Tamfugma is the goddess of forest, and Limbus have a common belief that if she is unhappy, society suffers from misfortunes and diseases. A cock, a hen and an egg are offered during her worship. Limbus’ religion is “animalistic and similar to those of Rai, which mostly involves ancestors and nature worship” (Gurung, *Faces of Nepal* 67).

Limbu's priest is known as Phedangma, Yeba, Yema and samba accordingly and is attired in a special white elegant robe, bead necklace and feather head-dress. He exorcises with a shaman drum and officiates at births, weddings and funeral rites.

Yumaism believes in two forms of supernatural powers as 'Malevolent and Benevolent', for there are always two opposite forces at work in nature as malicious and generous (Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 14). These powers are to punish and reward the vicious and virtuous deeds of human beings. In this way Yumaism always discourages one to be wicked and immoral as there is a harsh punishment from some sort of supernatural powers. On the other hand, it always encourages all human beings to be righteous and charitable for which they are richly rewarded.

Though Limbus are the followers of Yumaism, the another sect in Limbus' religion has been developed. They are known as 'Satyhangma'. The path of Satyhangma was developed by the great reformer of the Limbu community, Falgunanda Lingden in 1930s, during Rana regime. The followers of this sect also worship every god and goddess of Yumaism and consider 'Yuma' or 'Tigera Ningwaphuma' as the supreme power. But they differ in their religious practices and customs. The difference in their ritual is that they perform every religious practice in the Aryan method in the Limbu language. The scholars like Yehang Lawoti consider the path of Satyhangma sect not to be the original culture and religion of Limbu. Rather it is the imported one. It cannot preserve the originality of Limbu's unique culture and religion, Limbu customs, festivals and rituals. As Limbus worship nature, their festivals are also related to nature in a way. They call festival as Tangnam. They observe different festivals throughout the year. The main festivals they observe are 'Yakwa Tangnam, Sisekpa Tangnam, Balihang Tangnam, Chasok Tangnam, Kakphekwa Tangnam etc. Yakwa Tangnam is a communal worshipping of land before getting involved in agricultural activities

like cultivating the crops, sowing the seeds etc. During Yakwa festival, all the villagers gather together and pray for water or rain, favorable weather and avoidance of accidents or wounds whilst working and flood and other natural calamities. Sisepka Tangnam is observed in the first week of the month of Shrawan. It is observed at night when all villagers gather together and carry homemade torches and 'thal' (plate) and 'Nanglo' (bamboo basket) and chase away the starvation and beg for prosperity shouting slogans. Bailing Tongnam is observed in the month of Kartik for three days. It is a festival of light where Limbus remember their great King Balihang and wish for the happiness and prosperity of each other playing Deusi and lighting the candles.

Chasok Tangnam is a festival of gratitude and thanksgiving. After harvesting the yearly crops, the Limbu community gather together and they express their gratitude for gods' favour for crops growing and ask for the permission to use and eat that newly harvested crops to the supreme power 'Tagera Ningwaphuma'. Kakfekwa Tangnam is observed in the first week of the month of Magh. It is also the New Year's Day of Limbu. Current Limbu year is running in 5063. They call their year 'Yele Tangbe'. On this day, they clean their houses, take a bath and worship and pray to their god Tagera Ningwaphuma and eat yams. Limbus believe that the yams are the first food that mankind learned to eat. Before eating they offer a certain portion of food to the god 'Tagera Ningwaphuma' and their neighbours too.

Thus, Limbus' festivals are close to nature and it proves that they are the true worshippers of nature. Their all festivals have a certain link with nature. In addition, as one of the distinguished indigenous nationalities, Limbus are rich in unique cultures and cultural practices. They practise many cultural practices which are not only original of their own, but also different from other tribal identities. Some of them are briefly listed below.

Limbus term 'birth rite' as Sappok Chomen. According to Bairagi Kainla, Sappoko Chomen is one of the most significant rituals of Limbus which must be carried out by every family before the birth of the new baby. Sappok Chomen is a rite of womb worship for the protection of a child in the uterus. It is also a rite of propitiating gods, for the good health of the mother and baby in the womb as well as successful delivery of the baby. It is unique in the sense that no one in the vicinity solemnizes such ritual except Limbus. This ritual is carried out by 'Phedangmas' and it must be done within the five to nine months of pregnancy. Sometimes it is observed even after the birth of the baby, but it must not be missed. (2)

Yangdang Phongma is the naming ritual of newborn child. If the child is female, this ritual is carried out after three days of birth and if the child is male, it is carried out after four days of its birth. This ceremony is carried out by Phedangmas. The literal meaning of 'Yangdang Phongma is 'hang a cradle' and it is a ritual of purification of the mother, the baby, the house and the close relatives and giving name to the baby and showing the baby the light of the day'' (Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 103).

Chakewan Lekma is observed when a boy or a girl reaches up to the age of 15 or 16. The thrust of this practice is to announce the maturity of one and make him/her realize his or her duties and responsibilities. A Limbu priest, Phedangma carries out this ritual on a special occasion.

### **Marriage**

In the Limbu community, we find mainly two types of marriage. They are arranged marriage and love marriage or chosen marriage of free choice. Limbus do not marry within same clans or thars. So, the marital relationship within blood tie of at least seven predecessors is strictly prohibited. Eden Vansittart, in *The Gurkhas*, states "With Limbus, therefore, and all

Kirants, a many may, with certain exceptions, marry any girl of the Limbu nation, as long as she doesn't belong to the same clan and tribe as he does'' (109).

Arranged marriage is known as "Naksingma Mekkhim" and love marriage is known as "Nanumna Khemma Mekkhim" (Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 119). In arranged marriage, first of all, a bridegroom and his relatives go to a bride's home with some gifts and make a proposal of marriage to the bride's parents. If the proposal is accepted and both party reach consent, the date of marriage is fixed. Then the preparation for marriage begins. All the villagers and relatives are invited and bridegroom's party makes a procession towards the bride's house on that fixed day. They bring the bride to the bridegroom's home where she is welcomed by the bridegroom's parents. Then the marriage ritual is carried out by Phedangma. The Phedangma makes both of them promise to stay together life-long. And all the relatives are given a feast and offered home-made wine. They enjoy Kelang (Chyabrunge dance) and Yalang (paddy dance).

Love marriage is a self-decided marriage. When this type of marriage takes place, the parents of married couple have a little role to play. Dor Bahadur Bista in *Sabai Jaatko Fulbari* clarifies the marriage system of Limbus: " marriage ceremony is like of Rai. Also, it resembles to other people of the hill. Bride and groom are generally of 18 years to 20 years. Except for few rich families, most of Limbu boys and girls marry running away from their families (104-05). When a Limbu boy and a girl like each other and fall in love, they decide to marry without the consent of their parents. If a Limbu girl elopes with a Limbu boy, the boy brings her to his home. Then the neighbours and old gentlemen gather in the boy's home and try to find if there is any blood relation between them. If no blood relation is found, then a short formality of marriage is completed by Phedangma. Immediately the relatives and

villagers are invited and given a feast. Later they inform girls' home and there too marriage formality is completed.

### **Death Rites**

When a Limbu dies, his body is at times kept for one night before burial. The body is laid out at full length and then washed and cleaned with the water poured from gold. Then its clothes are changed and adorned with flowers and a one rupee coin is stuck to its forehead. Finally, the dead boy is placed into the chethap i.e. a special makeshift bed like structure and carried to the spot chosen as a grave. The officiating Phedangma is given one rupee with which is supposed to purchase a grave from the spirits of the place. After the body has been buried, the Phedangma may either keep the money or throw it away, crying out as he does so: 'This is the money with which we purchased this land'. The grave is dug deep and the body is laid full length in it, the toes pointing to the sky, the hands upon the breast, with the fingers of one hand clasping the fingers of the others.

Eden Vansittart gives us the further insights into the death rites of Limbus:

If the body is buried near a road, the top of the grave will be made to be convenient resting place for travellers, and a tree will be planted to give shade and coolness to them. After the actual burial is over, the priest and all guests and friends go to the home of the deceased, where a feast is provided to them. The family and relations of the dead will mourn for four days if the deceased was a man, and for three days, if was a woman and are forbidden during that period to eat any meat, salt, oil or chillies. (112)

At the conclusion of the period of mourning, a feast is held in the presence of Phedangma, the mourners and friends. The feast is the final ritual related to the dead person to separate him from the world of living. In the ritual of feast, the Phedangmas and the



other attendants observe the special rites which are meant to purify the world of living caused by the death of that particular person. The feast ends with the priest calling out the dead spirit: 'Go now where your forefathers and foremothers have gone before.'

Apart from these rituals and festivals, Limbus observe many dances and they have several musical instruments. The utmost popular dances are Yalang (Paddy Dance) and Kelang (Drum Dance). Their musical instruments are 'Ke' (Chyabbrung i.e. drumlike musical instrument), Kom (binayo), Mufro (flute), Tanke (nagara) etc. Limbus observe many other cultural and ritual practices. Some of them are Nahangma, Mangenna, *Tongsing*, Akwama, etc in which they worship God and they respect the dead and wish for the prosperity and happiness of living one.

### ***Tongsing and Its Performance***

Amongst many cultural festivities of the Limbu community, *Tongsing Takma* is one of the most important celebrations. *Tongsing* is also called *Tongsing Takma* in which 'Tongsing' means to be united to act or work together and 'Takma' means to hold the beliefs and customs of ancestors intact. *Tongsing Takma* is a ritual practice of Limbus in which Mundhumian myth of the story of the origin of the universe, Earth, plants, insects and birds, aquatic and terrestrial animals, along with the story of the origin of the man is told. *Tongsing* is a technical name to "the bamboo basket filled with earth where small pointed sticks are stuck upright in the middle that represent the spirits of deceased persons and living ones, which is placed at the bottom a long bamboo pole or two poles stuck in the centre of the courtyard" (Bista, *Sabai Jaatko Fulbari* 106). It is a ceremony performed by Sambas and Yebas (Limbu priests and shamans), or by Yemas (Limbu priests) mainly for three or four days and three nights which tells us how social harmony is created. Whilst performing, they beat the brass plates and a special kind of drum and they are accompanied by their disciples.

*Tongsing* is a link of present with ancestors. *Tongsing* is not only a ritualistic practice but it is a social practice as well. It unites and re-unites the family members and relatives in a place strengthening the bond between them. “*Tongsing* is a ritual which literally means an act of coming together or co-operation. *Tongsing* symbolically links the living world with the world of the ancestors. It unites the past and the present and gives the vitality to our life” (Kainla, *Tongsing Takma Mundhum: Aakhyan ra Anusthan* 3).

Sociologist Dor Bahadur Bista in *Sabai Jaatko Fulbari* assesses the cultural meaning of the *Tongsing Takma* and explains that how importantly it has played the role for social unity in their community:

All Limbus have a ceremony called *Tongsing* observed in the courtyard of the house for three days each year in the name of all the dead members of the family. Sometimes four or five extended families join together to conduct a common *Tongsing* for economic expediency. The *Tongsing* ceremony is performed for the welfare of the dead and the merit of the survivors. (106)

It is a creative practice in which all members are considered to be equal and equal participation is expected from all. The performance of *Tongsing* is highly symbolic. The symbolic activities and material and their artistic presentation connote common social, cultural, religious and moral purposes and responsibilities of Limbus. *Tongsing* is a ritual to appease supernatural agents to avoid befalling distresses, disasters and other probable misfortunes. Limbus are one of the ethnic groups living in their land known as Limbuwan in the eastern Nepal. They have their own distinct culture, religion, language and other ritual practices. Though they have different cultural and religious ways of life, they live in harmony with all other members who belong to different caste, religion and culture. Their main occupation is farming. Many Limbu youths are attracted to the foreign employment and are

working in different countries all over the world. Limbus have started to show the concern about the preservation of their language, culture, religion and other heritages of historical importance which are commendable—positive indication.

## **CHAPTER-II**

### ***Tongsing from the Perspective of Performance Theory***

## **Performance and Performativity of Rituals**

The word performance refers to the act of doing something such as musical, dramatic, and other forms of entertainment performed to achieve certain goals. It is an artistic performance in which something fulfills its intended purpose. It is an inherently human activity which refers to the act of performing a ceremony, a play or a piece of music. In fact, the word 'performance' can't be limited to some particular meaning as it covers both very performance activities like dance, play, music, etc. to our very informal everyday activities in every field like talking with friends, writing, etc. So, it can be said that performance is the daily human activities.

Performance basically refers to the act of performing a play, concert or some other forms of entertainment. It includes the way a person performs in a play, concert etc. There are other forms of social drama comprising of various rituals relating to the concept of performance. It is an action or achievement, considered in relation to how successful it is. There are formal and informal performances. Formal performance is mainly related to the arts such as dance, music or drama which are performed to entertain people. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines performance as an act of performing a play or a piece of music, an occasion on which play, a piece of music is performed, the act of doing a piece of work, duty, etc, how well or badly you do a particular job or activity, and a bad behavior that involves angry shouting. (51)

Performance is an art form in which a performer 'does' instead of 'describing' something. Performance does not intend to describe a report. Neither can we check its validity, truth or falsity nor we can restrict the meaning of the term in a particular context of a particular culture.

It cannot be always true and acceptable that each performer makes his or her own definition in the very process and manner of execution. In the non-Western cultures like in Limbuwan, a performer (Samba) does not necessarily intend to create his own definition whilst performing rituals like *Tongsing* as all Sambas solely observe the ritual for social harmony and cooperation. More or less, he performs in certain repetitive pattern every time with the sole objective of social harmony. One's performance is very similar to the other performers of the same class for the same ritual like *Tongsing*.

Victor Turner traces the patterns of universality in performance. His model of performance of social drama includes the four phrases as "breach, crisis, redress and re-integration or schism" (9). He asserts that at the first stage of 'breach' a person breaks away the rules of society. Breach follows the stage of 'crisis' that brings forth conflicts within the individuals and society. This crisis is resolved by the redress public action that is undertaken by the elders of guardians. This redress action can be either political, or judicial or ritual. Ritual redress includes different rites that are supposed to carry out for the welfare of the society. Redress action aims at bringing the society into its normal state.

The model of performance is more or less similar to many cultures operating throughout the world. In the performance of Limbu rituals like *Tongsing*, Nahen Lakma and many more are carried out with the purpose of social welfare. Though it is not necessary that a person must break away the social rules, Limbus' rituals are performed to address conflicts and problems prevalent in the society. Nahen Lakma ritual is performed to avoid the effects of jealousy of others so that society can run smoothly in its normal course. *Tongsing* is carried out to make life peaceful and prosperous. Thus, Limbu rituals are directed towards the aim of bringing the society into its normalcy preventing it from problems and chaos.

The literally critic Elizabeth Bell describes the three main characteristics of performance as:

Performance is both process and product in which something happens, emerges and grows in and through a process, a set of activities which in procession unfolding is also a product, an accomplishment, an event; performance is productive and purposeful which causes, creates produces both itself and things outside of itself and which has many purposes, functions, uses and intentions; performance is traditional and transformative which makes reference to the former ways of doing, acting, seeing and believing that can uphold, critique or change the status quo by performing anew. (16-17)

If we analyze Bell's definition closely, we can deduct that performance which encompasses almost all human activities. To her, it is an action with purpose. It is not only a simple process, but a process that is progressive which questions the status quo and can change that status quo wherever/whenever necessary. Performance is about doing, and it is about seeing, embodiment, it repeats and it is intentional and unintentional, innovative and derivative.

There are different voices in relating performance to a society and human life. It includes all human activities. The basic distinctions between the formal and informal performance can be made. Thus, the formal performance can be viewed as an action or a set of actions which occurs or can be performed in a special occasion in a particular place. Informal performance is related to the everyday manner, behavior, experience of the particular person or community. It is a process of carrying out a certain task. It is the fulfillment of the duties. It is a staging or production of a drama, piece of music. In fact, all human activities and all cultural entities are performance.

## **Performativity**

Performativity is a concept that is related to Speech Act Theory, to the pragmatics of language and to the work of John L. Austin. The concept of performativity has also been used in science and technology studies and in economic sociology. Other uses of the notion of performativity in the social sciences include the daily behavior or performance of individuals based on social norms or habits. Performance studies look back to J.L. Austin's term 'Performativity'. For Austin, every saying is doing in itself. So performativity is doing activities instead of reporting or narrating them. When somebody uses a performative word or expression, for e.g. 'I promise' or 'I apologize' they are also doing something like promising or apologizing etc. Austin, in his masterpiece, *How to Do Things with Words*, makes a basic distinction between two types of sentences: constatives (sentences that assert about facts or state of affairs and can be true and false) and performatives (sentences that accomplish some actions like praising, questioning, promising). Performative sentences perform the action they state.

In his book, Austin questions: 'Can saying make doing it?' He answers: 'yes' if the performatives are uttered within certain condition, in the proper circumstances before the proper authorities, and with sincere intentions. Jacques Derrida later criticized Austin's view about language and claimed that 'all language is citation, an iteration or a repetition with no link to an original version. Furthermore, all languages can be lifted from its original context and quoted in a quite different context. (46)

Elizabeth Bell claims both Austin's and Derrida's views on language played an important role in performativity and performance theory. According to Bell, performance includes a big area of study.

Austin's Speech Act Theory and Derrida's critique, then, are very important to

performativity: performances of identity are iterations-repetitions of sedimented historical conventions. All performances are citations-enacted references to ways of doing gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class and ability that are bound by constraints that are legal, medical, religious, and always political. (188)

Performativity is not merely confined within a stage as a theatre; rather it covers the broad area such as streets, social services lines, loan offices and other useful staging grounds or places. It helps us to survive the performances of our traditional or ritual day-to-day life experiences.

Bell says, “Performativity as a theory of identity, strategy of critique, and a political practice, gender, race, class and abilities are all constituted in and through their performances” (176).

Performativity in the context of Limbu culture and religion is a construction of Limbu ethnic identity. It is the denial of mainstream, Hinduism. In the past years, government tried to influence Limbu people with the ideology of Hinduism by adopting different means and approaches. Their mother tongue was discouraged. But they continued with their cultural and religious performativity. They continued speaking using their mother tongue. This continuation of their cultural and religious performativity was not only a means of ritual performance but it was also the voice of suppressed Limbus and other indigenous nationalities with the message of strong denial of Hinduism. These rituals were the critique to the government’s decision of marginalizing the non-Hindu cultures. Thus, these continuations of Limbu cultural rituals amidst the days of hardships gave Limbus a distinct identity.

Every performance, though how minor and insignificant it is, has a certain purpose



and meaning. Performativity is a political practice. It is the search of identity; it is a demonstration and resistance against the oppressive authority. Through it people can resist and change oppressive structure and ideologies in everyday life. Patric Johnson argues:

The stage, for instance, is not confined solely to the theatre, the dance club, or the concert hall. Streets, social services lines, picket lines, loan offices, and emergency rooms, among others, may also serve as useful staging grounds for identification performances. Theorizing the social context of performance statures the gap between discourse and lived experience by examining how squares use performance as a strategy for survival in their day to experiences. (qtd. in Bell 192)

A distinguished scholar of English literature M.H. Abrahams, in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, attempts to clarify Austin's concept of performatives further:

A number of deconstructive theorists have proposed that the use of a language in fictional literature is in fact a prime instance of the performative, in that it doesn't refer to a pre-existing state of affairs, but brings about, or brings into being, the characters, action, and the world that it describes. Language of statement and assertion, deconstructive theorists convert Austin's constative and performative distinction into an undecidable deadlock, or oscillation, of irreconcilable oppositions. (293)

In countries like Nepal, where many ethnic groups are the victim of denial, and exclusion from the country's mainstream political and administrative structures, performativity is a way of expressing their discontent and anger against the concerned authorities. Performativity opens up new possibilities for understanding identity as a claim to selfhood, with agency to work with and against dominant structures and ideologies.

Performativity is also a theory of gender constitution that rejects foundational approaches to gender and argues for gender's material and historical constitution in performance. The performance can be utilized to criticize the boundaries, institutions, and languages that produce it. As a political practice, the micro politics and everyday resistance, as well as grand-scale, public protests and so on are important projects to performativity. Performativity can happen and be enforced through the law or norms of the society though.

The performativity tend to emphasize the performative function of a language as represented in the literary text, and much performance-oriented criticism of drama, for all its invocation of the theatre, similarly betrays a desire to locate the meanings of the stage in the contours of the dramatic text. Performative can work felicitously only to a degree that they, like theatrical performance, are reiterable, that they signify through a process of citation, utterances perform actions only when they iterate familiar verbal or behavioural regimes.

### **Ritual as Performance**

Rituals in a broader sense include rites, ceremonies, service, formal procedure, custom, convention, tradition etc. It is a repetition of certain set of actions and behavior in a certain occasion. A ritual is a religious service or other ceremony which involves a series of actions performed in a fixed order. It is a way of behaving or a series of actions which people regularly carry out in a particular situation, because it is their custom to do so. In general understanding, ritual is a ceremony performed by a particular group of people often for religious purposes.

Ritual has three specific characteristics. First, it occurs in a unique, social space, set apart from everyday life. Second, communication in rituals takes place through symbols and emotions rather than relying primarily on words. Third, ritual confirms and transforms people's worldviews, identities, and relationships with others. Rituals are linked to ceremony

and religious devotion which includes prayer, expressions of faith, sacrifice of food, crops, animals, or other goods. Arts like music, dance, song and painting are other important aspects of ritual.

The rituals mark the various occasions of birth, death, coming of age in a community. They endeavor to clarify the relationships between people, animals, the natural world, the divine, etc. In case of necessity people seek petition that ask for some kind of divine intervention or assistance.

Ritual is a performance as it is performed in the way any other social drama takes place. It follows the pattern of gathering, performance and dispersing as an especially theatrical pattern proposed by Schechner. In every ritual performance, there is a gathering, a performance and a dispersing. Every ritual performance has a certain aim of redressing the conflict and crisis. It is carried out to solve some ongoing crises or to avoid some forthcoming crises. In every society, people come together to mark or celebrate certain occasions or events. Such ceremonies are shared events, which may involve traditional words, music, or include special ritual actions or costumes. According to Victor Turner, multifaceted system of rituals “embraces the images of cosmos and chaos... the intertwining of dance, body languages of many kinds, songs, chant, incense, burnt offering, ritualized feasting and drinking, painting and body painting...” (12).

His idea of ritual can be better linked with the Limbu rituals. The life philosophy of Limbus is based on Mundhum which contains cosmology, mythology, stories and history of Limbu people.

The ritual life of Limbus are based on Mundhum. Limbu rituals are full of the images of cosmos and chaos that include the dances, songs and chanting of many kinds. In different

occasions of different rituals, they offer animal sacrifice, feasting and drinking. The ceremonies linked with birth, marriage and death often have a symbolic meaning; they mark the different phases in an individual's status in society. Manner and dress of the performers play an important part in the performance or rituals. There are special codes of dress that are assigned to the performers. Richard Schechner in *Performance Theory* quotes Eliade as:

The shamanistic costume tends to give the shaman a new, magical body is animal look. The three types are that of bird, the reindeer (stag) and the bear but especially the bird...Feathers are mentioned more or less everywhere in the description of shamanistic costumes. (201)

As Schechner argues that Limbu shamans also use bird's feathers on their head in the performance of rituals like *Tongsing*. But this shamanistic costume of feathers is not intended to give the Limbu shaman an animal look; instead it relates Limbu ritual practices to nature and natural objects. So there are unique features of Limbu rituals which are guiding their thoughts and shaping their beliefs. Despite the elements of universality in Limbu rituals, they are also very different from rituals of other religion and race. The life rituals of Limbu are based on their religious scripture i.e. Mundhum. Limbus customs, ideologies, moral values, thoughts, etc are guided by Mundhum. Even though it is not in the written form, it is often cited by Limbus during their life-cycle. Mundhum is a vital document for Limbus. These Limbu shamans Phedangma, Samba, Yeba, and Yema have been reciting this scripture "Mundhum" from the time of immemorial during the performance of rite and rituals. Thus, the unique cultural and social rituals are creating the identity of Limbus throughout the world. There are various rituals in different society. Birth is a ritual marked in different ways in the

different parts of the world when a new member arrives in a community. In Christian ceremonies, a baby's head is dipped in or touched with water.

In western countries, some people receive a key on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday as a symbol of their entry into adulthood. In marriage a man and a woman make a formal commitment to spend their life together, they agree to share their property and set up a new house. Similarly, death is also marked by ritual in most societies. Now, it is obvious that society and culture are closely associated with the ritual as performance. In a sense ritual is a cultural pattern. So society and culture are very crucial to our understanding of rituals.

J. L. Austin says performance is not narrating or describing something but doing something. It is an action oriented. The main pioneer of performance theory Austin has stressed doing something. Everyone can describe something, but doing is better than describing. A person can make many plans and strategies. But what matters is putting them into effect. It is easy to tell a story written by an author, but the pioneers like Austin, Abraham, Bell, Johnson, Goldberg, etc have encouraged coming generations to write than tell what someone has written.

Thus, all rituals are the performances that involve actions or behavior which follows the similar pattern every time they are used. Ritual performances are fixed symbolic parts of a religious service and ceremony. They are carried out in a fixed, structured way rather than spontaneously. The term 'ritual' is used to describe a series of actions that is always performed in the same way especially as part of a religious ceremony or something that is done regularly and always in the same way. Ritual performances are those activities which are the part of formal religious occasions. All rituals are a prescribed order of performing rites and procedures that are regularly followed. The most essential essence of ritual is that it has some intended purposes and meaning beyond its performance and occasion. In the

context of Nepal, performance of ritual is a means to assert one's caste, culture, customs and religion. Rituals endow us with identity. *Tongsing* is not only a description but also an action. So many formalities have to be done to carry out *Tongsing*. It will not be worth trying to observe *Tongsing* without performing. When a Shaman recites Mundhum, it is part of description. But placing bamboo poles at the courtyard, playing drums, etc are part of action. Therefore, *Tongsing* and performance are interconnected.

## CHAPTER-III

### Theme of Social Harmony in *Tongsing*

#### Limbus' Social and Religious Ritual

*Tongsing* is a religious and social exercise of Limbus that seeks social solidarity and cooperation. There are rituals within *Tongsing* which are performed for happiness, calmness and prosperity of society. *Tongsing* invokes various divinities for good harvest, and for better opportunities to live in peace and prosperity. It is also a practice of worshipping various Gods and goddess to avoid befalling distress, illness, natural disasters, and difficulties that are hindrances to the development of the society. *Tongsing* is conducted not only in the concern of one particular family, but it is the concern of all the Limbu communities that live close enough to one another.

There are various views and opinions on the meaning of '*Tongsing*'. *Tongsing Takma* is a ritual of social solidarity or cooperation initiated and performed by a particular family or families for their well-being, prosperity and happiness. It is also a ritual of continuing the socio-cultural rituals, tradition and identities initiated by the ancestors. Chaitanya Subba describes *Tongsing* as a link with the ancestors and the present. He asserts:

It is an ancestral worship to bring forth happiness, calmness, happiness and prosperity for the succeeding generations. It is a ritual of exorcising evil spirits from individual as well as from family or community. It is a ceremony of invoking various divinities or functional deities to bestow good harvest, better opportunities and prosperity and to ward off illness, difficulties and natural calamities. It is also a ceremony of formally segregating the paths and souls of dead persons and living ones and an excellent opportunity of

reciting, recalling and listening to the Mundhums of great significance and enjoy the ritualistic drama. (156)

Limbus still believe that worshipping snakes, trees, rivers etc. saves their lives from any sort of accident. Also, they think if they discontinue to worship such things, they have to cope with unwanted consequences. For instance, some Limbus think that dead souls will haunt them and try to take their lives. On account of fear, people have been upholding the tradition of worshipping natural objects. So *Tongsing* can be an obligation, too.

Hindi-Limbu Dictionary defines *Tongsing* as the most important festival of Limbu people which begins along with the recitation of scriptural Mundhum in which they worship for progress, peace and prosperity for living people and peaceful heavenly rest of dead ones. (45)

Likewise, B.B. Subba defines *Tongsing* as a ritual to please the supernatural power to avoid misfortunes. It is observed in 3 nights. It is a ritual to worship for appeasing the dead souls. (61)

Different forms of the social roles were interwoven within the performance of *Tongsing* in the Limbu community from the ancient time. In these ancient days of human civilization, life of human beings was difficult. In search of food and hunting animals, many of them were killed by beasts, whereas some died by falling off the cliffs.

Bairagi Kainla studies the meaning of *Tongsing* in the Limbu language and emphasizes its social utility: The Limbu word *Tongsing* is formed by two words 'Tong' and 'Sing'. 'Tong' is derived from verb 'Tongma' which means 'to be united or to integrate'. In the Limbu language 'Sing' suffix is added in verbs to make them nouns. Therefore *Tongsing* literally means an act of being united. *Tongsing* is a familial ritual of social harmony and solidarity of society and entire mankind. (2)



Limbus are found living together. It is hard to find only one Limbu family in a village. At least a couple of families or more than that we find in a village. They prefer living together to individually. In case one Limbu family organizes a puja or ritual, none other than a Limbu can help to do the puja smoothly. It is because an individual belonging to another community is not expected to know about Limbus' religious and cultural practices. Limbus live harmoniously.

### ***Tongsing Mundhum***

*Tongsing Mundhum* is what is narrated and recited during the performance of *Tongsing*. The *Mundhum* of *Tongsing* is very long and complex which consists of many rituals. This *Mundhum* is the oral one. It has been transferred orally from one generation to another. Hence, it is known as 'Thugsap' 'Thuthure Vedas' which means 'the story told by mouth'. Recently most of its parts have been written and transcribed by various scholars and enthusiasts.

According to Sambas, *Tongsing Mundhum* begins with the description of the origin of the universe. There was just a void and nothing as before the beginning of the universe. Then Almighty god Tagera Ningwaphuma appeared by his own will. He was the creator, omnipresent and the source of the all knowledge. He created the sun, the moon, the blue sky in the void. Then he brought stars and galaxies from Makhetembe, the place of origin of the stars. And he created the earth, water and air. The sea was formed by his sweat. In the beginning the earth was full of water. Then the world of Mujingna Kheyongna (The First Woman) was created. The mountains like Everest, Kumbhakarna etc were made.

Small hillocks and hills were made from which rivers and rivulets began to flow. These rivers brought big and small stones and sand then the caves were made. The earth

slowly began to get dried but was still muddy. Slowly the grasses and earthworm began to hold the earth tight.

Then he created Porokmiba Yambhamiba to make this earth even more beautiful. He ordered him to make a jungle, but Porokmiba Yambhamiba had no ideas to make jungles. So he went to god Tagera Ningwaphuma to get knowledge and seeds of the plants. The god gave him the idea and returned. The first plant that sprouted was a nettle plant and so on. The Mundhum of '*Tongsing*' is very complex and elaborated one with complicated rituals. If recited and narrated properly and thoroughly, it can take nearly one week. The reason of this lengthy recitation is that Mundhum consists of 'various myths, legends, narratives and oracles are believed to be linked with *Tongsing Mundhum* which guides the social, ethical and religious concepts and shape the attitude and behavior of Limbus'' (Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 156-58). Limbus believe that *Tongsing* should be conducted every year if possible, if not at least once three years.

If it is not possible even every three years, it must be conducted at least once eight or nine years. Mundhum expert Bairagi Kainla finds the language of *Tongsing Mundhum* very beautiful and versatile which varies according to the contexts. Kaila finds the beautiful and powerful mixture of folk dramatic elements in *Tongsing Mundhum*. *Tongsing Mundhum*, for him, is full of dramatization with performing various rituals within it. He writes:

When *Tongsing Mundhum* begins, the Sambas or Yebas pray to various Gods and goddess, and pay homage to their religious teacher. In his time, they recite Mundhum with a long voice mixed with poetic qualities. But the language while harvesting crops is dramatic, funny and entertaining. The language turns even more sad and pathetic when Sambas recite the sad story of Sappory Mempory Hangma in the ritual of the dead. (4)

*Tongsing Mundhum* begins with ‘the Mundhum of raising the ‘Yagranging’ i.e. a bamboo pole stuck up in the middle of the courtyard. The very first stanza goes this way:

Tagerama a, Ningwaphuma a

Tuttusesepro, Tumyangsesepro

Yaklasesepro, Suhangmasesepro

Midhung pogiro, Mirakpogiro

Angsuk Pogiro, Yukmipogiro! ( Kainla, *Tongsing Takma Mundhum*:

*Aakhyan ra Anusthan* 35; 1-5)

Which means:

Oh! Almighty god Tagera Ningwaphuma!

To worship for the protection of gentlemen and ladies

Let’s be fire and the flames of fire

Let’s be fire that catches the forest!

In this way, *Tongsing Mudhum* begins with the invocation of the supreme god Tagera Ningwaphuma. He is worshipped to protect all the members of the society. Samba here in the witness of the gods addresses his fellow members that all gentlemen and the ladies should be like fire and its flames. It has a symbolic meaning; we all must be vigorous like a fire to work for the welfare of societies and we all must be self-sacrificing like a flame which burns to light others.

One must light the light of knowledge for the society. It is an occasion to express solidarity for the well-being of all members in the society. Whilst performing *Tongsing*, some special materials are required. There is a strong conviction in the Limbu community that in the absence of those things, *Tongsing* can’t be performed. They are a bamboo pole/poles, Pong (wooden jar of liquor), banana leaves, flowers, a small rice cooking pot, pieces of

colored clothes, threads (tiers), bamboo baskets filled with earth, sacred water, hens and cocks, eggs, a pig etc weapons like knife, khukuri, axe, sickle, etc.

### **Performers of *Tongsing***

*Tongsing* cannot be performed by ordinary people. For it, there are special Limbu Shamans who believe themselves that they are the assigned people by God for this duty. There are mostly four kinds of Limbu shamans in the Limbu community. Fedangma (male) Samba (male) Yeba (female) and Yuma (female). These are four shamans differ in many ways in accordance with their duties, practice and costumes. There are various opinions about their roles and duties in the Limbu community. Who is the right candidate for conducting *Tongsing Takma* ritual?

Some argue that all four are illegible to conduct *Tongsing* whilst other disagree with this idea and name either one or two of them. The difference in their views is partly caused by the different social practices of these shamans in different areas of Limbuwan. In one area one type of priest carries out this ritual whilst in another area others carry out this ritual. Chaitanya Subba claims that Samba, Yeba or Yema are the rightful candidate for conducting the ritual of *Tongsing*. He writes:

It is also said that Samba will be enough to perform a *Tongsing* of one night and if it is of three nights, the rituals of two nights should be conducted by or by the name of Yeba or Yema and the last clean rite *Tongsing Takma* is performed by Samba. Most people in Miwakhola and Tamarkhola opine that the combination of Samba and Yeba or Yema is desirable to conduct Sumyamba Yagrangsing (three nights *Tongsing*)...The pole of Samba is called “Kesing” and the poles of Yeba are known as “Yagesing”. Samba is always supported by his assistant and disciple Sanlangoba and Yeba Yagapsiba. (158)

Popular Limbu priest Chandra Kumar Sherma opines that the Yeba who knows and recites the Mundhumian myth of the origin of everything including universe, is the rightful Shaman for *Tongsing*. Likewise, Yema who also knows the songs of origin and creation also can conduct this ritual. But another Limbu writer and researcher Jeetendra Raj Chemjong disagrees totally with their views and claims that the only rightful candidate for conducting *Tongsing* is 'Samba'. He agrees with others that though Yeba, and Yema also conduct *Tongsing* in the Limbu community; they are not rightful candidate of it. For him, it is the outcome of lack of Sambas in every community. Due to the lack of Sambas in the past, Yeba and Yemas also started conducting *Tongsing*. They did so as that was the obligation of scarcity of Sambas in their society. Another Limbu writer Yehang Lawoti also agrees with Chemjong that Samba is the only right candidate for conducting *Tongsing*. (48) But for Mundhum expert Bairagi Kainla that the both Sambas and Yebas can perform *Tongsing*. (23)

In this way, there are various views on it. There is still a debate about the right candidate for conducting the *Tongsing* ritual. Though Samba is and can be the more rightful person for *Tongsing*, reality is that Yebas and Yemas are also carrying out this ritual in the Limbu society. The main differences between Sambas and Yebas is their bamboo pole in the courtyard. Sambas raise a single bamboo pole in the middle of the courtyard whilst Yeba raises two. Thus, both of them carry out *Tongsing* ritual that knows and narrates the story of origin and creation. Sambas have acquired his power and position as a result of trance or by divine intervention, and not by study and other channels.

Although the main purpose of *Tongsing* is to bring social harmony and solidarity, its various forms can be found as per the objectives and length of its performance. There is a common belief that *Tongsing* must be conducted once a year. If it is not possible, it must be conducted at least once three years. The most commonly practiced *Tongsing* in the Limbu

community can be discussed as Sese Sangsang *Tongsing*, Ighechchhing *Tongsing* and Ighepmasing *Tongsing*. When the *Tongsing* is conducted as part of the usual yearly celebration, it is known as 'Sese Sangsang' *Tongsing*. It is usually called *Tongsing* only. Ighechchhing *Tongsing* is conducted after the death of the close relative and family member. It is organized by the single family. Ighepmasing *Tongsing* is also conducted after the death of the close relative and family member. Instead of a single family, it is organized collectively by the group of families and all relatives as a joint practice.

On the other hand, *Tongsing* has its variations according to its length of performance. The real form of *Tongsing* takes seven days and seven nights. Later it was shortened to the performance of the three days and nights. Moreover, it was further shortened to 'single night' *Tongsing*' which takes only one night to perform. Single night *Tongsing* is the limited version of *Tongsing* in which the main myth of Mundhum is recited and less important rituals are left out. Single night *Tongsing* is the product of the modern age because nowadays it is being increasingly difficult to gather all the relatives for a long time as most of them are employed in different places. It is also the outcome of the economic expediency to curtail the expenditure.

Bairagi Kainla says that generally *Tongsing* can be divided into two parts. (7-8) According to him, the first part takes place in the first two nights where the myth of universe and its origin, the creation of the earth, the creation of human beings and the development of society is recited. It narrates how envy, jealousy, greed and other evil practices began along with the development of human beings and society. These rituals not only show the problems but also tell us the solutions to get rid of them. After the completion of this first part, the second part of the ritual begins on the third day. During this all family members go to a

nearby river and symbolically wash their evil thoughts within themselves and promise to keep themselves free from all kinds of evils.

### **The Main Rituals within *Tongsing***

There are many rituals which Shambas must complete in *Tongsing*. Those rituals must not be left out. Their rituals show that *Tongsing* is not only a religious practice to please some sort of supernatural powers, but also a social practice that gives a message of unity and solidarity with practical skills. The main rituals performed during *Tongsing* are Yagrangring Phongma (Mundhum of Raising Yagrangring), Idhuk Sogha Pakma (Driving away the Evil Spirits of Unnatural Deaths), Phungwa Changma (Rituals of Life and prosperity), Poklung Lepma (Throwing of Stones), Nahen Lakma (Suppressing Envy or jealousy), and Sakmura Bademma (Avoiding the Effect of a Curse) etc.

During *Tongsing*, a new bamboo pole (*kesing*) is placed in the courtyard and an alter is constructed at the top. This ritual is known as the ritual of Yagrangring Phongma. Yagrangring means a long bamboo pole that is raised in the middle of the courtyard. A big bamboo basket with leaves and branches, and chyabbrung (a special drum) is hung on the pole. *Tongsings* are stuck representing various souls and other sacred objects placed in small bamboo baskets filled with soil. They are placed at the bottom of the pole. In the beginning of the ritual, Samba makes the introductory remarks in course of his Mundhum recitation by mentioning that the creator god sent various Sambas, Phedangma and Yebas to the earth to save mankind. Then he invokes his master spirits and the mythical and the symbolic journey begins.

This ritual is important not only for the recitation and performance of Sambas or Yebas but it is also important for the symbolic and mythical journey the performers take us in

the course of its observation. Chaitanya Subba describes the symbolic journey of Sambas and Yebas as:

The journey starts from the *Tongsings*. They move towards Kesing climbing the several steps there and then descend to the floor or courtyard. They enter the house and reach the main pillar where Akwanama stays and move towards the hearth. Then they proceed towards the hooks and small bamboo baskets hung on the top of a hearth and to the sooty beams. They climb the upper storey of the house and reach the axle of the roof. From the ridge of the roof, Samba watches the village in the light of the moon and stars and tells what he has seen, whether good or bad signs, in the village. (190-97)

According to Subba, in the course of its performance, sometimes Sambas have to go through the shining path covered by Sellobung (*Thysanlolaena maxima*), and sometimes through the sunny path shaded by Chestnut tree. They must be careful as there are spear grasses on the way. They also find Hangangse trees covered by black fruits, even making the path dark and they must proceed cautiously as evil spirits stay or rest on those trees. They even find a place on the way covered by the flowers Chuwat Phung (*chrysanthemum*), the flowers of dead persons, and they are supposed to take good care of all the souls not to miss or lose any. While moving ahead on their track, they reach a place where the white flowers of Kokphekla (*Mongolia tree*) and colorful flowers of Thokphekla (*rhododendron*) make the surroundings pleasant. They also find pine trees and places covered by mist and cloud in their ascending journey and they have to protect Tuttu *Tongsings* (men's *Tongsings*) and Suhangma *Tongsing* (women's *Tongsings*) from the wind and rain.

Various kinds of birds and beasts can be seen on the way. While moving further towards the highland, there comes a place full of springs where there are fountains in a row.



They are the fountains of supreme goddess Tagera Ninwaphuma, and fountains of Tuttu Tumyahang (gentlemen i.e. respected laymen), Yakla Suhangma (ladies), Sawala Yechchham (reverend souls), Siphak Yemi (Shamans) etc. These are the sources of clean water and the deep sanctuary of snake and tortoise carpenters, bamboo-crafters, herders, potters and fair dames looking after poultry, piggery and weaving clothes. The team members of the journey should be careful with the broken pieces of earthen wares because the evil spirits may hide in those broken pieces. After crossing the beautiful and fountains, they pass through the marshy land. There is a log just like a see-saw, placed on the track to cross the marshy land. They have to jump through it. The rites of Idhuk Sogh Pakma are observed in the first night of *Tongsing*. The main objective of performing this ritual is to drive away evil spirits. Limbus have common faith in ghosts and other evil spirits.

They believe that if these evil spirits haunt nearby homes, they can make anyone sick which can even cause his or her death too. So these rituals are the most important ones.

Chaitanya Suba narrates the ritual of driving away the evil spirits (soghas) as:

Yeaba casts a spell on Soghas and calls them to come to the thread and accept their food. When these evil spirits start to take their foods, Yeaba throws arrows from his bow pointing to the leaves and they fall to a broken earthen pot where Neghekpa (nicker bean), Khesik (walnut) and small pieces of white crystallized silica, beat the brass plates rapidly and drive away following them around the house to the crossroads and a little away to the west direction.

(161-62)

There is a common belief in the Limbu community that Samba never kills Soghas (ghosts) but just blocks their way to be near to the house and courtyard. To block the path of

The Soghas, Sambas chant special Mundhums in the course of ritual performance at night. The illustrative dramatization of the myth and its performance overwhelms the spectators. The Sambas exhibit many skills in a symbolic way to chase these ghosts. He shouts, yells and shrieks here and there in the dark and all the family members and spectators have to follow him yelling, shouting and throwing stone chips and sand.

The ritual of Phungwa Changma is performed for the prosperity, good luck and power acquisition of Limbu youths. This ritual is especially for the youths. In this ritual all Limbu youths from the house stand carrying a brass plate filled with a kalash (sacred pot with water) and a small lamp decorated with Sekmuri (celery) flower and other flowers. "Sekmuri flower has a very important place and meaning in the Limbu community. It is a flower that symbolically stands for the human life" (Lawoti 52).

While observing this ritual, the youths must stand in a circle surrounding the *Tongsing* pole in the middle of the courtyard chanting certain words together along with the Samba. The Samba, then recites special Mundhum to carry out this ritual. There is a separate brass plate for each Limbu youth. This is specially designed for them. Each youth should carry their own plate and place on their shoulder according to the signs and symbols of the Samba. The boy must make four complete rounds of the *Tongsing* pole while the girls must make three complete rounds and dance with the Samba once in the morning and once in the evening of that appointed day in *Tongsing*. Then the Samba chants the special words and spray the special water of the sacred pot with the help of the very Sekmuri flower of each person respectively.

Poklung Lepma is a prestigious game of throwing stones which represents the adventurous endeavor of young people. It is very much like a modern game of shot-put. Sambas and Yebas perform this ritual narrating a myth that tells how this ritual practice

began and why it is still important. According to a Yeba, Mr. Tek Bahadur Lingden, there was drought on earth. To cause rainfall, Porokmi Yambhami, the creator god, threw Poklung towards the end of the earth aiming at the horizon. It struck at Sakholung Khingwa, Lakhonglung Khongwa and broke the earthen pot which caused rain and thus the Earth was freed from draught. Before throwing the stone from Iwa Hata, he came in contact

With Khambongba Sungbonba that he had to cross the limit set by them and the stone should not be broken. If the stone didn't cross the limit, that would cause downfall and humiliation and if the stone is broken into pieces, they would turn into evil spirits causing harm to the stone thrower himself according to the condition agreed by both parties. It was also agreed that if the thrower succeeds in his attempt, that would mean a victory, progress and prosperity.

The trail limits were set and Porokmi Yambhami successfully crossed the limits every time, eventually breaking the earthen pot full of water. By his attempt of Poklung Lepma, the Earth turned into a green and fertile land. Following the tradition and instruction given by the Sambas and Yebas, young men have to perform this ritual imitating the action of throwing stone some distance.

Sambas say that when Porokmi Yambhamiba at last threw the stones keeping the gentlemen and ladies as an eyewitness. He threw and threw and at last he promised and remembered the supreme god Tagera Ningwaphuma and threw the stone into the great space, void. The stone went up to the Kongkonglung hill and brought a great storm and rain causing thunder storm. Then the rain continued up to the nine days and the Earth drowned in the water.

Afterwards, the seeds sprouted everywhere on earth making it more beautiful than before. The stone 'Paklung' broke into several pieces and they became gods and goddesses.

Now, this ritual is observed in a symbolic way. After the recitation of Paklung Changma Mundhum, the Samba calls out the names of the concerned boys and girls one by one. He then takes his special coin as a symbol of the stone to be thrown. Then he tosses the coin reciting their names. If the 'head' of the coin turns on, it is considered to be 'good sign' and if 'tail' of the coin turns on, it is the 'bad sign'. Therefore, Samba tosses the coin continuously until the 'head' of the coin comes.

There must be good luck for everyone for whom the *Tonsing* is being performed. Nahen Lakma is of the most important rituals of *Tongsing Takma*. 'Nahen' literally means envy or jealousy and 'Lakma' means 'to suppress or block'. In this way this ritual means to suppress or block the envy or jealousy from others that stands as the hindrance to the progress. To conduct this ritual, a sacred place like garden is chosen where a bamboo pole of nearly seven foot is raised, below the pole, a flat stone is kept and on that stone another piece of stone is kept upright.

Then a bow with an arrow is tied with the pole in the direction of the sky. The sky directed bow and arrow is meant for the symbolic protection and the safety from the thunderstorm and other evil spirits. After all apparatus are set, the Samba starts the Mundhum of Nahen. His followers and all the family members should stand in front of the bamboo pole carrying weapons like khukuri, sword, spear, gun, bows etc. when Nahen Lakma Mundhum is recited, all those standing persons should shout along with the Samba towards right and left raising their weapons high on the air. At the same time they should lift up their legs and stamp on earth dancing together in a line. Then Samba keeps the sky and the earth as the eyewitness and presses the earth with his feet as the symbol of suppressing the envy and jealousy.

For Limbus, this ritual is very symbolic and important. It teaches them to live with peace and harmony avoiding bitterness among one another. It gives the message that though there exist negative traits like hatred, envy, and jealousy in human society, we must forget them to bring forth happiness and progress. So it is important to observe once a year to cast out all the evil thoughts from all the member of a society.

Sakmura Bademma is the ritual of averting the curse. The main reason of this ritual is a social message of unity, understanding and co-operation. Though there is a quarrel, fight or dispute between brothers, relatives, and neighbours within the different periods of the years, this ritual inspires them to forget such bitterness in their relation and encourage them to come with a new strength and vitality and work together for the progress of all. Though the “practice of curse is vanishing among the Limbus today, but the feeling and fear is still there and the curse to forefathers are often reminded by Phedangmas, Sambas and Yebas” (Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 172).

While observing this ritual, the Samba recites the Mundhum that narrates how the curse system originated among the first human beings. Limbus have a deep belief in curse. A separate special place traced with white flour is made in a special triangular shape. Seeds of various food grains including paddy, maize, millet, wheat, mustard, etc. are mixed together and the family members drop those mixed seeds on that traced placed and spit on them which symbolically mean they hate the curse. Then all of them shout together announcing that from today onwards there is no bitterness and hated among them. Hatred is believed to be gone with those chanted seeds. At the end, those seeds are thrown either from the nearby rock or river. Limbus believe this way they can live with a new and refreshed life from that day onwards.

In this way, the function of *Tongsing Takma* is entirely social as it always aims for social welfare. All the sub-rituals of *Tongsing* are fully concerned with the harmony of a society. With the evolution of human beings with its different races, mankind suffered from different forms of pains and distresses. The life was extremely difficult and severe in those days of beginning of human civilization. So, *Tongsing* from that day onwards aimed for nothing but for social development and prosperity. The death is tried to be prevented in a society. It teaches how to live happily with the co-operation of one another in the society.

### **Social Harmony in *Tongsing***

From the outset of the Limbu civilization, *Tongsing* has been working as a guiding force in the Limbu's community. It has been working as an unwritten law in the Limbu community from the ancient time. All the Limbus are abided culturally, politically and socially by the Mundhum, and rites and rituals of *Tongsing Takma*. During its performance, many rites are performed for the protection of the family, relatives and society. The Sambas separates the spirit of the dead persons with the living ones so that living person must not suffer from the dead spirit and its evil effects. He blocks the path of the dead by special rituals. Then he blocks the path of the envy and jealousy as well. The purpose of such ritualistic exercises in *Tongsing* is to avoid misfortunes a wish for the peace and harmony of the family and society in the days to come.

*Tongsing* as a ritual of the Limbu community, takes place on special social occasions. It is conducted in different occasions and it has got slight variations in accordance with those occasions. "Sese Sangsang *Tongsing* is conducted as the part of the yearly celebrations" (Kainla, *Tongsing Takma Mundhum: Aakhyan ra Anusthan* 1). It is usually known as *Tongsing* only. On this occasion Limbus gather together in the certain house and take part in various rituals of *Tongsing* with Samba or Yeba to avoid natural calamities, disasters and

unnatural death. They wish for the happy and peaceful life of all relatives and members of the community. On the other hand, “Ighechchhing *Tongsing* and Ighepmasing *Tongsing* are conducted after the death of a close relative of a family member by a single family and by the group of families and all relatives” as a collective practice respectively (Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 158)

Like most of the rituals, the communication in *Tongsing* takes place through symbols and emotions, rather than relying primarily on the words. Munhdum expert Bairagi Kainla opines that the language and phrases used in *Tongsing Mundhum* are very beautiful and highly symbolic” (5).

With the help of highly symbolic performative language of Mundhum, the Samba carries out different rituals addressing the supernatural and natural world. During the performance of *Tongsing*, the Samba involves himself in a narrative and ritual performance of Mundhum and he dramatically, physically and verbally interacts with a large number of addressees who help the shamans chase the evil spirits out of the human world and there is a communication; there is a mystic union between human beings and nature. They make a very symbolic journey across various locations that range from the beautiful Himalayas and steep hills, green forests, rivers, several other places etc. They also address the actual human audiences. The addressers (performers) and addressees are thought to interact cooperatively in those different places. That friendly interaction can be envisioned as one of the most vital social elements of social harmony.

Its symbolic performance and communicative language can be illustrated from the ritual of Paklung Lepma. After the recitation of Paklung Lepma Mundhum, the Samba calls out the names of the concerned boys and girls one by one. He then takes his special coin as the symbol of the stone to be thrown. The Samba tosses the coin continuously until the ‘head’

of the coin meant for the good luck turns on. There must be good luck for everyone for whom *Tongsing* is being performed. In this performance, the Samba speaks out as:

The bright place because of the moon

The bright place because of the sun

In the place where lies our life and age

Our life and age can be decreasing

As the bells of time and death is ringing

So I chant the mantras; toss this coin

To obstruct the path of Death

To protect us from the Death. (Kainla, *Tongsing Takma Mundhum: Aakhyan ra Anusthan* 318)

So, the text of *Mundhum* is culturally and traditionally a communicative occurrence. This interactive performance is representation of social reality that bears a witness to the situations. Rather than imagination, it refers to the actual context through traditionalization, a process of making potential knowledge currently active into the tradition of the community. The text-composer and the audience or the receivers have got traditionally and culturally assigned roles. They carry out cultural and traditional duties and fulfill their cultural responsibilities.

*Tongsing* is a ritual of religious devotion with prayer and worship. The prayer is an expression of the faith of the Limbu community to their gods including Supreme Tagera Ningwaphuma and other various supernatural forces so that they can live in peace and harmony. The prayer is meant to please the gods and other supernatural forces. It is a “proprietary rite to please the supernatural forces and thus to avoid befalling distresses and misfortunes and ancestral worship to bring forth happiness, calmness, cooperation, and



prosperity for the succeeding generations” (Subba, *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* 156). As a typical ritual, *Tongsing* also practices sacrifice of different foods, and animals. At an initial phase of ritual performance, shamans offer a sacrificial piglet, millet, beer, and a one-rupee coin to master spirit. In Nahen Lakma ritual of *Tongsing Takma* “some eggs are placed on the banana leaves and Samba or Yeba, together with their assistants perform the ritual by sacrificing a pig or a cock and its blood drops are sprinkled on the banana leaves” (206).

In this way, *Tongsing*, which is a ritual includes the practice of animal sacrifice, is one of the most common features of world rituals. Mudhum expert Bairagi Kainla finds the language of *Tongsing Mundhum* very beautiful mixture of tune and rhythm comprises of serious meaning, charm and repetitive pattern and symbols and images have made it poetic literature of high quality” (4). In the beginning of *Tongsing Mundhum*, the Sambas or Yebas pray to various gods and goddesses, and pay homage to their religious teachers. In this time, they recite Mundhum “with along voice mixed with poetic qualities. But the language while harvesting crops is dramatic, funny and entertaining. The language turns even more sad and pathetic when Sambas recite the sad story of Sappory Mempory Hangma in the ritual of dead” (4). The language of *Tongsing Mundhum* sometimes turns into a highly poetic language. Sambas and his helpers dance for nights chanting and shouting. Sambas also draw different sketches of different shapes with the traces of flour in the performance. This drawing can be linked with the painting.

In this way *Tongsing Mundhum* gives us a comprehensive insight into understanding the Limbu community from various standpoints and likewise other Mundhums consists of different but complete events in themselves, which are related to various daily activities and religious, and socio-cultural dimensions of the community. This truth entrenches an argument

that the narrations and ritual performances of Mundhums are accomplished not in isolation somewhere in desolate forests hut in front of a large number of audiences.

## CHAPTER-IV

### Conclusion

#### ***Tongsing* for Social Harmony among the Limbus**

*Tongsing* is not only a ritualistic practice but it is also a social practice. It unites and re-unites the family members and relatives in a place strengthening the bond among Limbus. It is a creative practice in which all members are considered to be equal and equal participation is expected from all. The Mundhumian myth of *Tongsing* has shaped the value, culture, thought, and ideals of Limbus since the time immemorial. That's why it is highly valued in Limbu communities. It takes us to the mythical and symbolic journey of historically and mythically important places. It symbolically takes Limbus towards their ancestors through the long symbolic journey, it teaches us many social and practical skills like how to harvest corns and paddy, how to grow flowers, how to offer respect to the visitors and guests.

The objectives of the research concerned with the social message of the ritual performance of *Tongsing* ritual. Not only does the study focus on cultural and religious aspect of *Tongsing* but also its implication in the context of Nepal. At present people are discussing the pros and cons of federalism and racism. Such systems are bound to lead our nation to anarchy and chaos. Therefore, *Tongsing*, which seeks social harmony and welfare by uniting relatives in a place, can be a striking example to inspire same messages among people of ethnicities to live in harmony. For this study, the researcher has consulted the different Limbu cultural books and some Limbus who have a good insight into pure social aspects of *Tongsing* ritual.

The performance and performative issues related to the social message of the ritual were studied and analyzed on the basis of western theory of performance and performatives

of social drama and rituals. The focus of the research was only to dig out the social aspects of social harmony, unity and solidarity within the complex and elaborated ritual of *Tongsing* in Limbu community. So the center of attention was how the ritual created social harmony strengthening the bond between individuals and families in the Limbu community. It aimed at studying how it worked as a guiding force for social unity, solidarity, and peace. The study found that *Tongsing* has been working as the guiding force since the beginning of the Limbu civilization in the Limbu community.

It worked as the unwritten law to govern Limbus in the ancient time. *Tongsing Mundhum* is an incorporation of various myths, legends, narrations and oracles that are closely to the daily activities of Limbus because they guide their social, ethical, and religious concepts by shaping their behavior and attitudes to birth, life, death, and the universe in a distinct way. Its narration or recitation and dramatic performance are expected to bring peace, progress, prosperity and happiness in individual life, families and thereby in the whole community.

*Tongsing* is the fusion between present generation and our ancestors. Though *Tongsing* can unite the Limbu community socially and culturally, the importance of *Tongsing* is deteriorating nowadays. At present Limbus are paying less attention to it. There are few families observing this cultural ritual. Many Limbus have either changed their religion or forgotten it. Today it has become a rare event. There are various reasons for it. Many Limbu families have been displaced from their own land of the eastern hills of Nepal to the southern Terai region, cities, and abroad. The main reason behind this migration is economic security and other infrastructures of development. Moreover, more than 70 per cent of Limbus are still economically backward and illiterate. Illiteracy prevents them from being aware of preserving *Tongsing*. They ignore its social and historical importance. Poverty is another

chief reason that has prevented Limbus from preserving their culture. *Tongsing* needs a good amount of money every time that forces Limbus to curtail their household expenditure. In such a condition, if Limbus do not pay their attention to *Tongsing*, and if they don't start a solid action for its preservation, it is likely to be extinct in the near future.

So there is an immediate need of a strong commitment from Limbu youths, scholars, intellectuals, writers, Sambas, Yebas and government for its preservation and other Limbu cultural entities. At the cutting age of science and technology, we cannot follow *Tongsing* and its directives as it was followed in the past centuries, but we can improve and modernize its weak aspects so that it can suit the demands of new generations. Preserving its artistic and original quality intact, *Tongsing* should be reformed and improved in the context of changing scenario.

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